Playing the Folk:
Black & Native Vernacular Performance, 1880-1940

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Abstract

"Playing the Folk" draws from a range of primary source materials to argue that Black and Native folklore, Native anthropology, and white interpellations of Black and Native musical and dramatic performance were in active material and rhetorical exchange during the period of 1880-1940. My research brings together the work of Americanist cultural historians Michael Denning, Karl Hagstrom Miller, and Sonnet Retman, Black (archival) studies scholars Daphne Brooks, Kara Keeling, Fred Moten, and Stefano Harney, and Native studies scholars Kiara Vigil, Elizabeth Maddox, Margaret Bruchac, and John Troutman, to elucidate the significance of these vernacular musical performances of race. Working both within and against discourses of extinction, primitivism, and pre-modernity that dominated the cultural and folkloric spheres, anthropologist, folklorist, and fiction writer Zora Neale Hurston, ethnologist and autobiographical fiction writer Francis La Flesche, and poet and vocational polymath Langston Hughes used ethnographic materials to experiment with different types of musical performance across cultural arenas and disciplines. In this way, each writer articulated their own creative versions of vernacular Black and Native identities that both worked within and resisted dominant discourses. At the same time, reformist folklorists like then-renowned Natalie Curtis Burlin and dramatists like lesser-known Indianist Helen P. Kane used Blackness and "Indianness" to negotiate their gendered whiteness in the public sphere using the same tools that Hurston, La Flesche, and Hughes reappropriated.

Drawing from Zora Neale Hurston's ethnographic audio recordings, ephemera from her Black vernacular play *The Great Day*, and her extensive writing on Blackness and drama, the first chapter expands the ongoing critical conversation about Hurston's unique position as both ethnographer and ethnographic subject by arguing that her folklore in particular was *explicitly* its

own stage for Black drama; that each genre of performance and recording is often literally a rehearsal of the other, collapsing the distinction between both. The second chapter compares the unexamined dramatic work of Francis La Flesche (Omaha, Ponca) to prolific playwright Helen P. Kane's writings in order to navigate La Flesche's search for liberatory forms of meaning-making and to offer an early history of the "Indian Play"-genre, including both Native and white female interpellations of "Indianness." Chapter three unearths and analyzes Langston Hughes's sustained, non-teleological, and exploratory approach to Black music through his life's work as a song collector, songwriter, and historian of Black music, paying particular attention to his unpublished song revue *Run, Ghost, Run* and avant-garde mixed media poem *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz.* A final coda engages with Curtis's proposal to La Flesche to stage a traveling ethnographic performance. Reading her *Indians' Book* next to a piece she published in *The Southern Workman,* the chapter examines Curtis's white, feminized, sentimental interpellation of Native life as a means by which to trace the associative relationship between Black and Native folk-song and folk-drama, as well as the lived relationships between Hurston, Hughes, La Flesche, Kane, and Curtis.

At the time these authors were writing, fantasies of "primitive" Black and Native life on stage and in song helped to produce the theories of biological race that justified social oppression in the intersecting realms of politics and culture. These authors decided that the idea of "the folk" as it was communicated through music and drama had the potential to foster a space of possibility for racial and social self-definition, and insisted on bringing those spaces to life.

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I lost a friend back home while I was alone in Virginia. I'm not sure that he would've read this. A genius and a maniac with an unmatched musical ear, he's been with me in this project from start to finish. Nick Polster, this is for you.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 1963, *Tambourines to Glory* began its brief run as the first "gospel-play" on Broadway. Distinguishable from a longer history of white-performed and -directed interpretations of Black spirituals—as well as from precedents like Hall Johnson's *Run Little Chillun* (1933), by its self-reflexivity as a Black music play, written and performed by Black artists, whose primary subject was Black music (Sanders 64)—*Tambourines to Glory* was a striking achievement. But it was not Langston Hughes's first time writing a libretto for the dramatic stage; nor was it the first time he used music as a dramatic vehicle with which to tell the history of Black vernacular life. Even before he finished his first draft of *Tambourines to Glory* in 1956, Hughes wrote what he called "A Music-Drama," *Don't You Want to Be Free?*, for his Harlem Suitcase Theater in 1937. Five years later for the Skyloft Players—another theater that Hughes founded—he wrote and staged *The Sun Do Move: A Music-Play* (1942). A slew of song-plays followed: after *Tambourines to Glory*, *Wasn't That a Mighty Day! A Christmas Song-Play* (1961), *Jerico-Jim Crow: A Song Play* (1964), and finally, two years before his death, *Tell It To Telestar: A Song-Play* (1965). And while his musicals *Black Nativity* (1961), *The Gospel Glory: A Passion Play* (1962), and *The Prodigal Son* (1965) privilege the story of Christ's birth and crucifixion, they too render Black experience by foregrounding Black music. Hughes's unusual rhetorical flourish—the "music-play," the "song-play"—divulges his interest in dramatizing music and in deploying music in drama in order to communicate his vision of Black life.

Influenced by W.E.B. Du Bois's contention that the folk songs, tales, and literature of ordinary "black folk" constituted the soul of the nation, Langston Hughes's Black history was vernacular: signifying on ideas of "the folk" that circulated in cultural and ethnographic discourses without consigning himself to folklore's often limited parameters. Working

throughout his life as a folklorist, archivist, and historian of Black music, Hughes also wrote hundreds of songs over the course of his career, and intended most of them to be performed together on the dramatic stage. The use of Black vernacular music on the dramatic stage to argue that Black art was essential to the identity of the United States—that questions of citizenship, cultural formation, and freedom were bound to the creative production of Black art, which effectively and affectively told the story of Black vernacular life—was at the heart of Hughes's numerous projects. That work could be encapsulated by the modest proposal of the "song-play": that music and drama were bound together and that intentionally forging that bond in performance would communicate with exuberance and gravitas the depths and valences of Black history.

In fact, in his song- and music-plays and in his extensive work in vernacular song and performance, Langston Hughes was one of a larger group of Black, Native,[1] and white Americans negotiating racial identity from within national and global frameworks from roughly the 1880s into the 1940s. During this period, various people began staging, publishing, choreographing, drafting, and curating dramatic performances of ethnographic, vernacular music that drew representational elements from anthropology and popular media to articulate visual and sonic ideas of Black and Native "folk." While these performances had some precedent in shared rhetorics between anthropological and popular culture during the period, its practitioners were, in their time, unexpected.[2] Despite intersections between genres and performances in their present,

[1] In choosing and capitalizing the word "Native," I follow the example of Margaret Bruchac (*Savage Kin* 4-5). I capitalize the word "Black" following the example of Kimberlé Crenshaw ("Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," Footnote 6, 1244).

[2] I adapt the rhetoric of "unexpectedness" from Philip Deloria's *Indians in Unexpected Places.* Deloria describes his book: "I take as my unifying theme the changes and persistences found in

these authors, anthropologists, and folklorists were relegated by racial and gender discrimination and by funding to specific avenues of publication that, when taken alone, over-simplify the corpus, ideology, and arc of their work as well as its socio-political and cultural contexts. Using ideas of folklore to stake the claim that Black or Native cultures—or white, feelingful, feminized interpellations of Black or Native cultures—were foundational to the creation of a uniquely American art form, these performances operated within and against the grain of dramatic and rhetorical strategies of the period to construct and assert the race of the creator as one whose history was worth hearing.

"Playing the Folk: Black & Native Vernacular Performance, 1880-1940" argues, first, that Black and Native folklore, Native anthropology, and white interpellations of Black and Native musical and dramatic performance were in active material and rhetorical exchange during the sixty-year period named in the title.[3] Second, it argues that Black and Native artists, authors, and anthropologists worked against fiscal and social pressures to instrumentalize this exchange by performing ethnography in music and in musical drama. In this way, these creators articulated their own creative versions of Black and Native identities that both worked within and resisted dominant caricatures of each. Working both within and against discourses of extinction,

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the ideological / discursive frames that non-Indians used to generalize their expectations of Indian people. All Native people have had to confront these expectations—whether that meant ignoring them, protesting them, working them, or seeking to prove them wrong" (12).

[3] It is beyond the scope of this introduction to describe the myriad ways that, following Franz Boas, ethnographers and anthropologists in the early twentieth century began ascribing objectivity to their fieldwork while this exchange was still in motion. Ethnographic claims to objectivity were in contradistinction to nineteenth century reformist anthropologists like Alice C. Fletcher, who claimed her expertise through her ability to sustain a sympathetic and feelingful relationship with her subjects rather than through rational distance from them (see Littlefield and Parrins, "Introduction" *Ke-Ma-Ha*, xx), and to the shared rhetoric of racial biology and racial primitivism (see Miller, *Segregating Sounds*, 107, and *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Ed. Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (2000)).

primitivism, and pre-modernity that dominated the cultural and folkloric spheres, anthropologist, folklorist, and fiction writer Zora Neale Hurston, ethnologist and autobiographical fiction writer Francis La Flesche, and poet and vocational polymath Langston Hughes used folkloric materials to experiment with different types of musical performance across cultural arenas and disciplines. Third, this dissertation argues that at the same time that Hurston, La Flesche, and Hughes undertook these musical-dramatic projects, white female reformist folklorists like then-renowned Natalie Curtis Burlin and dramatists like lesser-known Indianist Helen P. Kane used Blackness and Indianness[4] to negotiate their gendered whiteness in the public sphere using the same tools that Hurston, La Flesche, and Hughes reappropriated. From within this matrix of imagination and reinterpretation, raced, gendered, sexualized, and classed ideas of "the folk" treat folklore as a space of hegemony and of possibility for negotiating personhood on a national and global stage.

Because fantasies of "the folk" circulated between the proximal disciplines of folklore and anthropology *as well as* between the dramatic stage, musical compositions and performances, and literature, it's logical that creators like Hughes, Hurston, and La Flesche would operate in multiple registers—often at once—to communicate their ideas of Native and Black America. For over a decade, Zora Neale Hurston chose to transmit her theory of black dramatic life through her ethnographic dramatic revue *The Great Day* despite being hailed in the nineteen-thirties primarily as an anthropologist and burgeoning fiction writer. Throughout his lengthy career, Langston Hughes worked in literature, dramaturgy, criticism, political commentary, journalism, sociology, poetry, and urban ethnography to produce a creative lineage of Black vernacular music history that focused on music, curation, and folklore. And while Francis La Flesche is remembered for his ethnological studies of Omaha and Osage language,

[4] I adapt the term "Indianness" from Phillip Deloria, who uses it his work.

ceremony, and music—and to a lesser degree, for his autobiographical fiction—his varied work on ethnographic "Indian drama" is a crucial marker of his varied communications of Native life to his contemporary audience. As white women of means, Helen P. Kane and Natalie Curtis Burlin were not restricted by racial expectations and funding constraints: Kane wrote romantic drama, literature, poetry, and Curtis worked in folklore, classical composition, and drama. Both Kane and Curtis created and perpetuated the idea that white womanhood could be the conductor and vessel of Native identity differently across these genres, and relied on the conventions of drama and folklore in concert to communicate their message. Hurston, La Flesche, and Hughes also navigated between the ethnographic and primitivizing impulses of folklore and the performative aspects of drama and song—each never wholly separate from the other in each author's constellation of Black or Native life—to create their own performances of Black and Native vernacular culture.

While musical and dramatic fantasies of "primitive" Black and Native life on stage, on record, and in text recapitulated the desires and fears of contact, assimilation, and extinction latent in anthropological, folkloric, and legal practices, vernacular music and drama of this period necessarily either capitulated or attempted to wrest itself from one looming precedent: the minstrel show. Decades before Hughes published his first "music-drama," white actors performed Blackness as a way to assert dominance over and desire for Black people by assuming the role of progenitor and purveyor of Black music. Similarly, Native dramas of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century typically featured "redface," a practice that had precedent in white men "playing Indian" in fraternal organizations in the nineteenth century and in the deployment of language and gestures of "Indian" ethnography into boy's camps[5] beginning

[5] I draw these claims from Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian*, chapters 3 and 4.

around the turn of the century. Performances of blackface and of "redface" articulated claims of knowledge and ownership of Black and Native "folk" musics by the players and by the audience, staking a claim against the knowledge and agency of living Black and Native people in the process. Bound up with cross-racial desire, revulsion, and transgressive thrill,[6] blackface minstrelsy restages the specific relations of chattel slavery by dramatizing "the seizure and possession of the black body for the other's use and enjoyment" (32), to quote Saidiya Hartman. In this way, the practice of blackface was a mode of white male self-fashioning that relied on the perceived fungibility, disposability, and talent that inhered to Black bodies. So too did Indian play dramatize the myth of noble savagery which, according to Philip Deloria, "juxtaposes and conflates an urge to idealize and desire Indians and a need to despise and dispossess them." Those contradictions, Deloria argues, "have themselves been the precondition for the formation of American Identities" (*Playing Indian* 4). Both practices render white power through racial acts that posture as historical reenactments. Both remind us that, to quote Justin Leroy, "indigenous and black theory frame settler colonialism and racial slavery, respectively, as the very conditions of possibility for the United States" (2). It was through these stagings of racial mockery and racial desire that whites workshopped their own identities in the modern world.

By calling blackface minstrelsy "a breach in the dialogue the American vernacular conducts with itself" (*Love & Theft* x), cultural critic Greil Marcus seems to pinpoint the fraught nature of dealing in Black vernacular drama and music in the both the midst and the wake of blackface's intense popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, as W.E.B. Du Bois described in 1926, Black people in the early twentieth century were incited by the

[6] This is a rough summary of a facet of Eric Lott's argument in *Love & Theft*; that minstrelsy constituted a "mixed erotic economy of celebration and exploitation" (6).

detrimental socio-political effects of these representations to wrest their own vernacular art from its clutches: "Until the art of the black folk compells recognition they will not be rated as human. And when through art they compell recognition then let the world discover if it will that their art is as new as it is old and as old as new" (Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art"). Langston Hughes was one of many "New Negro" artists who pushed against the claim that Black artists were responsible for "positive" representations of Blackness, crafting Black folk heroes with names like "Simple" in praise of those not included in the monied, educated "talented tenth." But he also committed himself to the project of revealing the "new" and the "old" as exchange, not teleology, in "the art of the black folk." He, like Hurston for the Black global south and like La Flesche for the Omaha, saw potential for this project on a global stage in the synthetic form of folkloric drama and ethnographic song. Where popular media used the rhetoric of ethnography to lend an air of veracity to minstrel and Indian plays, ethnographic publications appropriated rhetoric from the realms of popular culture—it was from within this shifting, hybrid scene that Hughes, Hurston, La Flesche, Curtis, and Kane staged their songs.

At the same time that these artists were experimenting with musical-dramatic forms to express different versions of "folk" and vernacular Black and Native identities for a largely white public, both Indianness and Blackness were differently deployed and interpreted in the intersecting arenas of culture and anthropology in the service of nominating an Indigenous identity and art form for a changing American scene. While contemporary ethnography distinguished Native people from Black people, defining both identities biologically through the lens of race, Black and Native identities were often "collected" together under the banner of folklore, at least as early as the discipline's inception. In 1888, the field-defining issue of the American Folklore Society's *Journal of American Folklore* (*JAMF*) articulated a set of

objectives: to encourage "the collection of the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America, namely…relics of Old English Folk-Lore…Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union…Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America…Lore of French Canada, Mexico, etc" (Newell 3). Displaying an imperialist, faux-heroic investment in the idea that Black and Native cultures were inherently primitive and hence threatened by an encroaching modernity, the association that *JAMF* drew between these cultures was actually echoed by W.E.B. Du Bois just fifteen years later. "There is no true American music but the wild, sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folk-lore are Indian and African," he wrote at the beginning of *The Souls of Black Folk*, "and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness" (7). In this phrase, Du Bois draws not only on folkloric understandings of Blackness and Indianness, but also on a history of intimate association and political solidarity. In literature and in folklore, both scholars and amateurs of this period shored up conflicting ideas of American nationalism based on an associative relationship between Black American and Native American "folk."[7] It was in this context that Hughes, Hurston, La Flesche, Kane, and Curtis began their cross-disciplinary work.

[7] This history is, predictably, difficult to summarize. I refer on page 95 of chapter 2 to Charles Eastman's use of the Du Boisian "color line" at the Universal Races Congress in 1911. This is a culmination of numerous solidarity struggles that began during slavery. For example, the Black Seminoles—in whom Zora Neale Hurston expressed interest, as I describe on page 219 in footnote 120 of the coda—had been cohabiting with the Seminole tribe for at least sixty years before the Indian Removal Act was signed into law in 1832. These coalitions were dangerous (and not relegated to the Seminoles): as Daniel Littlefield opines, "removal of the Seminoles was apparently as much an attempt to solve the 'Negro Problem' as it was to settle the 'Indian problem' of Florida" (12). Native tribes like the Cherokee, on the other hand, adapted to American capitalism through slaveholding. The "associative relationship" to which I refer in the body of the text is racist, primitivist, and fantastical, but lived realities (from the inside) provide a counterpoint to the imagined, imposed version of that association.

My first chapter, "'Trained and Taught this Song by Zora Hurston': Conservation, Rehearsal, Mimicry, and Performance Across *The Great Day*," proposes that Zora Neale Hurston's playwriting, folkloric song collecting, choreography, and concert-staging function in ongoing conversation, by arguing that each genre of performance and recording is often literally a rehearsal of the other. I contend that, against the grain of the stringent approach to cultural preservation with which ethnography identified itself during her lifetime, Hurston drew no distinction between doing ethnographic fieldwork and composing and staging her plays. In her work, Hurston taught "the folk" their own folksongs and dedicated nearly all of her efforts on a multi-media plane after 1930—including her ethnographic field recordings—to rehearsing her vernacular folksong revue *The Great Day* in its myriad permutations. I call this performance practice Hurston's "collecting stage": the step in her ethnographic fieldwork in which she gathered her sources before synthesizing them and then staged the performance in which she, too, participates. Akin to Fred Moten's concept of conservation which, like rehearsal—and like performance itself— is an exercise in dramatic mimicry, Hurston created her "collecting stage" as an exceptional space to enact the artistic exchange between Black folkloric dramaturgy and the drama of Black folklore that she explored in writing throughout her life. My chapter analyzes and historicizes the strategies of mimicry and folklore in Black performance history from New York through Florida and the Bahamas and across Hurston's field recordings and her rehearsals and ticketed performances of *The Great Day*. In this way, I expand the ongoing critical conversation about Hurston's unique position as both ethnographer and ethnographic subject, arguing that her folklore in particular was *explicitly* its own stage for Black drama.

My second chapter, "'Criticized When Written by Francis La Flesche': Native Authenticity, White Female Authority, and the Racial Ideology of the 'Indian Play,'" focuses on

two figures who differently inhabit the turn-of-the-century genres of "Indian Anthropology" and "Indian Drama": Francis La Flesche and Helen P. Kane. Known for being the first Native American ethnologist acknowledged and employed by the United States government, Francis La Flesche worked as a translator and assistant to Alice C. Fletcher, recorded and published extensively about Omaha and Osage songs and ceremonies, wrote autobiographical fiction, helped create two "Indianist" operas, and, I contend, wrote settings for Helen Kane's "Indian plays," collaborated with Kane on the copyrighted but unpublished *Adita, son of the Sioux*, and drafted his own experimental Native drama. A wealthy white woman with family ties to the Revolutionary War, Helen P. Kane was a prolific playwright who, having volunteered for the Daughters of the American Revolution and various Native anthropological outlets, began writing "Indian Plays" in collaboration with Francis La Flesche. Kane's extensive writing has not been accessed since it was repeatedly anthologized in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and even in recent years La Flesche has received a scant amount of extended critical attention.[8] To my knowledge, no writing exists on the plays and unpublished drafts that I discuss in this chapter. Because so much of La Flesche's dramatic work is not extant, Kane's plays constitute a major point of analysis in this chapter. Considering Kane's trajectory from "parlor play" to "Indian play" alongside her Native and American Revolutionary history hobbies specifies and illustrates

[8] While Francis La Flesche's work occasionally appears as primary source material, here I refer specifically to entire articles and chapters dedicated to La Flesche's life and work. Two excellent pieces by Katie Graber (in *Ethnomusicology*, 2017) and Sherry L. Smith (in *American Indian Quarterly*, 2001) intervene in the last two decades of relative quiet. La Flesche is additionally the subject of a brief chapter in Margot Liberty's *Native American Intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (1976). Joan Mark's biography of Alice C. Fletcher (1988) contains extensive research and dispersed information on La Flesche and his relationship to Fletcher. Finally, James W. Parrins and Daniel Littlefield, Jr.'s introduction to La Flesche's collected stories, *Ke-Ma-Ha* (1995), and Garrick A. Bailey's introduction to a compilation of La Flesche's Osage research, *Osage and the Invisible World* (1995), are excellent resources. To my knowledge, this is the extent of publication centered on La Flesche from the past forty years.

the ways that science (anthropology, eugenics, folklore) and popular culture (film, music, children's camps) came together in the under-explored genre of sentimental amateur "Indian drama" to reproduce hostile attitudes first stoked by the United States government in the nineteenth century. Francis La Flesche's dramatic writing approaches this story by accessing the possibility of more liberatory forms of meaning-making, specifically in the realm of dramatic and musical performance.

My third chapter, "Langston Hughes's Life in Music," focuses on Langston Hughes as a folkloric song collector, songwriter, and historian of Black music. While scholars tend to argue that Hughes's work as a songwriter throughout his life was mostly mercenary and subsidiary to his blues and jazz poetry, I argue that attention to both his protean, extensive, and startlingly under-examined music writing and his work as a folklorist provides new approaches to the musical and the literary work of one of the Harlem Renaissance's most prolific writers. In order to introduce Hughes's generically and geographically diverse musical archive (which includes, but does not limit itself to, Black "folk" music), and to think through his experimental formulations of Black musical history, I focus on two texts: *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz* (1960), Hughes's dramatically avant-garde contrapuntal text of toasts, poetry, music, and critique, and "Run, Ghost, Run" (1941), an unpublished, unstudied, whimsical and encompassing song revue whose drafts I have traced throughout Hughes's substantial archive. In this chapter, I extend Hughes's work beyond the period of the Harlem Renaissance, exploring the unanswered questions of his music writing as they resonate throughout his life and into the 1960s. Contributing to a growing body of literature that recognizes Hughes as a jazz and blues historian and songwriter, I propose that his sustained, non-teleological, and highly exploratory approach to

Black musical history extends into his diverse popular music-writing and his song collecting practice, enacting a vision of Black history that is fluid, transnational, and utopic.

The coda, "Natalie Curtis Burlin's Ceremonial Dance-Dramas," draws togethers claims and ideas that run through the body of the dissertation by focusing on an unfinished dramatic collaboration between Natalie Curtis and Francis La Flesche. A classically-trained pianist and composer, folklorist of Native and Black music, and avid preservationist, Curtis's life and work are evidence of networks of exchange between Harlem and the American southwest and between Black and Native folklore. Hers is the story of the search for indigenous American art through scientific, educational, and popular media approaches to Black and Native history; that story reflects Curtis's conspicuous proximity to the lives, works, ideas, and ideologies of Harlem Renaissance figures like Hughes, Hurston, and Alain Locke. Twelve years after publishing the widely-acclaimed *Indians' Book* and in between two published books of Black music and stories,[9] Curtis proposed to Francis La Flesche that, together, they revisit an idea they'd discussed a year earlier: to collaborate on a traveling "dance-drama." Tracing the interrelationships between Curtis's story and the dissertation's other chapters throughout, the coda contextualizes and expands Curtis's proposal to La Flesche by reading her *Indians' Book* next to a piece in *The Southern Workman* in which she describes listening to a Hopi song. By focusing on Curtis's assumption in her proposal that Native ritual, ceremony, song, and performance were inherently "dramatic" American art forms, the coda begins to parse the associative relationship between Black and Native folk-song and folk-drama from the turn of the

[9] *Negro Folk-Songs* (1918) and *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent* (1920). The former focuses on Black American music and lore collected mostly during her research on *The Indians' Book*; the latter, on African music and lore collected from two African students at Hampton Institute: C. Kamba Simango (Ndau Tribe, Portugese East Africa), and Madikane Čele (Zulu Tribe, Natal, Zululand, East Africa).

century into the nineteen-twenties. I conclude by proposing that Curtis mimes a version of Hurston's, Hughes's, La Flesche's, and Kane's musical-dramatic ethnographic practices, by attempting to use Black and Native American musical-dramatic performance to consolidate her own gendered understanding of her whiteness.

By performing a heterodox reappraisal of the relationship between songwriting and song collecting, ethnographic performance, and popular media across Harlem, Nebraska, Florida, Mexico, and New Mexico, "Playing the Folk" identifies and elaborates upon the ways in which authors, anthropologists, and folklorists of and adjacent to the movement used intersecting musical and dramatic practices as vehicles for constructing ideas of race, folklore, musical performance, and text. While Hurston herself "played" her ideas of Black folk on stage and in her field recordings, Hughes played Black folk musics in text, in recordings, and on stage. La Flesche proposed and drafted "Indian plays" in ways that intersected with and diverged from those of Helen Kane, while also performing versions of Native life in ethnography and in fiction. And Curtis proposed an ethnographic version of the "Indian play" while "playing Indian" in her music-playing and in her collecting practice. Each used the specter of "the folk" to construct ideas of vernacularity, gender, and race by playing music and through musical plays.

"Playing the Folk" compares, connects, collates, and analyzes a range of primary source materials in order to contribute to the fields of performance studies, American literature and American studies, Black studies, Native studies, popular music studies, and folklore studies. I have been particularly inspired by race, performance, and archival studies scholars Fred Moten, Stefano Harney, Kara Keeling, Joseph Roach, and Diana Taylor, to approach the archives ethically, with an openness to what might be hidden, and to what might constitute a performance outside of my own initial understanding. My consideration of the ways that race and genre were

co-constituted through the lens of "folk" and popular music in the turn-of-the-century United States is particularly indebted to Michael Denning, Karl Hagstrom-Miller, Sonnet Retman, Julie Marie Stoever, and John Troutman. The project relies on cultural histories and critical approaches to race and folkloric performance that I have developed in large part under the influence of Black studies scholars Daphne Brooks and Daphne Lamothe, Native and Indigenous studies scholars Kiara Vigil, Elizabeth Maddox, Margaret Bruchac, and Hanay Geiogamah. I fear that in arranging this appreciation by field, I begin to fall into the trap against which "Playing the Folk" cautions: each of the above scholars approaches the study of culture across disciplines, and I have tried to emulate their deeply interdisciplinary projects in my own work.

Using under-accessed primary texts and audio recordings as the core of this theoretical and historical project, I have tried to approach a creative and ethnographic scene and its practitioners without limiting the scope of their thinking and work to genre conventions that were, and perhaps are, still in flux. Within these scenes of exchange, Hurston, Hughes, La Flesche, Curtis, and Kane dramatized and wrote and recorded and collected their interpretations of vernacular Blackness, Indianness, and feminine whiteness. Each created musical dramas and dramatic musics that drew from and pushed against contemporary folklore in order to grapple with the constraints and contradictions of their moment. Each differently redefined their own races through these musical, dramatic, and ethnographic projects, celebrating versions of vernacular Black and Native history in projects that either mystified or advocated for Black and Native peoples' autonomy. At a time when theories of biological race were being loudly reinforced and deliberately dismantled,[10] these authors decided that the idea of "the folk" as it

[10] The racial pseudoscience of eugenics and Franz Boas's intervention are the dull murmur in the background of this dissertation. The term "eugenics" was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton—the

was communicated through music and drama co-constituted a space of possibility for racial and social self-definition, and insisted on bringing those spaces to life.

man who also coined “nature versus nurture”—and enjoyed widespread acceptance at least into the 1920s. Boas first articulated his theory of “cultural relativism” in 1887, training his students (like Zora Neale Hurston) to think of culture pluralistically rather than on a comparative evolutionary scale. It was in this contesting social scientific and popular scene that these authors and anthropologists set their musical stages.

Chapter 1:
"Trained and Taught this Song by Zora Hurston": Conservation, Mimicry, Rehearsal, and Performance Across *The Great Day*

I. Introduction

Zora Neale Hurston always had a flair for drama. Dressed to the nines in extant photographs, she was also known to traverse New York City in costume. While under the employment of Fannie Hurst in 1925, for example, Hurston would habitually chauffeur the novelist while donning a turban "to impersonate an Indian princess" (Levering-Lewis 129). "She once appeared at a party we were giving," Carl Van Vechten recounted, having first met Hurston earlier that year, "attired in a wide Seminole Indian skirt, contrived of a thousand patches" (Levering-Lewis 131). No longer costumed in the only extant photograph of her vernacular "folk" revue, *The Great Day*, Hurston leans eagerly forward, camouflaged mid-clap with her eyes trained on her dancers. In addition to being a collector, choreographer, and producer, this photograph captures Hurston as a dancer, a player of her own ethnographic research in her own play [IMG 1].

Hurston played a dramatic role in her field research as well. Disembarking from "Sassy Susie," the car she purchased for her field recording trips through the southern United States using her patron Charlotte Osgood Mason's money, Hurston played the part of bootlegger's woman to explain her car and her dress to the turpentine and lumber camp workers in Polk County, Florida, whose trust she required for her graduate fieldwork. Running from 1927-1931, this field research trip would become the foundation for her dissertation, which itself became her autoethnographic *Mules and Men*. During her stay at the same camp, Hurston staged herself in performance with her characters, singing "John Henry" at a juke joint to, as she put it, "prove that I was their kind" (*Mules and Men* 65). No longer in need of that proof of entry by the time of

Tell My Horse, an autoethnography that she researched under two Guggenheim fellowships in 1936 and 1937, Hurston often demurs from recounting the experience of her subjects, choosing instead to spend an entire chapter staging her own encounter with Haitian zombies.[11]

Stories like these are replete in her anthropological work because Hurston shaped her life by performing it. Specifically, Hurston extended her creative self-fashioning from her fiction and her autoethnography into her fieldwork. In the surviving recordings of that work, Hurston foregrounds her presence and influence on her ethnographic subjects, then goes on to use these recorded performances as source material for her writing and, importantly, for her plays. By revising the static definition of source material from something to be reinterpreted creatively to creative reinterpretation itself, Hurston disturbed the idea of a single origin for Black folklore. And by repurposing this dynamic material for her folkloric drama and her folk concerts, and then using that drama to collaboratively reconstruct her folklore in the field, Hurston amplified her theory of the inextricability of Black folklore from Black drama. With her dramatic and reiterative performances, Hurston proposed that the systems that would disown Black cultural agency as a matter of course could be deconstructed. Her work showed that visionary Black folklore could operate against the grain of the extant order while still existing within it.

In this chapter, I will argue that Hurston's commitment to self-staging is foundational to her unique synthesis of ethnographic field recordings, folk concerts, and the dramatic form of the folkloric song revue. In addition to her folk concerts, in the nine years following the initial concerts and full-length performances of *The Great Day*, Hurston went as far as to perform its songs herself, solo, for Herbert Halpert during the Southern States Recording Expedition for the

[11] While I do not cite him directly in this article, I am indebted to Robert E. Hemenway's biography of Zora Neale Hurston, which I used in concert with Valerie Boyd's biography of Zora Neale Hurston to structure my timeline of events.

Joint Committee on Folk Arts, Works Project Administration (WPA) and the Library of Congress in 1939. She also staged those same songs on the "original" field recordings she made with folklorist Alan Lomax in 1935. Hurston literally taught "the folk" their own folklore—often in the same places that she had originally learned and collected those same songs—while simultaneously rehearsing *The Great Day* across media and in the field recordings themselves. Grappling with these participatory rehearsals shows that there is no discernible difference between Hurston's ethnographic fieldwork and the ways that she composed and staged her plays.

Hurston's commitment to self-staging informs her unique synthesis of ethnographic field recordings, folk concerts, and drama, but in no other body of material is the cross-pollination between Hurston's ideas of Black drama and Black "folk" life more evident than in her ethnographic and vernacular folksong revue *The Great Day*. "A day in the life of a railroad work camp, from daybreak until dusk" (Kraut, "Everybody's Fire Dance"), *The Great Day* was comprised of a series of choreographed musical skits that often culminated in a performance of the West Indian Fire Dance. During her ethnographic fieldwork in Florida, New Orleans, and the Bahamas from 1927-1931, Hurston collected the songs that would become the foundation of that three-act revue. Although she would go on to claim sole authorship for *Mule Bone*, the Black vernacular play that she had begun in collaboration with Langston Hughes during the early years of her fieldwork, *The Great Day* was the first play that Hurston crafted and compiled on her own, sourced solely from the material she had gathered from the same folkloric subjects whom she had also selectively cast as dancers in that same play. Nearly all of Hurston's work on a multi-media plane during the years of 1931-1944 can be traced back to *The Great Day*.

Consistent revisions, rehearsals, and performances of the revue signify Hurston's decades-long commitment to it. Because no complete script of any version of *The Great Day*

remains, however, scholarship on the performance is scant: an introduction to the three extant playbills in Jean Lee Cole and Charles Mitchell's essential *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays*, brief mention in academic articles by Elin Diamond and Leif Sorenson, and a more extended analysis in another academic piece by Barbara Speisman. Similarly, only Daphne Brooks and Roshanak Kheshti have written, respectively, about Hurston's presence in Herbert Halpert's 1939 recordings and in the 1935 Library of Congress recording trip, and neither has explored the connection between her field recordings, folk concerts,[12] and play. Amidst these excellent pieces, Anthea Kraut's *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* has been particularly influential to my study of Hurston as a dramatist. Arguing that dance and choreography were as central to her creative interpellation of Black American folklore as were fiction and anthropology, Kraut thinks across genres in order to construct an archive of materials related to *The Great Day*. Picking up where Kraut left off, this chapter puts Hurston's field recordings into conversation with her writing of and about Black drama, in order to expand and revise current understandings of the ways that Hurston deconstructs and reconstitutes her position as both ethnographer and ethnographic subject.[13] To facilitate this conversation, the chapter reconstructs the networks that Hurston created by insistently re-staging the folk songs that she collected, taught, wrote settings for, choreographed, and performed herself.

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[12] There is only one extant folk concert recording, housed at the Library of Congress, featuring six songs sung by a choir led by Hurston and recorded at the National Folk Festival at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., in 1938. I consider these recordings to be in the orbit of the multi-media interpretations of folklore that Hurston constellates throughout her oeuvre, but I do not give them extended attention in this chapter.

[13] In this project, I am particularly indebted to the scholarship of Sonnet Retman (*Real Folks,* 2011), Daphne Brooks (*Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910,* 2006, and "Zora Neale Hurston and the Sound of Angular Black Womanhood," 2010), Valerie Boyd (*Wrapped in Rainbows,* 2004), Daphne Lamothe (*Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography*, 2008), and Roshanak Kheshti (*Modernity's Ear,* 2015).

I contend that, against the grain of ethnographic folklore scholarship's stringent approach to cultural preservation during her lifetime, Hurston used her field recordings as rehearsal spaces, specifically to revise and revisit *The Great Day* in its myriad permutations—thus also blurring the line between staged dramatic performance and the rehearsals that typically precede such performance. Just after she had completed her field research for her dissertation, within the four-year period of 1932-1935 Hurston staged various versions of *The Great Day* ten times throughout New York City and Florida. That number rises as we begin to account for the riffs on and repetitions of the play's core group of songs, dances, and skits. An isolated performance in Orlando of the Fire Dance brings the number to eleven—nineteen, if the various "folk concerts" that contain the same handful of songs in more or less the same order are also included. The number grows larger still as the resonances between her choices of folk materials (and the instances of public rehearsals, well as official performances) are accounted for [IMG 2 & IMG 3]. Even as she was swiftly gaining fame as an author of fiction (in particular, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937), a sizable amount of Hurston's efforts on a multi-media plane after 1930 were given to rehearsing *The Great Day*. Celebrating and exploring the extended repetitions of *The Great Day* across Hurston's work gives new access to the archive of a play whose primary texts and performances are no longer materially present. This absence is an opportunity to access moments of creative agency, setting, and translation primarily across her play and her recorded fieldwork.

By conceptualizing Hurston's various stagings as rehearsals, I focus on the inextricability of and contiguity between process and product in *The Great Day* and across her writing and field recordings. Hurston's performative exchanges purposefully reinvent oppressive, stringent definitions and representations of Black drama and Black folklore through

the intertwining practices of rehearsal, staging, and as I'll discuss, mimicry. I consider Hurston's various performances across genre and discipline to be rehearsal spaces because they are provisional: meant to be revised and revisited as part of a broader project to cross-pollinate black drama with a type of black folklore that, according to Hurston, is "still in the making."[14] By uniting Black drama and Black folklore through the practice of rehearsal, Hurston collapses notions of origin and product and signifies her refusal to air a final, static idea of either element.

Celebrating Hurston's creative processes through the lens of rehearsal requires that I attend to the ways that she both enacts (as a player in her recordings and in her play) and describes (as an ethnographer whose prescribed role was to record neutral scientific observations about her subjects) the intertwining processes of performance and dramatic mimicry. By performance, I mean Hurston's creative interpretation of her subjects and their culture. Because her creative interpretation is of ethnography as a dramatic stage, Hurston disturbs the idea of a single origin of Black folklore while also disrupting the possibility of a clean and coherent transmission between actors—herself and her subjects—performing the same cultural act. In this way, Hurston gives the lie to the idea of authentic "folk" culture as something static, or easily copied and preserved. By mimicry, I mean the dramatic reinterpretation of a subject across stages. I draw my interpretation of mimicry in Hurston's cross-genre folkloric performances from Hurston's own theorizations of this dramatic mimicry, and from Homi Bhabha's formulation of "the stressed necessity of everyday life" which, under colonialism, requires "performativity" for survival. Eschewing the language of "imitation," which signifies the act of

[14] In her letter to Langston Hughes from April of 1928, Hurston famously asserted: "Negro folklore is *still* in the making. A new kind is crowding out the old." Her language is similar in the section of "Characteristics of Negro Expression" entitled "Negro Folklore": "Negro folklore is not a thing of the past. It is still in the making."

copying without context and hence, without ideological baggage, Bhabha employs the language of "mimicry" to signify satire, ridicule, and entertainment. Hurston's vision of mimicry is a slight modification of that way that, under Jim Crow, Black people cited and mimed gestures or expectations of those in power as a mode of survival. Where Bhabha emphasizes the native's mimicry of the colonial ruler, Hurston also thinks of mimicry laterally—in this case, across folk subjects and to the native ethnographer and back. Across Hurston's ethnographic dramas and dramatic ethnographies, rehearsal becomes an exercise in dramatic mimicry.

Focusing on the ways that drama and mimicry intersect in Hurston's creative interpretations and conceptualizations of vernacular Blackness in her work has encouraged me to approach that work in two ways. The first deals with her practices themselves; the second, with the spatio-temporal setting that Hurston creates with those practices. Following Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, I call the first Hurston's *conservation* practice. Following Hurston herself, I call the second her "collecting stage."

Moving fluidly between staged drama and the ethnographic stage was partially in defiance of, and partially keeping with, the folkloric practices typical of Hurston's moment. With the notable exception of rare Black ethnographers like John Wesley Work and his family and students, the overwhelmingly white male discipline of contemporaneous folklore assumed to varying degree that authentic black culture was monolithic, primitive, and under threat of engulfment by the rising tide of modernity. Propelled by what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls "eleventh-hour ethnography," turn-of-the-century folklorist engaged in a faux-heroic, imperialist investment in "a disappearing subject, decimated both demographically and culturally," whose desperate need for cultural preservation was knowingly met by the eager

ethnographer.[15] Anthropology of the period committed itself to what Michael Rogin calls "a black past and a white present" (45). Foundational to the project of recording was the project of preservation; a moral imperative within an understanding of culture that assumed not only that so-called "primitive" peoples had no agency within or attachment to modernity but that outsider-experts had the ability to extract and display cultural characteristics accurately.

Hurston occasionally adapted a defensive preservationist stance on Black culture in relation to whiteness. Never conceding to the foundational white preservationist belief that Black culture was trapped in a primitive state, Hurston reacted strongly to the idea that its distinctiveness and autonomy was threatened by whiteness. She publicly defended segregation in an article published in 1955, on the grounds that it helped preserve what she saw as authentic black folk culture ("Court Order Can't Make the Races Mix"). She also scorned the Fisk Jubilee Singers' project of arranging traditional black spirituals as choral harmonies within the Western classical tradition (Hurston, "Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals," 344-347)—a project that is in many ways similar to her own. Even her donning of cultural "costumes" (to which I refer at the beginning of this essay) is evidence of a definition of culture that can be made static in order to enable its temporary appropriation.

Nevertheless, in her drama and ethnography (and ethnographic drama), Hurston often disavows the preservationist project in favor of something new. On the whole, I find Hurston's work to be much closer to Moten and Harney's idea of conservation. A strategy of Black resistance to what Jennifer Lynn Stoever calls "the liberal listening ear" (146), conservation, to

[15] While I draw here from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's "From Ethnology to Heritage: The Role of the Museum," an SIEF Keynote she gave in Marseilles on April 28, 2004, my analysis is also indebted to "Folklore's Crisis," the essay in which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett elaborates the idea of "eleventh-hour ethnography" by surveying the field of folklore studies.

quote Moten and Harney, "is always new…it's the space they say is wrong, the practice they say needs fixing" (63). If preservationists would put their subjects in freeze-frame, ignoring their agency as creators and contributors to the modern present by abstracting them to the realm of the "historical," the conservationist is defiantly presentist and future-looking. Given that culture is in constant flux, conservation denies the possibility of capturing a culture and its ideas, materials, performances, and practices. Acknowledging and incorporating culture's tendency toward adaptation and self-revision, Hurston's conservation practice is also collaborative. For example, in addition to directing and choreographing the material that she herself collected, Hurston seems to have sang and danced as a player in her own performances. Two of the three extant programs of *The Great Day* list Hurston as a cast member—*The Great Day* at the John Golden Theater and *From Sun to Sun* at the New School—and on *All de Live Long Day* at the Recreation Center at Rollins College Hurston is explicitly distinguished as the sole performer of the "Crow Dance."[16] Rather than concealing her role in the construction of these performances of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean folklore, Hurston's conservation practice places it at the center of her creative work.

Second, in order to understand her methods of conservation and performance I look to what Hurston, in a letter to Franz Boas in December of 1928, described as the "collecting stage."[17] Using it to detail the step in her fieldwork in which she gathered her sources before synthesizing them, the "collecting stage," as a moniker, can also be repurposed to signify both

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[16] The appendix to Cole and Mitchell's *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays* [see endnote 5] includes reproductions of original programs from *The Great Day* (1932), *From Sun to Sun* (1932), *All de Live Long Day* (1934), page 363-371.

[17] I extracted this phrase from a letter that Hurston sent to Boas on December 27, 1928. In it, she describes that she'd accepted money, presumably from Charlotte Mason, "on the condition that I should write no one. It is unthinkable, of course, that I go past the collecting stage without consulting you, however I came by the money."

her literal ethnographic fieldwork and the "staging" performance in which she participates. The "collecting stage" proposes a theory of mimicry and Black folkloric creativity alchemized into reiterative collecting-performances and enacted during Hurston's most prolific period of folkloric and dramatic labor as it intersected with the publication of her first two books. Focusing on the "collecting stage" as a space of ethnographic-dramatic performance enables a conversation about how, exactly, Hurston's folk plays operate at the levels of dramatic act and dramatic reenactment. It also enables an analysis that extends temporally and spatially: as recurrent phase of assembling and creating sources, and as a space of performance created from a global understanding of the Black American south.

Because Hurston's performance and song collecting practices are in contiguous dramatic rehearsal with mimicry as their defining act, the "collecting stage" is a dimension of Hurston's rehearsal praxis. And this "collecting stage," this mimetic rehearsal praxis, is routed through a longer history of Black folklore and Black drama that Hurston explores in correspondence, in performances, and in "Characteristics of Negro Expression." In order to convey the significance of Hurston's dramatic praxis, in the following section I engage with the above history and with Hurston's place within it, looking often to places in her own writing in which she elaborates what she sees as the relationship between Black folklore, Black drama, mimicry, originality, and rehearsal. Before discussing the 1935 Eatonville field recordings of *The Great Day* that she did with Lomax, I focus on their recordings from that summer in a different part of Florida. Reading Lomax's Index against the recordings themselves, I end by exploring the ways that musicians in Chosen used vocal mimicry in their performances of Black spirituals to unravel limited approaches to African American folklore against Lomax's exertion of interpretive control.

II. "Originality is the modification of ideas": "Characteristics of Negro Expression" & the History of Black Folkloric Drama

While Hurston describes and celebrates an amalgam of Black vernacular life and Black drama across her "collecting stage," it's in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," her contribution to the 850-page collection titled *Negro - An Anthology*, published in 1935 and including entries by, among many others, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and William Carlos Williams, that she articulates her theory of visionary dramatic Black folk life. She opens her essay on the subject of drama.

> The Negro's universal mimicry is not so much a thing in itself as an evidence of something that permeates his entire self. And that thing is drama…everything is acted out…There is an impromptu ceremony always ready for every hour of life. No little moment passes unadorned.

As Cheryl Wall has noted, Hurston privileges drama over other modes of Black expression by placing it as the first of a series of headers (including "Will to Adorn," "Dancing," "Negro Folklore," "Originality," "Imitation," and others). Here, Hurston's is the language of anthropology. By describing an "impromptu ceremony" and "evidence of something that permeates ['the Negro's'] entire self," she presents drama as a Black cultural rite. Rather than essentializing those acts as biological inheritance, Black drama becomes a set of behaviors, enacted ceremonially—or repeatedly, with deep cultural meaning—through the act of mimicry. By celebrating mimicry as a form of creative drama at the center of vernacular Black life, Hurston reacted to a longer history of fraught, primitivist associations between racial mimicry, performances of Blackness, and ideas of the Black "Folk."

The necessity of working through oppressive structures already in place would have been familiar to any Black performer grappling with the minstrel stage, and the particular history of racial mimicry haunts Black folklore and drama through its impact. With *The Great Day*,

Hurston attempted, as she wrote to Carl Van Vechten from her position as dramatic director at Bethune-Cookman University, to "show what can be done with our magnificent imagery instead of fooling around with bastard drama that cant[sic] be white and is too lacking in self respect to be gorgeously Negro." Hurston railed against the minstrel stage, but in addition to borrowing some of its tropes via vaudeville—a genre she loved—her dramatic revision of her field recordings works to undo ideas of essential Blackness[18] in favor of a more reiterative riff on ideas of race and performance. Beginning her own fieldwork as an anthropologist at the tail-end of the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston's ethnographic drama is a product of and a response to the intellectual and dramatic work of her Black predecessors and contemporaries, as well as of the fraught history of minstrelsy on stage.

During and following the Harlem Renaissance—which scholars typically locate roughly from 1920-1927—numerous interpretations of Black "folk" culture aired on Broadway. Most of these interpretations leaned heavily on the minstrel tropes that marked the first performances of (and occasionally by) Black people on the heretofore white stage. The first full-length show to be run, written, and produced solely by Black Americans, for example, was Bob Cole and William "Billy" Johnson's *A Trip to Coontown* (1898). Like Cole's collaboration with Will Marion Cook on *Clorindy*—the first hour-long sketch with an all-black cast to air on the popular stage—*A Trip to Coontown* trafficked in the character of the "zip coon," a minstrel personality first popularized by the white blackface performer George Dixon in 1834. While vaudeville assimilated

[18] Even though Hurston's idea of Blackness is not essentially biological, she does seem to possess an idea of racial autonomy that's allied with essentialism. Across her work, Hurston insists on the fluid, performative, and self-renewing qualities of Blackness, but she also expressed fear of its contamination. Contamination—through dilutive interpretations by white people or through what she saw as white art—seems to require an origin of cultural or racial purity. I argue in this chapter that ideas of dynamic and dramatic Black vernacular performance propel her work, but it is not my intention to elide this paradox.

minstrelsy and captivated its viewership on the popular stage in the US at the turn of the century, it remained an irascible representational problem for Black performers. Black auteurs were compelled to approach the insurmountable predicament of performing theatre that celebrated black creativity to a white audience that segregated blackness and humor from whiteness and respectability. Dramatic authors, composers, and performers like Cook, Cole, and Johnson approached this problem by working within the strictures of white audience expectation to occasionally subvert the dramatic form, dealing in vaudeville tropes that occasionally allowed performers to access themes of Black existence (racism, the back-to-Africa movement, class ascension) and making space for Black performers, composers, writers, and directors on the popular stage.[19]

Black dramatic authors and actors of performance genres that superseded vaudeville after its heyday were similarly compelled to respond to the entrenched anti-Black racism of the contemporary stage. In the nineteen-tens, extravagant, processional "pageants" celebrating American folkways gained popularity. W.E.B. Du Bois helped usher that popularity with *The Star of Ethiopia*—an extravagant six act pageant charting a chronology of Black history—to celebrate Black self-determination on a stage typically controlled by white casts and crews. As Du Bois put it:

> It seemed to me that it might be possible...to get people interested in this development of Negro drama to teach on the one hand the colored people themselves the meaning of their

[19] In the vaudeville era, the popularity of the "cakewalk"—a dance originally performed by enslaved Black people that involved miming and mocking the dances of white elites in those whites' own living rooms—is a particularly stark example of the centrality of mimicry and subversion to Black performance history. Featuring an all-black cast, the dance premiered on Broadway in Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Will Marion Cook's *Clorindy*. In the show, cakewalkers borrowed gestures from the minstrel stage, mawkishly parodying white performances of Black people and white performances of whiteness. Hurston herself wrote a cakewalk into the middle of *Color Struck*, an unperformed play that she scripted in 1925.

> history and their rich, emotional life through a new theatre, and on the other, to reveal the Negro to the white world as a human, feeling thing.[20]

In the nineteen-twenties, composers and directors on "Black Broadway" similarly worked to communicate Black people's humanity in the face of the dehumanizing caricatures of Blackness on stage. Played by a Black cast, Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along* (1921) may have ushered in this era: still located in the "Dixie" of many vaudeville performances, the show pivoted from the mores of the period by telling a sentimental love story that audiences were not meant to laugh at. Its success encouraged that of *Put and Take* (1921), *Miss Lizzie* (1923), *Plantation Revue* (1923), *Oh Joy, Liza* (1923), *Runnin' Wild* (1923), *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924), *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), *Lucky Sambo* (1925), *Blackbirds of 1926 and 1928*, and *Africana* (1927) (Krasner), installing Black musicals as a staple of the Broadway stage moving forward (Woll 60).[21]

While minstrel caricature in vaudeville and after was complexly received by Black viewers, playing to white audiences ran the risk of those exaggerated acts being received as extensions of reality. Steeped in the logic of Jim Crow segregation and primitivistic portrayals of Blackness in both sheet music and turn-of-the-century blackface acts, white viewers in the late nineteenth century craved what they saw as accurate representations of Blackness—from white and from Black performers. Presumably in the service of promoting Black cultural visibility,

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[20] My discussion of *The Star of Ethiopia*, including the quote by W.E.B. Du Bois, is drawn from the text of the play and from Freda Scott Giles's introduction to the text.

[21] Unlike Krasner's, David Levering-Lewis's list of watershed plays depicting Black life during period includes shows written by white as well as black playwrights. His list includes: *The Rider of Dreams* (1917), *Simon the Pyrenean* (1917), *Granny Maumee* (1917), *Eugene Oneagin* (1920), *Emperor Jones* (1920), *Shuffle Along* (1921), Paul Robeson and Mary Jefferson Wilborg's *Taboo* (1922), *Salomé* (produced by Mrs. Sherwood Anderson) (1923); Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924); and the 1933 film adaptation of *The Emperor Jones* that featured Paul Robeson.

Black newspaper weeklies displayed barely any criticism of the "coon" craze (Sotiropoulos 101) on the vaudeville stage. As a mode of subversion and of survival, Black minstrels themselves also promoted this misconception. Karl Hagstrom Miller describes how Bob Cole acknowledged the predicament of maintaining access to publishing houses and to the stage, "when he advertised his sheet music as 'Genuine Negro songs by a genuine Negro Minstrel' in 1896":

> It was a two-pronged sales pitch. Cole found the claim of black authenticity to be an important selling point. He was offering black music straight from the source. Yet he also placed his art squarely within the marketable genre of minstrelsy. His was an attempt to transform blackface from within: black performers made the most realistic minstrels (130).

A Black performer could only register "black authenticity" by mediating it through whiteness: that is, by performing white performances of Blackness. Similarly, blackface minstrelsy authenticated itself by telling stories about performers' and musicians' relationships to Black people and Black life, in order to present itself as ethnographic drama. The danger of validating these white expectations of unmitigated Blackness is located in the source of these expectations: the racial biologist claims, first, that Black people were natural (rather than skilled) musicians and performers and, second, that in order to ascend from natural impulse to learned, "civilized" behavior, Black people needed to adapt to, learn from, and *mimic* whites. In this way, a complicated racial performance could be interpolated by a white audience as evidence of a racial reality that was in fact fabricated by that same audience. That evidence could then be instrumentalized to bolster claims that inhered to that racial biologist idea of reality; claims that validated the ongoing oppression of Black people both on- and offstage.

The necessity for Black minstrel performers to appeal to white audiences by mimicking white ideas of Blackness—and the effect that these performances had on Black "folk" performances—repelled Hurston. In 1934, she wrote to Eslanda Robeson describing her plan

to resuscitate Black drama, which was starved for representations sourced from Black "folk" culture: "I have staedily[sic] maintained that the real us was infinitely superior to the synthetic minstrel version, and once they have had a glimpse, the imitation is rapidly losing ground."[22] Defining minstrelsy as a white imitation that plays and consumes itself in opposition to "the real us," Hurston counterposes imitation to a definition of the "real" that contains ideas of origin (Black people should decide what Blackness is) and originality (that decision is itself a performance, contra-to the "minstrel version"). Here, Hurston flouts contemporaneous associations between imitation and originality by attributing originality to Black, not white, performers. In "Characteristics of Negro Expression," she goes a step further; reclaiming mimicry as a subversive act of camouflage deployed by colonial subjects and black dramatists negotiating the minstrel stage. "It has been said so often that the Negro is lacking in originality that it has almost become a gospel," wrote Hurston in 1935. "Outward signs"—these minstrel performances, perhaps also a biased and cursory glance at Black life—"seem to bear this out. But if one looks closely its falsity is immediately evident" ("Originality," *Characteristics*).

A review of the premiere of *The Great Day* in the Black-run *New York Amsterdam News* quotes Hurston describing "that her purpose for the presentation" of the performance "was to show Negro folklore in its most *original* form" (emphasis mine). Composites of the lived experience of "Negro folklore" and the dramatic craft of its "presentation" would coalesce into what she famously described in a letter to Langston Hughes as "the real Negro art theater"—a preoccupation that Barbara Speisman argues is part of a greater body of evidence that "Hurston

[22] Hurston's critique of blackface minstrelsy in "Characteristics of Negro Expression" is similar, but encompasses the new dimension of focusing on *imitation*: a skill that she attributes, elsewhere in the essay, to Black performers instead. She writes: "Every one seems to think that the Negro is easily imitate when nothing is further from the truth" ("The Jook").

and Hughes believed that dramatic presentation was the best form through which to present African-American folklife, songs, and tales" (34). On Hurston's "collecting stage," Black drama is inextricable from Black life. A play on the relationship between origin and originality, Hurston's vision of "realness" demonstrates her flexible, but never pliant, commitment to the relationship between what she saw as Black "folk" life and Black drama.

Navigating the place of Black performers on a stage marked by increasing degrees of minstrel imitation, Hurston would embrace the popular association between black people and mimicry by reframing it. Developing a theory of originality under the heading of "Imitation" in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston asserted that a Black person's renown as a mimic:

> …in no way damages his standing as an original. Mimicry is an art in itself. If it is not, then all art must fall by the same blow that strikes it down. When sculpture, writing, acting, dancing, literature neither reflect nor suggest anything in nature or human experience we turn away with a dull wonder in our hearts at why the thing was done ("Imitation," *Characteristics*).

By making mimicry a defining quality of being "original," Hurston redefines ideas of origin and of originality through the characters of Black folk. Against reformist anthropology—though not completely outside of paradigms of racial essentialism—and in opposition to the idea that Black art emerges effortlessly from its creators, Hurston sees Black folk as "original" because of their capacity to mimic creatively. She claims that at its best, the arts of "sculpture, writing, acting, dancing, and literature" can hope to mimic "nature" and "human experience." Originality—or artistic creativity—and origin, or "nature" and "human experience," are of a piece. Here, in the "Imitation" section of "Characteristics of Negro Expression," is Hurston's conservation project. As an anthropologist of African American and Afro-Caribbean people, Hurston's interest is in their vernacular art, which brings the audience and the performers closer to "human experience"

through performance.

"Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston's paradigmatic interpretation of originality and imitation published the same year that she staged two variations of *The Great Day* and two folk concerts based on these variations, marries her fieldwork to her work on the stage just as it locates her as *a part of* and *apart from* the movement of racial uplift characteristic of the Harlem Renaissance. A movement that flourished in the Harlem Renaissance, the "New Negro" uplift project can be traced to earlier Black responses to emancipation and the racist restrictions of Jim Crow Law. A figure in transition and a newly emancipated subject, the "New Negro" is an image, ideology, and identity, forged in an attempt to provide an antidote to dehumanizing representations with progressive images of Black prosperity. Marked by class as well as by race, this movement was aimed at what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "talented tenth": a monied progressive class of Black Americans, many of whom resided in Harlem, who believed in a gradualist approach to civil rights. In accordance with Du Bois' Hegelian, teleological view of Blackness, the "talented tenth" tended to focus on revising the existing orders by integrating into them. Manifest in classical arrangements of Black spirituals, lyric poetry about black life, and critical writing about Black history and culture, this (typically older) generation, while typically loathe to critique Black art for a white audience,[23] did tend to express distaste not only at minstrel tropes, but also at Black art that did not live up to what he saw as its politically-motivated propagandistic function. Both *The Souls of Black Folk* and the lavish production of the

[23] In *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, David Levering-Lewis describes how prominent intellectuals in the Harlem Renaissance were similarly careful about critiquing white interpretations of Black art. He writes: "Among themselves, Harlem's intellectuals had serious doubts about this new wave of white discovery" of Black art—and of adaptations of the themes and subjects of that art by white people—but, careful to preserve the opportunity to elevate Black artists and Black history, "pretended they were enthusiastic about the new dramatic and literary themes" (92).

"Star of Ethiopia" pageant hold Du Bois's commitment to Black cultural autonomy at their surfaces.

Of a younger generation of the New Negro creative class, Hurston would famously and consistently critique what she saw as Black elitism, in which she found the threat of black culture being diluted to tepid whiteness. Still, even the subjects of her critique bore some similarity to her conservation practice. In Hurston's work, mimicry becomes the vehicle for change through repetition, a way to *conserve* Black cultural creation without annihilating it. A subject of that critique themselves, the Fisk Jubilee Singers actually undertook a similar project. Locating the Singers as an origin site for the dilution of Black folk song, she writes in "Characteristics of Negro Folklore": "In spite of the goings up and down on the earth, from the original Fisk Jubilee Singers down to the present, there has been no genuine presentation of Negro songs to white audiences" ("Jook"), because each presentation is "so full of musicians' tricks." Hurston was "of the opinion that this trick style of delivery was originated by the Fisk Singers; Tuskegee and Hampton followed suit and have helped spread this misconception of Negro Spirituals" ("Jook," *Characteristics*). In fact, by rearranging Black spirituals into new harmonic compositions, each Black university chorus did the work of the folklorist, composer, and performer—work that mixes practice and product in a mode reminiscent of Hurston's collecting stage.

Each chorus shared Hurston's commitment to what W.E.B. Du Bois famously called "the souls of black folk." Developed in large part from his German mentor Johann Gottfried Herder, Du Bois believed the nation's "soul" to be rooted in the folk songs, tales, and literature of its ordinary Black people. Like Hurston, W.E.B. Du Bois heard in "the Negro folk-song"—as he described in "The Sorrow Songs" chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*—"the sole American

Music…the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas" (155). Unlike Hurston, Du Bois also believed the Fisk Jubilee Singers had created "the true Negro folk-song" against to the "caricature" of white "imitators" (156). Since Du Bois's essay was published in 1903, a debate had been raging over the authenticity of the Fisk Jubilee Singers' approach to spirituals. Writing in the mid-1930s, Hurston constructed her opposition to the group based on her assumption that the performers were elite (though actually most Singers grew up in the churches of the southern backwoods): as she described in a submission to the WPA's Florida Folklore project, "the mode and the mood of the concert artists who do Negro spirituals is absolutely foreign to the Negro Churches" (103). Conversely, in order to conjure that experience in teaching her sixteen Bahaman dancers the Fire Dance that concluded *The Great Day*, Hurston "took pains" to learn the dances during her visit to Nassau in the Bahamas, even recording three reels of film footage that she used to refresh her memory while she choreographed the show. And in the extant recordings of the 1938 National Folk Festival, Hurston and her choir sing in unison, harmonies ebbing and flowing unevenly against the grain of the choral arrangement. Hurston's criteria for Black folk musical performance seem to include physical proximity to and intimacy with the subjects of that art: both made possible through the anthropological methodology of "participant observation" that Hurston used to rehearse and to gather material for *The Great Day*. It's these two claims—physical proximity and intimacy—that she levels against a group of Black composers and intellectuals who seem to share some of her frustrations.

Hurston's opinions about Black theater and what she called in "Characteristics of Negro Expression" the "all-permeating drama" of Black life bore notable similarity to a portion of the "Drama" section of Alain Locke's bible of the movement, the *New Negro* anthology. Deploying the language of versatility and creative futurity in the "Negro Folklore" section of

"Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston wrote: "Negro folklore is not a thing of the past. It is still in the making. Its great variety shows the adaptability of the black man: nothing is too old or too new, domestic or foreign, high or low, for his use." Here, Hurston insists that the greater public take seriously the creativity and audacity of Black folklore globally and in the present. In the *New Negro* anthology, influential dramatist and prominent proponent of the National Negro Theatre movement Thomas Montgomery Gregory echoed Hurston's sentiment:

> It is seen that the popular musical comedies with their unfortunate minstrel inheritance have been responsible for a fateful misrepresentation of Negro life. However, the efforts toward the development of a sincere and artistic drama have not been altogether in vain….As the spirituals have risen from the folk-life of the race, so too will there develop out of the same treasure-trove a worthy contribution to a native American drama….However disagreeable the fact may be in some quarters, the only avenue of genuine achievement in American drama for the Negro lies in the development of the rich veins of folk-tradition of the past and in the portrayal of the authentic life of the Negro masses of to-day (159).

Reminiscent of Hurston's epistolary and published texts, Gregory's essay emphasizes the inextricability of ideas of Black theater and Black self-making from ideas of Black "folk-life." That particular turn of phrase is compelling, insofar as it pivots from what would have been the contemporary language of "folk-lore" to insist on the relationship between the spirituals and the lived experience of their performers. At its best, Black drama has the potential to contribute to "a native American drama" that portrays "folk-life" rooted in the past and re-created in the present, as portrayed in "the development of the rich veins of folk-tradition of the past and in the portrayal of the authentic life of the Negro masses of to-day."

Hurston's idea that Black folk-life, to borrow Gregory's phrase, is created continually through the ongoing process of dramatic mimicry, is complicated not just by the imbrication of mimicry in a longer history of blackface minstrelsy, but also because of its place within the intertwining histories of slavery and colonialism. As Saidiya Hartman has described, the

emphasis in the Western intellectual tradition on "individual responsibility, reliance, and self-making" (152) was leveraged in the nineteenth century (and onwards) to justify slavery. Within this framework, Black men were expected to be submissive *and* to assimilate to the mores of white respectability. Submission and assimilation are two forms of social performance, but unlike submission, the requirements of assimilation were for Black people to *mimic* whites. Because the demands of submission and self-making are often contradictory, that mimicry symbolically disqualified Black men their citizenship status while also being posed as a requirement for survival. A progenitor of Hartman's theory, Bhabha describes what he calls "colonial mimicry,"[24] the "stressed necessity of everyday life" under colonial rule, as:

> …the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.

It is in representing this difference, produced through performance, that "mimicry emerges" as "itself a process of disavowal." To copy with a difference is to act with creative agency even as that act reinforces and appeases the ideology that requires it. If the system of colonialism requires that difference be created in a performance that poses as an imitation, then that system requires for its upkeep the same act that undercuts its foundation. A colonial logic which is at its core ideological, this illogic is reinforced into existence by extensive and pervading repetition

[24] Bhabha's theory of "colonial mimicry" is foundational to the thinking of scholars who work to understand the ways that systems of power are reproduced (and whose work has influenced my thinking in this chapter). Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that subjects repeat, reiterate, cite, and mime gestures and phrases of power into being and it is from these processes that gender is both created and undone. In *Scenes of Subjection,* Saidiya Hartman uses Bhabha's "mimic man" as foundation from which to describe the ways that enslaved people were compelled under situations of extreme duress to perform whiteness. Extending Hartman's point in his book *In the Break,* Fred Moten notes that "modes of radical performativity or subversive impersonation—are always already embedded in the structure they would escape" (2).

and—if only in certain moments—might be undone by repetition as well.

The relationship of imitation to mimicry and self-making is latent in the field recordings that Zora Neale Hurston, Alan Lomax, and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle made in Chosen, Florida. Recorded in the same summer, though not the same site, as Hurston's rehearsal of *The Great Day*, these performances contextualize Hurston's "collecting stage" and specify the power and assumptions that Lomax comported to these recording sessions. As I'll describe, the Chosen (and Belle Glade) sessions were probably spearheaded by Hurston. However, reading Lomax's descriptions of the sessions in his Index reveals both the ways that his understanding of Black "folk" differs from Hurston's and, importantly, the ways that Lomax's and Hurston's recording subjects also used dramatic mimicry to assert their agency from within the restrictive medium of the field recording.

In his typewritten key to the recordings the performance of three spirituals "interpolate[s]" "American Negro Preaching" or, interchangeably, "the old slave dialect." On the tape recordings themselves, these recordings are not consecutive. But in the Index, Lomax typed:

> Swing Low Sweet Chariot, spiritual, sung by Soley with interpolated remarks in an imitation of the old slave dialect
>
> I Am Some Mother's Child, spiritual, mixed chorus lead[sic] by Rabbit, with his interpolated take-off on American Negro preaching
>
> Spiritual, mixed chorus led by Rabbit with interpolated comments in imitation of American Negro preaching (377A.2, 385A, 405A) [IMG 5].

Lomax's notes on these sessions contain a few important errors. "I Am Some Mother's Child" is misattributed to the A-side of disc 385, which actually holds the blues standard "Motherless Children" and was recorded in Belle Glade, not in Chosen. The artist is also misattributed: Rabbit lives in Chosen, but it's Booker T. Sapps, Roger Matthews, and Willy Flowers, who live

in Belle Glade and who perform this "Motherless Children."[25] The title "I Am Some Mother's Child" repeats once in the Index after the misattribution: on side A of tape 376, recorded in Chosen, the Index attributes this second version of "I Am Some Mother's Child" to "Soley, Rabbit, and group" [IMG 5]. The song that Lomax simply named "Spiritual," "led by Rabbit" with his "interpolated comments in imitation of American Negro preaching," is not a misattribution, but is a clumsy misnomer: it's actually the final minute and a half of the actual version of "I Am Some Mother's Child" on 376A. Unlike the description for the misattributed "I Am Some Mother's Child," the actual version of "I Am Some Mother's Child" is *not* listed as an "interpolation": it reads, simply, "I Am Some Mother's Child, spiritual, Soley, Rabbit and group." As it turns out, "Spiritual" is a recording of the final minute and a half of the actual version of "I Am Some Mother's Child" on 376A. That means that *the "uninterpolated" version of the song*—"I Am Some Mother's Child"—*is the same as the "interpolated" version,* "Spiritual." In his Index, Lomax mistakenly distinguishes the same song from itself using the language of "interpolation."

Lomax's error is significant: by assuming that Soley and Rabbit, two Caribbean-American Black men whose other recordings from these sessions include mostly Afro-Caribbean jumping dances and launching songs, "interpolated…[their idea of] American Negro Preaching" by using "the old slave dialect," Lomax assumed, first, that both musicians inhabited the identity of the "American Negro Preacher" for the duration of their performance of the

[25] Booker T. Sapps, Roger Matthews, and Willy Flowers all perform on B-side of the same reel-to-reel tape on which "Motherless Children" (written as "I Am Some Mother's Child" in Lomax's Index) was recorded. It was by doing a listening comparison of the A to the B side, and listening repeatedly to other songs by the above artists and by "Rabbit," that I decided who the group performing here actually were. It's also logical that Lomax would've used the same tape to record the same group in one session for the sake of convenience (though in general there are also reasons for a recorder to record different sets on the same tape).

spirituals; and second, that that identity was of a fundamentally different nature than their own. In this way, anathema to Hurston's understanding of Black music on the "collecting stage," Lomax's notes draw a line between African American and Afro-Caribbean personhood; a line that he also inadvertently troubled by misattributing an idea of absolute difference to what was actually the same song. In the form of parody—exaggerated mimicry, imitation with a difference—Soley and Rabbit deconstruct that line. Singing in lilting vaudevillian staccato, Soley winkingly tried on the subjectivity of the figure of the preacher in a time when ideas of Blackness were hewn closely to the black church, garbing himself in a version of identity that his recorder sought out. In a booming tenor that underwrites the recording session, Soley's collaborator Rabbit does the same.

Soley's pantomime and Lomax's categorical mistakes stage a complicated and shifting performance of selfhood that destabilizes Lomax's assumption of what Joseph Roach calls the "convenient but dangerous fiction" of "a fixed and unified culture" (*Cities of the Dead* 5). Where John and Alan Lomax both attributed ideas of cultural purity to regional folk figures (Filene 58)—and as this example shows, to regional folk tropes—Rabbit and Soley staged a performance that called into question the categorical approach to Black music by parodying the idea of Black American folk performance. Their cultural performance, to paraphrase Kelly Wagers, both consolidates and disrupts what appears to be a coherent transmission between actors performing the same cultural act (206). Unlike Alan Lomax—who would actually go on to trace what he saw as the relationship between different cultures globally through his "cantometrics," "choreometrics," and "parlametrics" projects[26]—Soley mimicked his idea of a

[26] It's a little outside of the scope of this chapter to engage deeply with Alan Lomax's ideas about folk music, but I want to note that these three projects are essentializing in a different way

Black preacher in his audibly Caribbean accent in a rejection of categorical analysis both across and within national borders.

An additional intentional linguistic slippage in Lomax's Index lends accidental insight to Hurston's project, particularly as it speaks to (and within) these preaching parodies. In this part of the Index, the language of "imitation" and "interpolation" is interchangeable: "imitation of American Negro preaching" under the header of "Spiritual," "interpolated take-off on American Negro preaching" in the version of "I Am Some Mother's Child" that's actually a recording of "Motherless Children," and "interpolated remarks in an imitation of the old slave dialect" for "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." By collapsing their slightly different definitions, Lomax communicates that by imitating, the imitator temporarily inhabits an identity that is not obviously, or exactly, their own. That is to say that the requirement of imitation is that the object of the performance must in some way be perceived as differentiable from the subject performing it. In this way, in the face of Lomax's misattribution of titles and performers and of his misguided assessment of the recordings through the language of "interpolation," his allying imitation to interpolation in the Chosen recordings Index actually highlights the way that Soley and Rabbit subvert the recorder's attempt to restrict them.

In rehearsals of *The Great Day* across stages in New York and, particularly, in Florida, Hurston both defies and works within contemporary folkloric expectations. Where Soley, Rabbit, and their "group" imitated an idea of Black "folk" that was particularly enticing to folklorists,

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than are the mistakes he makes in this Index about "interpolated" preaching. In order to draw comparisons between cultures in this project, which he intended to produce as a humanist project illustrating cultural kinship, Lomax consulted a group of experts to fabricate a set of categories of physical movements, linguistic characteristics, and musical gestures. In this way, the foundation of the Jukebox comes not from some essential set of characteristics, but from the idea that those characteristics are even possible, and discernible from a set of examples from Lomax's own collection and of Lomax's own choosing.

Hurston taught the performances of Black "folk" that she'd gathered in autoethnographic field research from her hometown to a group of Black "folk" in that same town—then played along with them, and took those performances to the stage. The following elaborates Hurston's loose approach to the type of stage she was creating with these hybrid performances of *The Great Day*, focusing on Florida as a privileged site in Hurston's work for dramatic folkloric experimentation.

III. "A series of concerts of untampered-with Negro folk material": Reconstructing *The Great Day*

While no known manuscripts remain, Hurston's and her viewers' fluid approaches to *The Great Day*, *Singing Steel*, *From Sun to Sun*, and *All de Live Long Day* are latent in extant reviews, correspondence, and playbills. These documents reveal a "collecting stage" that is both geographically extensive—displaying ideas of global southern vernacular Blackness—and temporally reiterative. In her letters in particular, rehearsals come to constitute a kind of dramatic mimicry in which Hurston can visibly, actively participate. Hurston's disregard for certain kinds of fixed products can, and has, created difficulties for contemporary archivists. Those who approach her material with assumptions about predetermined distinctions between author, performer, and audience; dramatic script or musical score and source material; and genre of performance will be unable to access the ways that Hurston's work is focalized across rather than distinct within subjects, audiences, and spaces. Evidence of a fluid understanding of the relationship across folklore, music, drama, and performance in that time period and in Hurston's approach to her work, *The Great Day* emerges as composite and composition in its genesis reception as a multi-genre piece.

In a letter to "godmother" Charlotte Mason in 1933, Hurston responded to an invitation to perform *Mule Bone* by short-handing her ideas about her rehearsal practice: "I want to try it out

here in our laboratory [at Rollins College in Florida] and work out mistakes. Then New York" (*Collected Letters*, January 6). While anything that Hurston wrote to her benefactress, who preserved full property rights over all of Hurston's writing until 1935, should be taken in context, the idea of rehearsal as a space in which to "work out mistakes" is compelling and recurrent.[27] It is even possible that Hurston repurposed the idea to rehearse for her New York show on a Florida stage from Broadway, where plays hold tryouts in secondary venues to work out the kinks before their performance in the Theater District.[28] That she continued to stage the play around Eau Galle, Florida as late as 1952 (as five "folk concerts")—almost exactly two decades after first staging the show as a play in New York—seems to point to the conclusion that even the New York performances were rehearsal spaces for the show's return to the site of its inspiration. Additionally, as the extant photo of Hurston's rehearsal reminds us [IMG 1], that practice was active—enough so that when illness forced her to sit during a rehearsal of *From Sun to Sun* she felt compelled to write to Mason in frustration: "the only real discomfort is that I am ill. I conducted rehearsal last night on an automobile cushion" (*Collected Letters*, January 6). Hurston's active and persistent role in the construction of "the folk" across her work, then, emerges from new consideration of her re-stagings as rehearsals.

Hurston seems to imagine Florida as a space of experiment and practice, versus—as she described it to Mason—the "complete success" that was necessary "to win in New York" (*Complete Letters* 276-277). It was in Florida that Hurston collected the majority of the African American and Afro-Caribbean material that would be foundational to her entire body of work, in

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[27] For example, a month later, in a letter to Edwin Osgood Grover dated February 1, 1933, Hurston wrote to express interest in taking "my group [of players for *From Sun to Sun*] to a few places in the state [of Florida] to further polish them before New York," suggesting "that that the Uni. of Miami might have us" for a performance (*Collected Letters* 278).

[28] I am grateful to Professor Marlon ross for sharing this information.

Florida that she was raised, and to Florida that she would return for the last eleven years of her life. Hurston recruited many of her dancers during her ethnographic recording sessions in Florida and the Bahamas. Florida, too, is the proving ground where she was able to perform her show most extensively as a play and a series of concerts. Where Mason insisted to Alain Locke, with whom she corresponded extensively about *The Great Day*, that the "two concerts…Must have No[sic] repeating no encores" (Kraut 100), Hurston located her repetitions and encores in the itinerant performances across the state of Florida that she would go on to stage at least as late as 1952.[29] Anthea Kraut sources Mason's insistence on isolated performances in her "profound distrust of the performance process" or at very least the "proprietary logic that undergirded and drove her almost paranoid concern for the material in Hurston's concert" (110). It was necessary for Hurston to interpolate, to some degree, the logic of her patron, but in her process of reiterative self-fashioning she diverged starkly from Mason's wishes. Insofar as fashioning an identity—like establishing a tradition or instituting an ideology—is a practice rather than a singular event, Stephen Mullaney reminds us that "representation is always a form of repetition" (48), taking shape through multiple reiterations of a form rather than magically appearing only to quickly disappear. Rehearsal, further, need not always be distinguished from a play or concert's final performance; with opportunities to stage her show restricted by funding and the demands of her work as a folklorist and novelist, Hurston's "practice" shows become opportunities to mimic creatively and undo the binary between practice and product.

[29] Her employment of Caribbean themes and performers did not go unnoticed by the black dramatic stage. Hurston later wrote that she "felt the influence of [my] concert running through what has been done since"—namely, a catalogue of Caribbean performance styles in which Anthea Kraut includes Orson Welles's *Macbeth* in 1936, Katherine Dunham's dance concerts of the 1940s and 1950s, and Sam Manning's 1947 calypso-style *Caribbean Carnival*.

While playbills located the origin of Hurston's fieldwork in the farthest reaches of a white American imagination of Afro-America—what playbills for *The Great Day* and *From Sun to Sun* both delineate as "the far south"—both songs and dancers actually hailed from Florida and from the Bahamas. Rather than capitulate to the playbill's idea of African "American" folklore, which relegates Black identity to an American south whose parameters are demarcated by national and colonial identities,[30] Hurston's idea of black folklore is decidedly transnational.

By reading *Mules and Men* next to *Tell My Horse,* Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo has described how Hurston used the language of blood and kinship to conceptualize "an ideological and racial connectedness" between Black Americans and Haitians during her fieldwork in Haiti (68). She concludes, however, that Hurston ultimately evaluates Haitian culture through an American exceptionalist framework that "inspires a hierarchical distance" from her subjects (73), even as an enthusiastic participant observer. To say that Hurston mimics her ethnographic subjects, instructs them to mimic her, pantomimes and satirizes the roles of ethnographer and Black ethnographic subject, and mimes her own performances across different kinds of stages, is not to say that the acts of reiteration and collaboration are inherently horizontal. Nor were they overwhelmingly extractive. Applying her idea that "every phase of Negro life is highly dramatised[sic]" (*Characteristics,* "Drama")—that Blackness was created and articulated and reproduced through dramatic mimicry by Black people—to her fieldwork and to her plays in the same spaces and at the same time, Hurston seems to favor exchange over equality. Leaving space for her role at dramatic center, Hurston's rehearsals and performances of *The Great Day* could

[30] For more on the ways that racist associations between black "folk" and abstract, nationalist ideas of the American south have been constructed during the twentieth century, see Grace Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014: 163-203.

not retain any semblance of sole authorship. And that authorship, that idea of Blackness, is tied to questions of reiterative performance within in a global idea of vernacular Blackness.

While it's difficult to gauge the breadth of Hurston's dramatic performances, approaching her oeuvre through the lens of the reiterative "collecting stage" reveals a breadth of documents and performances whose folk-songs and dances converge, to varying degrees, in *The Great Day*. Focusing on Hurston's choreography, Anthea Kraut includes in her timeline of Hurston's performances—which has been foundational to the creation of my own timeline [IMG 2]—nine external performances by some or all of Hurston's troupe of "Bahaman dancers." At least three of those performances include *The Great Day*'s show-stopping Fire Dance. Many of the performances on that timeline, including the five folk concerts that Hurston presented around Eau Galle, Florida in 1952, have no remaining documentation to compare to the extant playbills. The choral performance that Hurston conducted at the 1938 National Folk Festival, however, incorporated four of those playbills' seven songs [IMG 4]. Meanwhile, texts that share neither a core structure nor a specific set of recordings with the show still bear relation to it. As Jean Lee Cole and Charles Mitchell have noted, Hurston's 1944 play *Polk County* is comparable to her plays *De Turkey and De Law* (1930), *Mule-Bone* (1931), and *Spunk* (1935), and to her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) (269). *Polk County* is set in a sawmill camp; a location that constituted one source from which Hurston drew for the songs she used in *The Great Day* (*From Sun to Sun* playbill, "Notes on the Program"). Hurston's repetitive revisions were part of her overarching praxis. For the sake of space, however, I limit my discussion to performances whose structural and material resemblances to *The Great Day* are indisputable, operating with the understanding that if conserving and revivifying Black "folk" through Black drama was Hurston's life's project, then her entire body of work will to some degree resonate

with that venture.

Hurston's fluid approach to subjects and to spaces is at the surface of her shifting characterizations of the play. Describing *The Great Day* and *From Sun to Sun*, Hurston's language often slips seamlessly between the "theater" and "concert" stages; even in reference to the same material and performances. Corresponding with Edwin Osgood Grover, Professor and Chair of Books and active community member at Rollins College, she proposed "a series of concerts of untampered-with Negro folk material":

> I gave two of these this past winter in New York and they met with instant success….Now the material used in these concerts was gathered for the most part in Orange county. All of it came from Florida and so I thought that it would be fine to give a series, or one at least in the native habitat of the songs and tales. And I wondered if Rollins College would be interested thru its Dept. of Anthro., its Music dept., and since I am setting down the tales in a book, if the Chair of Books would not like to assist in putting the world right on Negro expression" (*Letters* 259).

The "concerts" that Hurston staged in New York in the winter of 1932 on January 10 and March 29 were both, respectively, *The Great Day* and *From Sun to Sun*. That Hurston proposed the series as a collaboration between Rollins' Music and Anthropology departments to the Chair of Books, who himself resided in the Literature department, speaks to composite quality of her show. *The Great Day* played at the John Golden Theatre, a stage located off Broadway at 45th St, while *From Sun to Sun* was performed at the New School for Social Research. Then a 14-year-old progressive institution still associated with Hurston's academic mentor Franz Boas, The New School might have aired many types of performance; the John Golden Theatre was an example of "Black Broadway," and would have erred on the side of theatrical song revues and musicals. In these scenarios—titled performances with roughly the same set lists[31]—Hurston's vision of folk concert and theatrical song revue blend together. Writing Grover a week later,

[31] See [IMG 4] for details.

Hurston further perpetuated this indistinction, proclaiming that "the real Negro *theatre* is yet to be born," that Eatonville might be the place for it to "first see the light of day," and finally that "there is not enough room at Hungerford for a good *concert* (emphasis mine). To Charlotte Mason in January of 1933, Hurston described the show at Rollins as "concert programs" to be performed in "a small theatre" that acted as "a drama laboratory." Her vision for the future of the program, she continued, was one of "Creative Negro art as it never has been done," with "special stress on music and drama, but painting, carving, sculpture—all forms of art to be encouraged." Throughout this and the following year, Hurston referred to "my concert" (to Ruth Benedict, 1933), "our plays" and "the theatre" for which they were destined (to Alain Locke, 1933) and, in a letter to James Weldon Johnson concerning her visit to Fisk University in 1934, made a lucid connection between both media: "Everyone seemed glad that I had come along at the time with my interest in *Negro folk-lore concerts*. So a great deal was said about Fisk doing something about *Negro drama*" (emphasis mine). From her correspondence alone, it's clear that Hurston considered Black drama and Black folk music to be contiguous and concomitant projects. Hurston's descriptions of her project also surface a connection, visible in the following chapters, an ideological, intuitive connection during this era between theater and music under the banner of folklore.

The overwhelmingly positive announcements and reviews of the two 1932 New York performances display a similar fluidity. When the *New York Times* first ran an announcement four days in advance of the performance, the show was "a collection of Negro folklore from the Southern states and the West Indies." The language of "collection" also characterized at least four other ads. Another announcement notes Hurston's "more than three years in the South collecting material," evocatively presenting the show as an assemblage of "an authentic cycle of

songs, dances, tales and rituals" (Jan 7, 1932). One night-of announcement appeared under "concerts," introduced the songs as "Negro folklore compiled by Zora Hurston" and transcribed a set-list of musical genres whose breadth signifies an entire ethnographic collection (or, in the words of the stage, a variety show): "Jook Songs," "blues" and "ballads of the South;" "conjure ritual;" "crow dance," "sermon by Itinerant preacher, with spirituals," and "work songs, Negro tales, dances and games" (January 10, 1932). Another called it an "episodic" "program" that included a "choral and dramatic ensemble" (January 11, 1932). By emphasizing the quality of assemblage and naming each genre of folk performance, these announcements present Hurston's show as a direct translation of fieldwork to performance. The assumption that this translation is possible speaks both to Hurston's "collecting stage" as her particular project and to the conditions of her present which would have made that project legible to her audience. What seems like an agreement actually reveals Hurston's innovation. At a time when racial biologism encouraged non-Black people to ignore Black peoples' skills in performance—claiming that skill set to be something natural and inherent to Blackness—Hurston refigured that paradigm, arguing in her writing and performances across her "collecting stage" that racial biology was in fact the precondition for particular performance skills, not simply the explanation of it.

The most pliant description of the show comes from the *New Amsterdam News*, which describes *The Great Day* as "a stage arrangement of part of a cycle of Negro folksong, dance and pantomime, compiled by Zora Hurston during her four years of travel [1927-31] in the far South...performed by a mixed choral and dramatic cast, with scenic background." As opposed to the word "play," "a stage arrangement" signifies a sort of composite of "choral" and "dramatic" elements. These elements of "Negro folksong, dance and pantomime" meet most explicitly in the "scenic background" of the "far South," the geographical edge of the newspaper's

imagination of the nation, incorporating Florida into the Caribbean. Hurston's show, in the parlance of this paper, is a hodgepodge representation of a Black, global, southern way of being that draws elements from the dramatic and folkloric stages and cleanly encapsulates the choral, dramatic, and ethnographic genres that comprise *The Great Day*. Not only does the play operate across these three disciplinary sites, but it is on each site that Hurston will differently rehearse and perform the same show. Repurposing materials across a variety of media rather than assigning to performance a typology that would limit its capacity to create meaning is a mode of conservation. It puts the possibility of Hurston's self-fashioning through multiple revisions and rehearsals across her "collecting stage" on full display.

IV. "Under the direction of Zora Hurston": The 1935 Florida Field Recordings

A nearly full performance of *The Great Day* survives in an ethnographic field recording of a rehearsal coordinated and performed by Hurston. In 1935, twenty-one year-old Alan Lomax invited Zora Neale Hurston and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle to collaborate on a field recording trip through Florida, with the eventual goal of preserving the audio in the Archive of American Folksong at the Library of Congress. Beginning in Georgia and traveling through Florida with stops in Eatonville, Belle Glade, and Chosen, Hurston eventually split from Lomax and Barnicle to make her way to Haiti while the other two left, under Hurston's influence, for the Bahamas. In early August of 1935, young Lomax wrote to Oliver Strunk, the head of the Music Department of the Library of Congress (at the time, Lomax's father was the curator of the Archive of American Folk Song), to elaborate on Hurston's role as:

> So to speak, our guide and interpreter in Georgia and Florida, who had led us into fields we might never have found alone, who had generously helped us to record songs + singers she had discovered herself…we felt that up until the time she left us, she had

> been almost entirely responsible for the great success of our trip and for our going into the Bahamas.

According to Lomax, Hurston was invited on her authority as a folklorist and, as we can hear through her audible presence, was instrumental to these recordings. While much can be said about the audio over which Hurston does not appear to exert particular influence, the moments for which "she had been almost entirely responsible" are the most evocative. In a mode that Roshanak Kheshti aptly calls Hurston's "phonographic refusal" (131), it's in these moments that Hurston repurposed the recording machine as another stage on which to rehearse her inventive and participatory celebrations of Black musical improvisation in concert with the other singers.

With regard to Hurston's particular agency as a double-agent—both accredited academic folklorist and progenitor of Black southern folklore—Alan Lomax's adumbration of the recording expedition to Strunk is telling enough to be quoted at length.

> Miss Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, professor of the ballad at New York University, Miss Zora Hurston, Columbia anthropologist and probably [sic] the best informed person today on Western Negro folk-lore, and myself met in Brunswick Ga..[sic] on June the fifteenth and began our search for folk-songs there. Through Miss Hurston's influence we were soon living .[sic] in an isolated community on St. Simon's island, on such friendly terms with the Negroes as I had never experienced before….
>
> Our next stop was in Eatonville, Florida, where Miss Hurston was born and brought up. Miss Hurston introduced us there to the finest Negro guitarist I have heard so far, better even than Lead Belly although of a slightly different breed. His records along with a more unusual group of spirituals, and work songs, and children games were made up and we moved on to Belle Glade on Lake Okeechobee in the Everglades (August 3, 1935).

Alan Lomax's document once again reminds his reader of the indispensability of "Hurston's influence" to the recording sessions by locating that influence in the rapport that she cultivated with their recording subjects. This would provide the logic for holding their second recording session in Hurston's hometown (but not birthplace, as Lomax thought; Hurston was known to fib it, and was actually born in Notasulga, Alabama). Titling their trip the "Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle

Expedition" and not the "Lomax-Barnicle-Hurston" trip in his index[32] to these recordings further evidences Hurston's cardinal role in the Florida sessions, and prepares the listener for Hurston's audible presence as recorder and recording subject across specific sessions.

Hurston's presence is especially prominent in *The Great Day* recordings that she supervised in her hometown of Eatonville, Florida. The fact of existence of these recordings can be sourced in the contemporary understanding that folk material could be translated without loss to the dramatic stage—leaving the possibility of (though not the precedent for) it being translated, cleanly, back to the space of its source material—as well as from hers and Lomax's cordial relationship with each other,[33] and from her Hurston's representational appeals to him. In his index, Lomax attributes the first song of the Eatonville Recordings, "Let the Deal Go Down," to A.B. Hicks, who was "trained and taught this song by Zora Hurston for her folk-opera A Day

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[32] Alan Lomax, *Song Index to the Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle expedition collection*, [October?] 1935, AFC 1935/001, Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle Expedition Collection, Library of Congress.

[33] While Hurston seems eventually to have abandoned the 1935 "expedition" out of distaste for Professor Barnicle, Hurston did express affinity for Lomax, writing him in June of the following year: You are an enthusiastic youngster with lots of charm and future. I am for you 100%. Feel close enough to you to cuss you out if I feel that way, but still have a world of enthusiasm for you and faith in your capabilities. Young as hell, but you'll get over that (June 7, 1936). Regardless of whether or not the letter communicates her feelings about Lomax, it does show the way that Hurston deliberately cultivated an amicable relationship with him. By contrast, that September Hurston wrote Alan Lomax's father, John, to accuse her other recording companion Mary Elizabeth Barnicle of a slew of vices. In the letter, she expresses distaste at Barnicle's left-wing politics ("she, like all other Communists, are making a play of being the friend of the Negro at present and will stop at absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing to accomplish their ends. They feel that the Party needs numbers and the Negro seems to them the best at present. They just don't know us is the reason they feel that way") and accuses her of trying to keep Alan Lomax in New York and away from John Lomax in Texas ("One of the things that she is working hardest for is that Allan shall not return to Texas this fall") in order to help "to build herself a reputation as a folklorist thru the name of Lomax." The letter ends with a bang: "I have not mentioned details and incidents because that would be too tiresome but I do know what I am talking about….I do not think that she is clean." She even "sell[s] him the idea that the way to collect folk-lore was to stay half drunk" (September 16, 1936).

in a Section Gang." While the way that Lomax foregrounds Hurston's role in the sessions is compelling, his other characterizations of her work expose his unsteady comprehension of her project. First, I believe Hurston may have used the title "A Day in a Section Gang" to interest Lomax, who garnered his fame for the "Parchman Farm" prison recordings that he made with his father. The play does take place on a railroad camp, but its drama is only loosely narratologically related to that site. It also seems likely that Lomax attributed the genre of "folk-opera" unprompted. By calling *The Great Day* a folk-opera, he invoked works like the wildly successful "folk-opera" *Porgy and Bess*,[34] which was premiered in New York just weeks after he logged the title in the trip index. *Porgy and Bess* was everything that Hurston disdained in Black Broadway: It was an account of black life written by white people who used the language of "folk" song to describe the arrangements of a white composer mimicking jazz music. The idea of the folk-opera also bears a resemblance to the "ballad opera" genre, which Lomax would go on to write and produce in the mid- to late-1940s, occasionally in collaboration with Langston Hughes.[35] Because this language resonates more with Lomax's work than it does Hurston's, it indicates that Lomax was convinced of the folkloric value of Hurston staging and performing folk songs as both drama and source-materials.

"Let the Deal Go Down" is followed by "Can't You Line It" and "Some Old Cold Rainy Day," and each of the three listings describes the musician as "trained by Zora Hurston."

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[34] Ray Allen analyzes the denomination of "folk opera" as it was attributed to *Porgy and Bess* in "An American Folk Opera? Triangulating Folkness, Blackness, and Americaness in Gershwin and Heyward's 'Porgy and Bess,'" published in *The Journal of American Folklore* in 2004 (244).
[35] Alan Lomax's involvement in ballad opera broadcasts include selecting music for and performing in *The Martins and the Coys* (1944) and *The Chisholm Trail* (1944), both written by his wife Elizabeth Lyttleton Harold; selecting music for *The Man Who Went to War* (1944), written by Langston Hughes; and writing and hosting a slew of ballad programs in the nineteen-fifties, at least two of which were identified as ballad operas (Harold 2018).

The A-side of the following tape holds “Can’t You Line It, sung by A.B. Hicks,” followed by the parenthetical annotation to “([sic]see no 54, I),” a reference to the preceding tape number that attributes “training” to Hurston. While the two songs that constitute the B-side to tape 55—“That Old Black Gal (The Heavy-Hipped Woman)[sic], railroad work song sung by A.B. Hicks” and “Convict song (Levee camp holler)[sic] sung by Charley Jones of Sanford Fla.”—make no reference to Hurston’s “training,” it seems likely that the relationship is assumed to hold for the entirety of the tape. A medley of “O Lula (steel-driving sng[sic])” and “Going to See My Long-haired Baby (tie-shuffling chant),” both by Hicks, was “under the direction of Zora Hurston” and constitutes the last number under Hurston’s direction before the tape cuts definitively, restarting on the B-side side with a new set of artists. According to Lomax’s key, the whole set bent to the angle of Hurston's “training.”

Hurston’s voice and movements are palpable in the audio recordings. She, Hicks, and Jones sound like they are in rehearsal. In “Let the Deal Go Down,” Hurston appears within the first stanza, singing the last word of the titular phrase in earnest. Using what Valerie Boyd calls Hurston’s “high pitched but forceful voice” (324) to join with A.B. Hicks’ tenor and the low bass of Charley Jones throughout the remainder of the song’s choruses, Hurston’s presence in the first track is also as hype-man and signifier. Playing a role reminiscent of the driver and gas station attendant who opened her unperformed 1930 play *Cold Keener* with “a focused exemplum of a ‘contest in hyperbole’ or playing the dozens” (Diamond 99), Hurston inhabits the vaudeville humor that she recuperated in “Characteristics of Negro Expression” just two years before this performance, when she praised the innuendo-laden acts of Butterbeans and Susie and the minstrel Bojangles (*Characteristics*, “Juke”). Rather than hiding herself in the beginning of this rehearsal set, Hurston is the first to speak, pronouncing: “All righty, let the deal go down, man,

let the deal go down!," just before sliding into the song's chorus. Then later, "alright Charley, you already got a dime, put your money on the water and," something like, "get your look so good." The next of her words are obscure, but the sounds are clear, rhyming "right" with "fight," calling again to Charley, in turns punctuating and rolling her phrases to banter with Hicks, who seems to call her a queen at the recording's finish. Being, to quote Daphne Brooks, perpetually "both of and in the crowd as well as whimsically positioned outside of it" (622), Hurston not only performs her play with this song but also stages the relationship between herself and the performers—a performance that authenticates (at very least, for Lomax) her connection to the culture she collects just as the act of performing undoes the idea that black folklore is somehow "old-fashioned, intuitive, and unadorned."[36]

As I've described, while folklore on stage had some precedent, using field recordings as a site to rehearse a play pitched to a New York audience is totally anathema to the way that Black folklore was understood—though not necessarily to the way that it was collected—during that period. The paradigmatic requirement of the field of anthropology during Hurston's lifetime was for accuracy. In order to be studied, folklore first needed to garner the status of artifact; to be allied to visions of an "authentic" past in order to be studied in the present.[37] As Sonnet Retman has described at length, Bronislaw Malinowski, the anthropologist whose 1922 study of the Trobriand Islanders popularized the au-courant methodology of participant observation practiced by Hurston and her mentor Franz Boas, believed that discreet ethnographic environments were both controlled and controllable; chemistry labs of sorts, where "accurate" preservation was

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[36] In *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*, Benjamin Filene uses this language to describe misconceptions about folk music in the twentieth century United States (119).

[37] Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1997.

possible given the right isolate conditions (152-190). In chapter two, I give some examples of the ways that anthropologists Boas, Alice Fletcher, Edward Curtis, and George Hunt differently "controlled" these environments, staging ethnographic photographs to create specific kinds of "authenticity" for public consumption. During his trip with Hurston, Alan Lomax recorded Gabriel Brown—the "finest Negro guitarist I have ever known" in his letter—in fourteen tracks displaying a standardization of song choices that seem to signify his curatorial decisions more than they do Brown's. Blues standards like "Careless Love," "Franky and Albert," and two takes of "John Henry" betray Lomax's taste for, and ideas of, traditional blues music. By contrast, Hurston does not hide her presence. In fact, she exalts in it. In this sense, her method of conservation is also a form of self-staging, creatively mimicking—even mocking—participant observation just as she seems to commit to it.

By staging a scene that mimics the "card playing song," a contemporary juke setting that she also celebrates explicitly in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston flouted folkloric expectations of—and in a different way, approaches to—black authenticity. At the same time, she displaced the folkloric desire to record the "origin" of a people by repeatedly rehearsing that scene—or, by mimicking a creative version of black folklore—without having scheduled its official performance. After 1934 Hurston put on "folk concerts," but was never able to stage *The Great Day* under the genre of "play" again. Inhabiting the position of folklorist while operating playfully outside of it, Hurston rejected the possibility of capturing living black cultures to instead participate in that culture's self-making through performance and sound.

As an audible collaborator in these Eatonville recordings, Hurston positioned herself as part of what she finds to be a legacy of dramatic collaboration in Black southern folklore. This folklore is particular not just to the south but to Florida. Hurston uses her particular mode of

participant observation in her hometown of Eatonville—one of the first all-black self-governing towns in the United States—in order to present its black folklore as a space of creative self-invention. In these recordings, Hurston mimics performances whose source could be the songs that she recorded in the same place during her field research years earlier, that she herself learned growing up in Eatonville, that she learned elsewhere, or that she had reinvented in her performances of *The Great Day* and re-appropriated here. These recordings are repetitions of repetitions. Teaching the folk what "folk" should sound like and reveling in exposing that process to the audible record, Hurston treats the whole session as a perfunctory performance.

Because Hurston hears her home state as an audible borderland of interactivity between African American and Afro-Caribbean life, her Chosen recordings represent her dynamic ideas of conservation and Blackness. They are also a testament to Hurston's specific way of de-centering the elite New York City establishment's authority on cultural legitimacy. During and just after the period when the Harlem Renaissance gained visibility for its celebration of black intellectualism and cosmopolitanism in the north, Hurston doubled down on the creative vitality of Florida, and on Chosen's black population in particular. In Chosen, Hurston, Lomax, and Barnicle recorded multiple versions of five of the six musical performances that together constitute the Caribbean "Fire Dance" movement concluding each of the three versions of her play (the last, *All de Live Long Day*, holds four of the six). "Bellamina," "Evalina," six different versions of the jumping dance, two versions of ring play, and the "Crow Dance" are performed by the "interpolated" preachers Soley and Rabbit alongside performers named Jack Delancey, Caesar Riley, and "Greene" and, potentially, others who were not inscribed into the index. These repetitions are significant not simply because they occur across plays and field recordings, but also because Hurston asserts her presence so starkly in "Evelina," "Bella Mina," and "Crow

Dance." "Bella Mina," for one, is the only song attributed to Hurston as the primary performing subject in Lomax's index [IMG 5]. The ninth of twenty-seven songs recorded in this Afro-Caribbean community, Lomax describes "Bella Mina" as "one-time jumping dance now round-dance. Miss Hurston had to lead this song because the Negroes had forgotten it." The song finds Hurston clapping and singing at the fore, drums pounding intermittently in the background, as she gives a measured, forceful, and insistent performance that articulates and separates each word and note.

Hurston is occasionally joined by a voice whose lucid upper-register tenor sounds like Soley's, and the startling similarity between them prompts a productive confusion between actors. That Hurston felt obliged to teach Soley the "Bella Mina" jumping dance does not necessarily place her at the creative origin of that performance, just as her instruction of A.B. Hicks in their shared hometown—having already employed him to act and sing in *All de Live Long Day* a year earlier—does not point to a stable origin for those folk songs. Four years after the Chosen recordings, when Herbert Halpert recorded Hurston singing and explaining a group of songs of her choosing, she selected "Bella Mina," "Evelina," and "Crow Dance" and performed them with uncanny similarity to the performances recorded in Chosen in 1935. With this alliance, Hurston stages her and Soley's recordings as their own performative Black folkloric-musical history.

While Soley's position in the recording of "Evalina" is recessed enough from the chorus that a comparison to Hurston's version beyond similarities in melody and lyrics (which do exist) seems a little foolish, his "Crow Dance" is bright and clear, and so similar to Hurston's 1939 recording of the same song that one is easily mistaken for the other. Hurston's version pulses at the beat; she hugs the mic, singing loudly and clapping along first on the first and third

beats and then in syncopation with her song. Where her performance is didactic in its tone (so forward that it sounds almost spoken rather than sung) and its measured consistency—broken when she punctuates twice towards the finish with a "CAWWW!"—Soley's is reserved, softer, looser, keeping time with what I believe to be Hurston's snapping. Coming from a much more experimental musician versed not just in singing different genres but also in the performance of other genres, Soley's delicate touch on the "Crow Dance" seems very much to have been at Hurston's behest. At the same time, whether Hurston is playing herself or mimicking Soley in her own performance of "Crow Dance" on field recordings, similarly funded by the US government just three years later, is impossible to discern, though I would venture that it was some version of both. With no audible record of "Bellamina," "Crow Dance," and "Evalina" in *The Great Day* and *From Sun to Sun* (only "Evalina" did not appear on *All de Live Long Day*), these performances exist as repetitions of a theme—evidence that in Hurston's rehearsal practice, the folkloric center cannot hold. Dramatic reenactment is the act at the center of these songs.

Directly following Hurston's recordings of what Lomax calls "work songs," the Eatonville tapes end with two and a half reels baring an unusually clear imprint of Lomax's presence. Usually silent on these reels, here Lomax calls for Charley Jones to state his name at the end of his performance of "I Ain't Poor No More," and can be heard urging him on again in the middle of his performance of "John Henry" (we might conjecture that Jones was not particularly excited to sing to Lomax's machine). Perhaps Hurston's role alongside A.B. Hicks and Charley Jones in the seven "work songs" is what goaded Lomax to speak. Because his letters evidence his high regard for Hurston, it is possible that here Lomax mimics her in order to channel her authority in his own field recordings. In either case, his presence is a reminder of various ways that all field recorders left their mark on their recordings during this period. What

is special about Hurston is not so much that she is present as that she is a co-conspirator in the artistic creation of the visionary black folklore with which she personally identifies.

V. "But I learned it from the crowd most exactly from my mind": Zora Neale Hurston Plays Herself

"What we really mean by originality," writes Hurston in the section titled "Originality" from "Characteristics of Negro Expression," located just before the "Imitation" section of the same text, "is the modification of ideas." The material riffs and repetitions of Hurston's influence across her oeuvre should be seen and heard as a claim to the inextricability of mimicry and originality in black art. As Jennifer A. Cayer writes of Hurston, "riffs on a theme and 'the modification of ideas' constitute the original. Indeed, mimicry was one of her own ethnographic strategies for not only learning tunes, but also for blurring the line between observer and informer and rendering a song anew" (2008).

In no place is the relationship that Cayer draws between Hurston's "ethnographic strategies" and creative mimicry more prominent than in the Library of Congress recordings of Hurston describing her relationship to her own subjects in the field. In this role reversal, Hurston interrogates the possibilities of individual and group subjectivity, all the while cloaking her narrative in a patina of "pure experience." Recorded by the young white folklorist Herbert Halpert, Hurston had gone to Jacksonville on assignment by the Federal Writer's Project with the intention to help organize his recording session (Boyd 324). Halpert's recordings are distinctive for their focus on Hurston herself, singing and describing extensively the songs that she had collected in Florida and the Bahamas between 1927-1931. "I heard Halimuhfak down on the east coast," she tells Halpert. She didn't remember who she heard it from: "I was in a big crowd and I learned it in the evening during the crowd. And I'm just—don't care to exactly remember who

did teach it to me. But I learned it from the crowd most exactly from my mind." Her insistence on having learned from "the crowd" in absence of "exactly remembering" a teacher is itself a tactic of reclamation. The crowd is a place of community formation as much as it is one of depersonalization, where sociality defeats individuality for the duration of its gathering. Western individualism that made "mimic men" of slaves in America is anathema to this sort of formation, but it poses a problem for black self-actuation as well: Mary Esteve has noted in particular that "Harlem's self-consciousness as a culture of crowds" was in dialogue in the minds of its artists with the negative condition of identity loss; that, similar to ideas of the contemporary crowd, "racism has inflicted upon blacks a sort of compulsory anonymity" (270). In her description of the crowd, Hurston privileges black peoples' collaborative authority in defiance of these racist idealities.

Couched in Hurston's explanation is her assertion that, as part of the crowd, she shares authorship of the song that was borne of it. Someone like Ralph Peer, the talent scout responsible for the first recordings of The Carter Family, Jimmy Rodgers, and many others, claimed copyright for cash rather than for creative writing agency. In the folklore of the period, Alan Lomax actively influenced the song and performance choices of his field recording subjects with his patina of expertise on what folklore "should" sound like. Claiming partial songwriting credit in copyright, his ability to camouflage his influence on his recordings of black artists was predicated on racial power. Where black people are sentenced to the "compulsory anonymity" of racial identification, white people like Lomax can sustain their individuality as well as don the temporary cloak of invisibility.

By contrast, in Hurston's willful participation with the crowd as a black woman singing black folklore with those she sees as black "folk," what she enacts is an authority of presence,

both individuated and authenticated by the song's residual presence "in her mind." Halpert, unprepared for this explanation, presses her. "How do you learn most of your songs?" And again, Hurston:

> I just get in the crowd with the people if they're singing and I—listen as best as I can and I start to joining in with a phrase or two and then finally I get so I can sing a verse. And then I keep on until I learn all the songs and all the verses and then I sing 'em back to the people until they tell me that I can sing 'em just like them. And then I take part, and I try it out on different people who already know the song until they are quite satisfied that I know it. And then I carry it in my memory.

In her own words, Hurston's anthropological methodology is conservational, not consigned to the concerns with accuracy typically embodied by methods of transcription and machine recording.[38] Diverging from the scientism of the period, she represents her ethnographic repository as "her memory." Built from participation and founded on her own capacity as a performer of songs and carrier of memories, Hurston represents her mode of learning as taking part in the drama. Collaboration and repetition comprise her conservational collecting practice. Hurston's description is particularly compelling insofar as it is a construction: she uses it to create herself as an appropriate ethnographic subject for the ethnographic recorder. As a bearer of and participant in the cultural memories of others, Hurston plays the role of "the folk," which she envisions as being constructed through a repetitive call-and-response and a disavowal of the academic text. Of course, her elite education—what she refers to in *Dust Tracks on a Road* as

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[38] In *A Spiral Way*, Erica Brady describes (Hurston's mentor) Franz Boas's imperative in the field to capture "people['s] records of themselves in their own words." While the phonograph is particularly suited to that project, it also locates Boas's fieldwork "emphatically on collection of *texts*" (67): because transcribing languages verbatim was so difficult, the machine fulfilled these requirements for scientific accuracy. However, because "the use of the phonograph automatically framed information as a presentation or performance, something set aside and special…[and was] best suited to record materials that were…set off in the normal course of events from the usual flow of social expression" (70), the phonograph was also a machine uniquely suited to Hurston's conservational ethnography. See Erica Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*, 1999.

her “carefully accented Barnardese”—was not something she could completely obliterate. Performing different subject positions as a mode of self-fashioning, Hurston was able to use each status as circumstantial act, allowing her to create the conditions for much, if not all, of her work.

This web of performance on multiple kinds of stages begins to constellate the dramatic acts of repetition and mimicry that resonate throughout her work. Hurston’s own act (as drama and as action) of performative mimicry dramatically revises the traditional, then-widely acknowledged goal of ethnographic preservation. Her work of reiterating performances across media that are themselves mimics of past collections are in practice an exploration of performance itself, as—to quote Joseph Roach—“always subject to revision,” as “restored behavior,” and as behavior “twice-behaved” (3). Her own goal seems in large part to have been one of reuse in celebration of the multifaceted and movable possibilities inherent in repeated performances of black folklore. While her own work is not in direct opposition to the corrective and coercive work of white folklorists, Hurston's position as a black female southerner collecting in the black and global south complicates the power dynamic of the collecting stage in fieldwork, and the relationship she drew between black drama and black life posited collecting itself as a drama to be staged. In this drama of contact and revision, repetition with a difference operates as one mode of resistance to racist assumptions of a “black past” whose only creative agency is to repeat itself indefinitely within the present.

Against these assumptions, Hurston mimicked in order to revise material, not to preserve or refine it. Repurposing materials across different genres is a mode of conservation. Playing “the folk” as a form of self-creation is a mode of conservation. Interpolating yourself as a mode of creative undoing is a mode of conservation. Hurston’s performative repetitions can be seen (and heard) as rehearsals—sometimes figurative but literal in the case of her folklore and in

some of her actual staged performances of versions of *The Great Day*. Elin Diamond summarizes the play as "a well-rehearsed presentation of folklore materials" (119); rehearsals across media are the source of this accolade, not simply the play's final performance or the recorded instances of rehearsal alone. It is in fact through these intersecting acts that the myriad versions of *The Great Day*—throughout her field recordings, folk concerts, and plays—are constructed.

The ways that Hurston stages folk materials in ongoing rehearsal present challenges and opportunities to those who seek to recover her intervention in the collection and performance of ethnographic folklore. Hurston's work is site-specific just as it deconstructs essentializing characterizations of those sites; dramatic just as it deconstructs rote ideas of performance; and folkloric without ciphering "the folk" into the annals of past history. She does all of this specifically by staging her collecting and her drama in continuum, with one foot in the worlds of folklore, ethnography, fiction, and drama, and one foot always out of the door.

Appendix to Chapter 1

IMAGE 1:
*"*The Great Day." 1932. Hurston is pictured clapping at the far right. Courtesy of Percival Punter, University of Florida, Gainesville Special Collections Library, Gainesville, FL.

IMAGE 2:
Timeline: Variations of *The Great Day* (folk concerts; field recordings; plays). Developed from primary source documents and based on Anthea Kraut's "Chronology of Known Performances by Hurston and the Bahamian Dancers," in *Choreographing the Folk*, *pages* 223-225. My additions to Kraut's timeline appear in red.

January 10, 1932: *The Great Day*, John Golden Theater, New York, NY.

March 29, 1932: *From Sun to Sun*, The New School of Social Research, New York, NY

November 11, 1932: Hurston spoke to a Rollins College (Winter Park, FL) classroom with a collection of stories that included "a beautiful recitation, partly in song, always with decided rhythms predominating, of a sermon she heard and wrote down, given by a negro evangelist."

January 20, 1933: *From Sun to Sun*, "the Museum," Rollins College, Fern Park, FL.

January 27, 1933: Second performance of *From Sun to Sun*, "the Museum," Rollins College, Fern Park, FL.

February 11, 1933: *From Sun to Sun*, Recreation Hall, Rollins College campus, Winter Park, Florida

March 20, 1933: Letter from Hurston to Alain Locke: "the two professors of Creative Writing are both North Carolinians and tied up with Chapel Hill. They planned to take my group with theirs up there march 31st for the play tournament, but now it looks as if none of us can go on account of money."

April 8, 1933: *From Sun to Sun*, Orlando Municipal Auditorium, Orlando, Florida.

October 16, 1933: *From Sun to Sun*, Sanford City Hall, Sanford, Florida.

January 5, 1934: *All De Live Long Day*, Recreation Hall, Rollins College campus, Winter Park, Florida.

April 1934: "Hurston presents a version of her folk concert with a cast of students from Bethune-Cookman College at the Daytona Beach auditorium in Daytona Beach, Florida" (Kraut).

April 29-May 2, 1934: "Hurston and ten of her performers from Florida present excerpts from her concert, including the Fire Dance, at the First National Folk Festival in St. Louis" (Kraut)

November 23-24, 1934: *Singing Steel*, Chicago Woman's Club Theatre, Chicago, Illinois.

June, 1935: Hurston makes field recordings in her hometown of Eatonville, FL in collaboration with Alan Lomax and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle. According to Lomax's index to the expedition, Hurston "trained and taught" the performers the songs in these recordings "for her folk-opera A

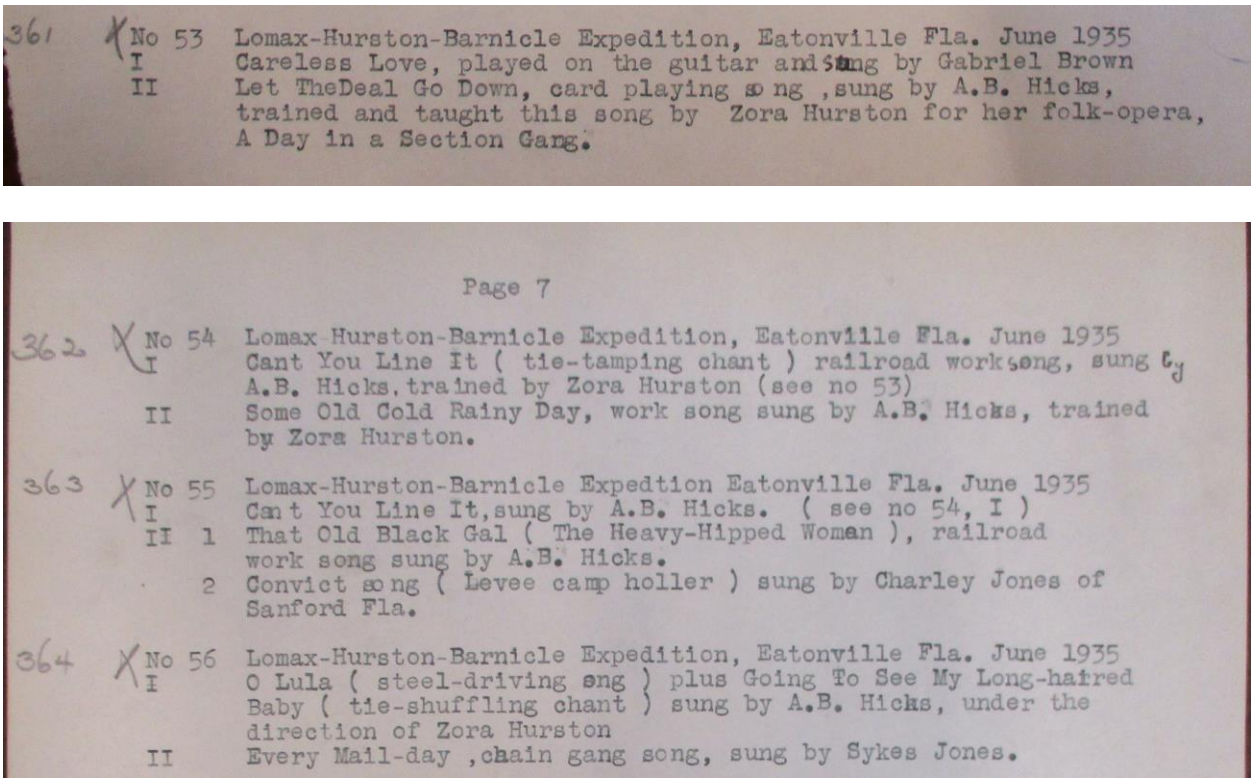
Day in a Section Gang." Similarities and repetitions are not relegated to this set, however, and resonances with versions of her folk-play *The Great Day* appear throughout the recordings in Eatonville, Chosen, and Belle Glade.

May 6-8, 1938: "Hurston and a group of her Florida performers present concert excerpts at the Fifth National Folk Festival at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C." (Kraut).

June 18, 1939: Hurston sings and is interviewed by Herbert Halpert during the Southern States Recording Expedition for the Joint Committee on Folk Arts, WPA and the Library of Congress in Jacksonville, FL.

February-March 1952: Five folk concerts presented around Eau Galle, Florida.

IMAGE 3:
Recording session featuring A.B. Hicks and Charley Jones. As listed in "Song Index to the Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle expedition collection." Courtesy of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



361 X No 53 Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Eatonville Fla. June 1935
I Careless Love, played on the guitar and sung by Gabriel Brown
II Let TheDeal Go Down, card playing song ,sung by A.B. Hicks, trained and taught this song by Zora Hurston for her folk-opera, A Day in a Section Gang.

Page 7

362 X No 54 Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Eatonville Fla. June 1935
I Cant You Line It (tie-tamping chant) railroad worksong, sung by A.B. Hicks, trained by Zora Hurston (see no 53)
II Some Old Cold Rainy Day, work song sung by A.B. Hicks, trained by Zora Hurston.

363 X No 55 Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedtion Eatonville Fla. June 1935
I Cant You Line It, sung by A.B. Hicks. (see no 54, I)
II 1 That Old Black Gal (The Heavy-Hipped Woman), railroad work song sung by A.B. Hicks.
2 Convict song (Levee camp holler) sung by Charley Jones of Sanford Fla.

364 X No 56 Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Eatonville Fla. June 1935
I O Lula (steel-driving song) plus Going To See My Long-haired Baby (tie-shuffling chant) sung by A.B. Hicks, under the direction of Zora Hurston
II Every Mail-day ,chain gang song, sung by Sykes Jones.

IMG 4: *The Great Day* playbill (1932), *From Sun to Sun* playbill (1932), *All de Live Long Day* playbill (1935), Alan Lomax's Index to the Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Florida Expedition (1935), Library of Congress Index to the National Folk Festival (1938), Library of Congress Index to the Herbert Halpert Southern States Recording Expedition (1939)

THE GREAT DAY, NY (1932)

Shack Rouser
Joe Brown
//Captain Keep a-Hollerin'
Oh, Lulu!
Can't You Line It?
Mule on de Mount
East Coast Blues
Black Gal
John Henry
// Children's Games
Chick-ma-chick
Mistah Frog
// Death Comes a-Creepin'
Sermon
All You People Got To Go
You Can't Hide
// Cold Rainy Day
Frankie and Albert
Halimuh Fack
Palm Beach
Let de Deal Go down
Alabama Bound
// Pea-vine Candle Dance
Hairs in the graveyard
// Fire Dance
Bellamina
Wasp Bite Noby
Evalina
Jumping Dance
Ring Play
Crow Dance
// Deep River

FROM SUN TO SUN, NY (1932)

Shack Rouser
Joe Brown
//Captain Keep a-Hollerin'
Oh, Lulu!
Can't You Line It?
Mule on de Mount
East Coast Blues
Black Gal
John Henry
// Children's Games
Chick-ma-chick
Mistah Frog
// Death Comes a-Creepin'
Sermon
All You People Got To Go
You Can't Hide
// Cold Rainy Day
Frankie and Albert
Halimuh Fack
Palm Beach
Let de Deal Go down
Alabama Bound
Guitar Solo
// The Fiery Chariot
// Fire Dance
Bellamina
Mama Don't Want No Peas
Evalina
Jumping Dance
Ring Play
Crow Dance

ALL DE LIVE LONG DAY, FL (1934)

Baby Chile
I'm Goin' to Make a Graveyard of My Own
// Cuttin' Timber
You Won't Do
John Henry
Please Don't Drive Me
Halimuhfack
Fat Gal
Water Boy
// De Possum
Brer Noah
Ham
// O Lord
I'm Going Home
Sit Down
Swing Low
All My Sins
Go Down Moses
I'm Your Child
// Ever Been Down?
Harmonica Solo
Let the Deal Go Down
Guitar Solo
Buck and Wing Specialties
St Louis Blues
Piano Solo
Break Away
// String Band in the Negro Manner
// Ahaco
Bellamina
Mama Don't Want No Peas
Jumping Dance
Crow Dance

Fire Dance

FIELD RECORDINGS: overlap from EATONVILLE; CHOSEN; BELLE GLADE, FL (1935)

Let the Deal Go Down
Can't You Line It
Some Old Cold Rainy Day
Can't You Line It
That Old Black Gal
O Lula
Going to See My Long-Haired Baby
Mule on de Mount
The Longest Train I Ever Saw Was Running Round Joe Brown's Coal Mine
Franky and Albert
Uncle Bud
John Henry
Bellamina
Evalina
Crow Dance
[various children's games]
[various sermons]
[various jumping dances]
[various ring plays]

NATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL, WASHINGTON, DC (1938)

Can't You Line It
Mule on de Mount
Dat Old Black Gal
Oh Lula, Oh Gal
Somebody's Knockin' at My Door
Unidentified song

HERBERT HALPERT WPA RECORDINGS (1939)

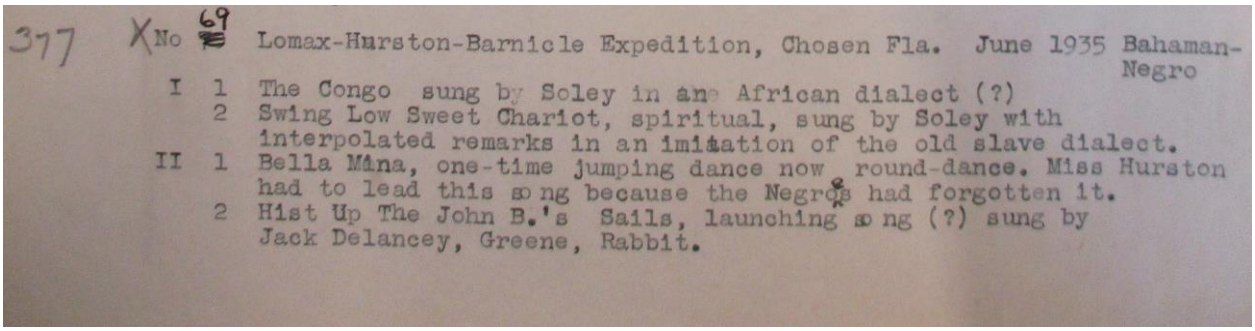
Gonna See My Long-Haired Babe
Let's Shake It
Dat Old Black Gal
Shove It Over
Mule on the Mount
Georgia Skin and Let the Deal Go Down
Uncle Bud
Oh, The Buford Boat Done Come
Ever Been Down
Halimuhfack
Tampa
Po' Gal
Mama Don't Want No Peas, No Rice
Crow Dance
Wake Up, Jacob
Oh, Mr. Brown
Tilly, Lend Me Your Pigeon (BAHAMAN)
Evelina

KEY: Red: appears in similar form across other media and in the 1935 recordings. Blue: appears in similar form across other media but **not** in the 1935 recordings. //: indicates a thematic break in the play's song-types.

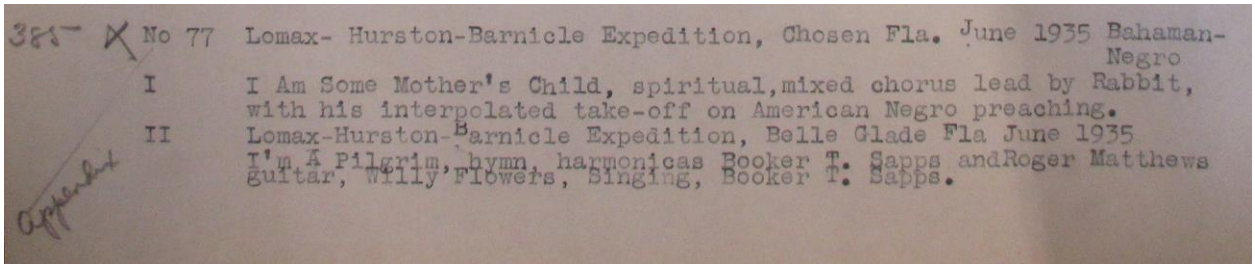
IMAGE 5:
Recordings in which Lomax uses the language of "interpolation" and "imitation" to describe the music: tape numbers 377A-2, 385A, 405A.

The first photograph includes "Bella Mina." 377B-1.

As listed in "Song Index to the Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle expedition collection." Courtesy of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

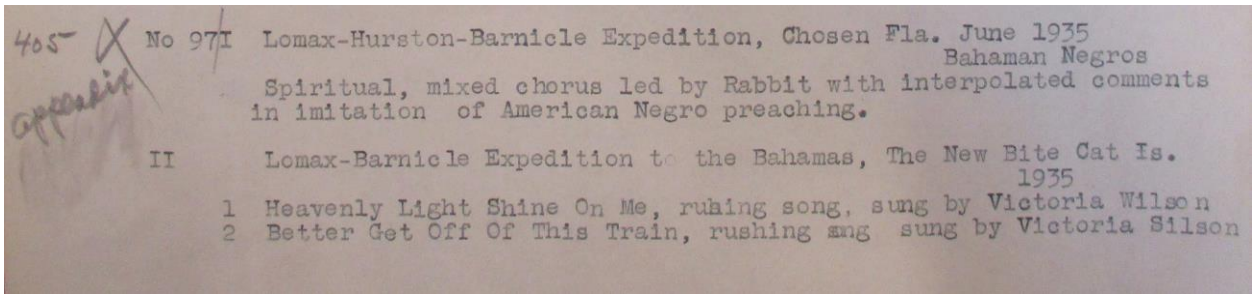

377 X No 69 Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Chosen Fla. June 1935 Bahaman-Negro

I 1 The Congo sung by Soley in an African dialect (?)
2 Swing Low Sweet Chariot, spiritual, sung by Soley with interpolated remarks in an imitation of the old slave dialect.
II 1 Bella Mina, one-time jumping dance now round-dance. Miss Hurston had to lead this song because the Negros had forgotten it.
2 Hist Up The John B.'s Sails, launching song (?) sung by Jack Delancey, Greene, Rabbit.


385- X No 77 Lomax- Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Chosen Fla. June 1935 Bahaman-Negro

I I Am Some Mother's Child, spiritual, mixed chorus lead by Rabbit, with his interpolated take-off on American Negro preaching.
II Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Belle Glade Fla June 1935
I'm A Pilgrim, hymn, harmonicas Booker T. Sapps and Roger Matthews guitar, Willy Flowers, Singing, Booker T. Sapps.

Applause


405- X No 97 I Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, Chosen Fla. June 1935 Bahaman Negros

Spiritual, mixed chorus led by Rabbit with interpolated comments in imitation of American Negro preaching.

II Lomax-Barnicle Expedition to the Bahamas, The New Bite Cat Is. 1935
1 Heavenly Light Shine On Me, rushing song, sung by Victoria Wilson
2 Better Get Off Of This Train, rushing song sung by Victoria Silson

applause

Key to the Audio of Chapter 1

In chronological order of appearance (titles quoted without revision from Alan Lomax's song index to the Lomax-Hurston-Barnicle Expedition, June 1935):

1. Tape 377A2: "Swing Low Sweet Chariot, spiritual, sung by Soley with interpolated remarks in an imitation of the old slave dialect"

2. Tape 376A1+405A: "I Am Some Mother's Child, spiritual, Soley, Rabbit and group" + "Spiritual, mixed chorus led by Rabbit with interpolated comments in imitation of American Negro preaching"
   NB: Not included: the mislabeled 385A1: "I Am Some Mother's Child, spiritual, mixed chorus lead by Rabbit, with his interpolated take-off on American Negro preaching"
3. Tape 363-I: "Can't You Line It, sung by A.B. Hicks. (see no 54, I)"

4. Tape 362-II: "Some Old Cold Rainy Day, work song sung by A.B. Hicks, trained by Zora Hurston"

5. Tape 363-IIA: "That Old Black Gal (The Heavy-Hipped Woman), railroad work song sung by A.B. Hicks."

6. Tape 363-IIB: "Convict song (Levee camp holler) sung by Charley Jones of Sanford Fla."

7. Tape 361-II: "Let TheDeal Go Down, card playing song, sung by A.B. Hicks, trained and taught this song by Zora Hurston for her folk-opera A Day in a Section Gang"

8. Tape 364-I: "O Lula (steel-driving sng) plus Going To See My Long-haired Baby (tie-shuffling chant) sung by A.B. Hicks, under the direction of Zora Hurston"

9. Tape 377B: "Bella Mina, one-time jumping dance now round-dance. Miss Hurston had to lead this song because the Negroes had forgotten it."

10. Tape 383A: "Evalina, The Baby Don't Favor Me, ring-play, mixed chorus with drum"

11. Tape 378B: "Crow-dance, sung by Soley with a drum accompaniment"

For a key with links to the entire set of audio recorded by Herbert Halpert of Zora Neale Hurston for the Southern States Expedition, see the guide from The American Folklife Center**.** Songs from this collection that are addressed at length in the body of the chapter but are not included as MP3s are: "Halimuhfack" and "Crow Dance."

Chapter 2:
"Criticized When Written by Francis La Flesche": Native Authenticity, White Female Authority, and the Racial Ideology of the "Indian Play"

I. Introduction

In August of 1908, the Library of Congress issued a copyright for *Adita, son of the Sioux*. Co-written by a playwright named Helen Kane and an ethnologist named Francis La Flesche, *Adita* fits in with the short genre of the "Indian Plays" of the period, takes a conventional three acts, and runs at a longer-than-standard length of ninety-eight pages. It's also the first play to be written and copyrighted by a Native author.

Adita, son of the Sioux was never published. While the manuscript is missing, its existence resonates through the work of Francis La Flesche—the first Native ethnologist to gain recognition from the Library of Congress—and Helen Kane, a wealthy white author of parlor-plays and Indian dramas. The play is a linchpin in a tumultuous moment in American history: when popular entertainment, anthropological science, and both private- and government-funded initiatives to disperse and disenfranchise Native peoples met in the form of the "Indian Play." La Flesche's friendship and collaboration with Kane seems to have been founded on their shared investment in producing work that communicated what, in a note to La Flesche, Kane once described as "authentic" Native culture. La Flesche was a dedicated ethnologist up until his death in 1932, but his work cataloguing and representing Native culture was not limited to the human sciences. It seems to me that La Flesche saw in the relatively new field of Native drama an opportunity to communicate what he considered to be ethnographic truth to a popular audience through the vehicle of youthful players.

La Flesche's under-acknowledged work as a dramatist disturbs the notion that the "Indian Play"—generally staged in amateurs playhouses, schools, and summer camps—was produced

and performed by white players, strictly through white imaginations of Native life. *Adita, son of the Sioux* was copyrighted over twenty years before Cherokee playwright Rollie Lynn Riggs's *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which is generally accepted as the first published play by a Native author.[39] And in addition to writing the setting for Charles Wakefield Cadman's Indianist opera *Daoma* the same year that *Adita* went under copyright and revising *Shanewis*—Cadman's second Indianist opera—after that, La Flesche also worked in some capacity on Helen Kane's three "Indian Plays" from 1914. On each play, he is credited on their covers with an unusual description: "criticized when written by Francis La Flesche." Accounting also for La Flesche's own unpublished play (which survives only as a fragment), La Flesche should be considered as an early progenitor of the Native American Theater.

A prolific playwright in her time, Helen Kane has disappeared from the annals of dramatic history. Her deftly-written parlor plays concern me insofar as they shed light on her "Indian Plays," her relationship to Francis La Flesche, and her position as a white woman of means peripherally involved in amateur theater and the fledgling genres of folklore and anthropology in a particularly oppressive political moment for Native peoples. Kane's volunteer work in various anthropological societies and in the Daughters of the American Revolution, as well as her fiction, poetry, and drama, provide a window into a period when science, popular culture, and law were colliding in the context and production of the "Indian Play." Kane's collaboration with Francis La Flesche is part and product of the way that white America's idea of itself at the turn of the twentieth century was often articulated through—and, hence, could be exposed by—its approach to "Indianness." That approach was often through performances of

[39] I draw this information from the historians of Native theater whose work I describe in detail beginning on pages 90 and 106.

drama, song, and citizenship. Francis La Flesche's collaboration with Helen Kane locates him firmly in the history of what Kiara Vigil has called "Indigenous Intellectuals," asserting his idea of Native song, language, and tradition in concert with and contradistinction to dominant ideas of Native life and culture.

I spend roughly half of "Criticized When Written by Francis La Flesche" discussing Helen Kane's parlor dramas, folklore, and "Indian Plays." This disproportionality results from the fact that while Kane's writing is, for the most part, still extant, ironically La Flesche's is not. While the National Anthropological Archive can hold La Flesche's rough drafts, no repository can retain the writing that La Flesche was unable to undertake in his lifetime. The chapter speculates, then, on La Flesche's role and work in seeking to intervene in the cultural and dramatic representations of Native identity from a highly disadvantaged place. Paradoxically, the apparatuses of turn-of-the-century Indian anthropology and white female dramatists like Helen Kane require his work as an "Indigenous intellectual" to authenticate their ethnographic and dramatic writings, while also marginalizing his authority and authorship to claim their own. By examining a selection of Francis La Flesche's ethnographic, dramatic, and fictional works alongside Kane's "Indian Plays" (in which La Flesche had a hand), the chapter tells a history of the "Indian Play" as a hybrid and contentious genre, focusing on La Flesche and Kane's modes of self-actualization, primarily through the dramatization of Indian mothers and of Indian boys.

II. Francis La Flesche

Francis La Flesche was born on December 25, 1857, to Omaha leader Joseph La Flesche and his second wife Ta-in-ne. Of Ponca, Omaha, and French descent, La Flesche grew up with five half-sisters from his father's first marriage. Born into the decade when Omaha leaders, under pressure from the United States government, ceded Nebraska territory to the US, La Flesche

grew up as the town of Omaha was incorporated, built up, and populated primarily by white people. La Flesche's life was duly effected: as a youth, he participated in buffalo hunts and religious ceremonies with his tribe and was enrolled in the Presbyterian mission school on the reservation in Bellevue, Nebraska (Swetland 216).

La Flesche's interest in the political and social welfare of Native peoples led directly to his career as a writer and ethnologist. At twenty-two years old, he accompanied his sister, Susette "Bright Eyes" Tibbles and her husband Thomas, on Ponca Chief Standing Bear's two-year lecture tour. Tibbles and her husband Thomas were Indian reform advocates, writing for the *Omaha-World Herald*, a publication that was starkly critical of the agency regime (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 25). On tour, Susette and Francis acted as interpreters, advocating for the struggle for the return of the Ponca to their homeland (Swetland 216). It was in this period that Susette introduced La Flesche to the ethnologist Alice C. Fletcher. Fletcher would go on to occupy a few influential roles in La Flesche's life. As his mentor (and eventually, as his unofficial adopted mother), she would collaborate with him on myriad anthropological expeditions, writing, and song collections, advocating for him while contradicting that advocacy by publishing work that primitivized Native peoples through the lens of social reform. She'd also go on to recruit him into the allotment project, contributing to La Flesche's life of working within oppressive structures in attempt to communicate the depth and variety of Native intellectual, cultural, and ceremonial practices.[40] After meeting Fletcher for the first time, La

[40] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss in detail, but even a brief look at La Flesche's personal correspondence reveals myriad letters from friends and family with requests for money. These letters reveal the wounds of relocation and land reallocation garnered from allotment; a process that Fletcher helped to inaugurate and La Flesche helped to instate. That La Flesche both helped signed his tribe up for allotment and then paid a version of reparations back for that process is one other important way that La Flesche worked within oppressive structures to support his community.

Flesche soon moved to Washington, and was appointed in 1881 as an Interpreter for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. That year Fletcher and Susette Tibbles went on an anthropological research trip to live with Sioux women at the Rosebud Indian Reservation, where La Flesche moonlighted as a translator. In 1892, he earned an LL.B. from the National University Law School (and an LL. after that), and his status rose to Clerk to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. By 1910, he bore the official title of Ethnologist from the Library of Congress, focusing on the Omaha and the Osage peoples.

Most Indigenous intellectuals doing anthropological work were not recognized, as La Flesche eventually was, as anthropologists. To access the Indigenous intellectuals who shaped modernity, it's necessary to look not only to La Flesche, but also to "Native speakers and translators (often called 'informants'), hosts, village guides, and political leaders of nonstate communities facing colonization" (Blackhawk and Wilner xii). As Alice Fletcher's assistant, La Flesche's job as a was unusual, but not without precedent. That he was able to gain government recognition (and salary) for his ethnologies distinguishes him from a much larger group of informants and translators who weren't given the opportunity to document their own work. As Kiara Vigil has noted, because they were compelled to struggle to define themselves for a broad variety of audiences, "Indigenous Intellectuals" worked within and against dominant expectations of Indian-ness and were often not recognized as activists and agents in their lifetimes. And according to Margaret Bruchac, "indigenous writers were typically classified as 'informants' rather than 'intellectuals'" (*Savage Kin* 17). Informants' own capacities as storytellers, linguists, and knowledge-bearers of history and culture were mostly unacknowledged, and few became "ethnologists" in the professional sense of the word. Of La Flesche's contemporaries, other Native ethnologists include George Bushotter, a Lakota

interpreter and historian working for J.O. Dorsey; Richard Sanderville, a Blackfoot interpreter and preservationist (Liberty, 8), and in the later period of La Flesche's life, the Zuni translator and interpreter Flora Zuni (Bataille and Sands, 45).

Born just three years after the Treaty of 1854 legalized the practice of surveying and allotting Omaha's northeastern Nebraska reservation, La Flesche was uniquely involved in the history of land allotment. In the 1880s, to be an Indian ethnologist was, quite literally, to participate in allotment. Alice Fletcher was instrumental in passing 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act (Mark 69-79): a national initiative that alienated tribes from their lands by relocating them to private plots and selling off the majority of the acreage to private prospectors and the U.S. government. By forcing Native peoples to acculturate and assimilate to a racial capitalist system—dis- and relocating portions of communities and privatizing their land—allotment paved the way for the "civilizing" missions of the Indian schools that were created by the U.S. government right around the same period. Private land plots meant abandoning the bison hunt, a mode of sustenance and survival that was incoherent to the "civilizing" work of missionaries in the 1850s and to Fletcher, their ideological disciple, in the 1880s. With allotments came the other trappings of assimilation: access to schools and, allegedly, to the protections of laws and of citizenship (which wouldn't be officially granted until 1924, just a few months after the Virginia General Assembly passed "The Racial Integrity Act"). Fletcher believed that Natives were "stranded between two modes of life" (Fletcher fieldwork diary 1881) that land privatization and assimilation was the best means for their survival. In fact, under the banner of privatization and assimilation, Indian schools developed as environments of intense regulation, surveillance, and attempted deculturation (banning Native languages, songs, and ceremonies); and laws paternalistically regulated Native freedoms rather than granting them

(limiting purchasing and ownership power and curtailing political sovereignty). La Flesche's involvement in this work may have encouraged him to look for alternative registers and methods for writing ethnographically about Native life.

After petitioning the U.S. government, in 1883 Fletcher was given authority to conduct allotment and enlisted La Flesche as her assistant, collecting data for her ethnographic study that worked seamlessly as census data for the U.S. government. In no place in Fletcher and La Flesche's career is the cross-pollination of government policy and Indian ethnography more explicit. Coupled with her access to resources through her employment as a government official, Fletcher's relationship with the La Flesche family encouraged one-fourth of the Omaha to actively support the program and the majority to go along with it (Mark 93). Francis La Flesche's commitment to the allotment cause stems at least in part from his trepidation that without making concessions to the U.S. government, the Omaha would lose even more control of their land and their history (Swetland 221). In this sense, his work on the allotment campaign with Alice Fletcher was driven by the same impetus that drove his preservationist work. As with his ethnographic work, La Flesche aimed to preserve the dignity and agency of his people, and represented—or, in the case of his writing, to re-present—those qualities for a majority-white audience. He must have been aware of the irony of surrendering tribal land, the very basis of Omaha culture, in order to preserve that culture, identity, and sovereignty.

In La Flesche's myriad collaborations with white anthropologists and composers, he focuses on various presentations of Omaha and Osage cultural practices and musics. Two years after Francis La Flesche agreed to be her assistant, Fletcher began writing for anthropological

and folkloric journals, the popular press, and various publishing arms of the Peabody Museum.[41] She also published two songbooks sourced from their work together: *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* (1883), the first serious study of Native music in its time save for one dissertation a year earlier, and *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900),[42] written to access a broad, popular audience. In addition to their extensive ethnographic publications, he and Fletcher were also involved, directly or indirectly, with World Fair exhibitions.[43]

Across these platforms, texts, and stages, Alice Fletcher presented sentimental ethnography as anthropological science. In the late nineteenth century, anthropological science was already intimately related to the popular sphere, meeting in the arenas of the World Fair, in

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[41] The publications attributed to Fletcher that bare the explicit mark of La Flesche's work as interpreter, translator, and informant include: "The Wa-Wan, or Pipe Dance of the Omahas," in the *16th Ann. Rep. Peabody Museum*, 1884; "Historical Sketch of the Omaha Tribe of Indians in Nebraska," Washington, 1885; "Of Friendship among the Omahas," *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (*AAAS*), 1885; "Lands in Severalty to Indians; Illustrated by Experience with the Omaha Tribe," *AAAS*, 1885; "Hal-thu-ska Society of the Omaha Tribe," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* (*JAMF*), 1892; "A Study of Omaha Indian Music," Archaeological and Ethnographic Papers, Peabody Museum, 1893; "Love Songs among the Omaha Indians," International Congress of Anthropologists, 1894; "Hunting Customs of the Omahas," *Century Magazine*, 1895; "Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe" *AAAS*, 1896; "Tribal Life among the Omahas," *Century Magazine*, 1896; and "Tribal Structure: A Study of the Omaha and Cognate Tribes," *Putnam Anniversary Volume*, 1909.

[42] While *Indian Story and Song* does contain Omaha songs, Francis La Flesche does not seem to have been involved in its production. In a letter to "Dr. Fewkes" (who I believe to be Jesse Walter Fewkes, an anthropologist, archaeologist, and naturalist who recorded the Passamaquoddy, Zuni, and Hopi in the 1890s), on August 16, 1927, La Flesche addresses Fewkes's request to locate the "Omaha melody that [Charles Wakefield] Cadman developed into the song, 'The Land of Sky Blue Water;'" a theme of *Daoma*, for which La Flesche wrote the setting. La Flesche describes *Indian Story and Song* to Fewkes as such: "Miss Fletcher did publish a book, the title I cannot recall, for which Mr. Cadman made four selections, this was published by Small & Maynard of Boston, and I understand is still in Print." Whether tongue-in-cheek or literal, La Flesche uses this letter to dissociate himself from the publication.

[43] Fletcher organized an exhibit in the 1884 New Orleans World's Fair (which, that year, was called The World Cotton Centennial). Her exhibit was on "Indian Civilization," and it focused on the Omaha, using fieldwork she'd undertaken with Francis La Flesche.

traveling shows, and, differently, in the museum.[44] Anthropology was often presented in these places as entertainment for the viewer. As a woman, in order to perform that entertainment Fletcher would have face some adversity. Sentimental ethnography was her vehicle for arguing her value as an authority on Native cultures. Lynn Festa describes the sentimental mode as one that:

> […]allowed readers to identify with and feel for the plight of other people while upholding distinctive cultural and personal identities: it thus consolidated a sense of metropolitan community grounded in the selective recognition of the humanity of other populations…convert[ing] scenes of violence and exploitation into occasions for benevolence and pity (2).

Magnanimity is not the same thing as solidarity, but the sentimental mode invites the possibility of a cathartic, one-sided, performative reconciliation for actor and viewer and—in the case of the song collector—also the listener. The discussion of Fletcher's beliefs and approaches that follows should illustrate the context in which Kane similarly operates through the register of ethnographic drama, and should help us to understand the impossible cultural situation that La Flesche had to negotiate in attempting his own goals.

Fletcher was in a tenuous position as a professional woman without academic training, doing work that was increasingly being claimed by academics who were often, though not always, men. So she inhabited the role of interlocutor, recapitulating the common progressive stance that white women were, to quote Godey's Lady's Book, considered to be "the connecting link…between man and the inferior animals, possessing a central rank between the mysterious instinct of the latter and the unattainable energies of the former."[45] Pursuing this point explicitly,

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[44] See the coda, pages 231-232, for further examples of this phenomenon.

[45] This theory is pervasive across science and etiquette books. For an example of a text from the period when Fletcher, Kane, and La Flesche were most active, see Otis T. Mason's "Woman's Share in Primitive Culture" (1889).

composer John Comfort Fillmore announced in his preface to *Indian Story and Song from North America* that Fletcher "is able to put herself mentally in the Indians' place and regard them and their acts from their own standpoint" (v). Fletcher's own introduction to *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* echoed this sentiment, relying on her lengthy description of a temporarily crippling physical ailment that removes her from her profession and levels her with her subjects: alone with the La Flesche family softly singing, "then it was that the distraction of noise and confusion of theory were dispelled, and the sweetness, the beauty and meaning of these songs were revealed to me."

This affective rhetorical collapse was a vehicle that Fletcher could use, to paraphrase Louise Michelle Newman, to mobilize social Darwinism in order to gain entry into the public sphere (Kheshti 28-29). It's also of a piece with the dominant anthropological approach in the nineteenth century to non-Western, nonwhite cultures, which assumed that unfamiliar social systems were "primitive" by comparison. In her extended introduction to *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* (which credits La Flesche as Fletcher's "aid" on the front cover), Fletcher perpetuates this myth while situating Omaha songs at the apex of Omaha culture. In comparison to what she calls the Omaha's "primitive" lifestyle, their songs represent the limits of Omaha "mental life and expression."[46] Melding this theory with the popular notion that Native people had been irrevocably erased through their forced acculturation into capitalist privatization and English education, Fletcher—an agent of that acculturation—concludes her introduction by noting that because "the Omahas as a tribe have ceased to exist," their music could have no

[46] While Alice Fletcher was a primitivist insofar as she infantilized her subjects, she also distinguished herself from her contemporaries by arguing for her idea of Native self-sufficiency. She also employed the explicit language of primitivism sparsely: but it is nearly absent from her published articles, save a note about the ruins of James R. Murie's "primitive dwelling" in "The Hako: a Pawnee ceremony."

"future development." As a part of that living tribe as well as Fletcher's aid and collaborator, La Flesche was compelled to contend with Fletcher's denigration (cloaked in the garb of appreciation) of the music that he would record and study for the rest of his career.

While La Flesche believed that his culture was in danger of disappearance, he also believed (as, to some degree, did Fletcher) that it was already intellectually and philosophically advanced before contact. A respected ethnologist and translator, La Flesche was contacted often by Indianist composers, ethnologists, and scholars for consultation, especially after he gained the official title of Ethnologist at the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1911. H.B. Alexander, a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (which would eventually give La Flesche an Honorary Doctor of Letters), wrote La Flesche in 1920 to thank him for his article "The Symbolic Man of the Osage" and to describe his own theories of "the simple and direct humanism" of "Indian thought." What Alexander describes as "psycho-eideism" he also elaborates in the *Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* in the entries "Philosophy (Primitive)" and "Worship (Primitive)." Expressing his wish "that I might have the opportunity of discussing the whole fascinating subject with you," Alexander concludes that in his letter to La Flesche: "shall be anxious for your opinion."

La Flesche's response two weeks later is complimentary and professional. After praising the term "psycho-eidism" and expressing his approval of Alexander's "vocabulary" in *Mythology of the North American Indians*, he pivots, and issues a caution:

> May I suggest that you give some critical thought to the use of the term "primitive." I can see the priority of its use to characterize uncultured peoples but I cannot regard it as applicable to ideas that have taken years of study and of thought to formulate. I can readily see that the term would be applicable to ideas when they are in their experimental stage but when they have once passed that stage and have found acceptance and use, a use that affects the life of the people, as individuals and as a tribe, it does not seem reasonable to me that these ideas should be still spoken of as "primitive."

La Flesche's letter is an unusual window into his views on an ideology that dominated both popular and scientific approaches to Native (and Black) culture through the nineteen-teens and twenties. Obviously taking offense at the term's infantilizing connotations, La Flesche pivots from "its use to characterize uncultured peoples" and reorients it towards a quality of "ideas." In La Flesche's reformulation, the term "primitive" signifies the suggestive qualities of "experimentation" and isolation. More than that though, according to Fletcher and her ilk Native people were "primitive" when they were not socialized into whiteness. By contrast, La Flesche posits that once Native people put forth an idea that's found "acceptance and…a use that affects the life of the people, as individuals and as a tribe," it is *not* a "primitive" idea any longer. "Acceptance," in La Flesche's parlance, is oppositional to primitivism, and translates explicitly to "use that affects the life of a people, as individuals and as a tribe." In this way, the shift from primitivism to the state that La Flesche celebrates is effected by and for Native peoples, irrespective of white observers and interlopers like Alexander.

This also seems to be La Flesche's argument in his four-volume series *The Osage Tribe*. An extensive and densely detailed four-part account of Osage tradition and ceremony, according to scholar Garrick A. Bailey, *Osage and the Invisible World* was crafted with the intention to make readers "see the world of the Osages for what it was in reality…a highly complex world reflecting an intellectual tradition as sophisticated and imaginative as that of any Old World people" (Bailey 3). While no piece of La Flesche's writing disregards its anticipated audience, *The Osage Tribe* pivots from the texts on Omaha and Osage culture that Fletcher wrote from their shared research. Rather than appeal to the sympathies of the reader (or the writer), *The Osage Tribe* denies resolution by presenting a mass of carefully recorded detail. Bailey calls it "a series of lengthy but disarticulated fragments" that La Flesche "never reached the point of

analyzing or integrating" (4); rather than titillating the reader's sympathies, it demands concentration, refusing to glaze over the minutia of each subject. La Flesche's detailed and fragmentary opus presents one of his strategies for reorienting racist ethnological theory toward a more meaningful engagement with Indian culture.

In addition to *Osage* and his collaborations with Fletcher, La Flesche's ethnographic works include numerous articles, a *Dictionary of the Osage Language*, and, posthumously, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*. *The Omaha Tribe* (1909)—published as the 27th Annual Report in the Bulletin of American Ethnology and, remarkably, the only publication that lists La Flesche and Fletcher as co-writers—pitted its extensive fieldwork and complex organization against essentialist "armchair anthropology," according to a critical review by Robert Lowie in 1913, by "classifying the material in accord with 'aboriginal' rather than 'scientific' logic" (Ridington 5). While *The Omaha Tribe* contains some of this "scientific," racial biologist logic, the word "primitive" is all but absent from these texts, save for a singular instance: a definition in his *Dictionary* distinguishing the word "**gu´-dsi,** farther into the house.," from "**gu´-dsi,** in times past; a long time ago (primitive)," presumably using the word to signify temporal setting that exists before the social formation of Native life as he and his contemporaries conceptualized it.

In some ways, La Flesche's aligning the language of primitivism to that of experimentation borrows logic from "Indian play," which dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly from the turn of the century into the 1920s. While white people "played Indian," slummed around Harlem, and deployed the racialized idea of primitive opposition to the strictures of modernity for their own creative self-actualization, La Flesche revised the script, exploring media outside of ethnology to see if he could better, or at least

differently, represent his tribe for a larger audience. Attempting to gain a broader audience outside of the community of scientists and reformers in which he was already emplaced, La Flesche's submission and subject matter speaks to a modified idea of the reformist project in which he was involved through his work with Alice Fletcher.

I believe that Francis La Flesche turned his efforts to setting and drafting "Indian Plays" in order to practice a new kind of meaning-making, for a different white audience than that of his anthropologist colleagues. He did this, I imagine, because the work of ethnology under the employment of the United States government was the work of white nation-building: gathering information to elucidate Native culture for the dominant class in Washington, D.C. permitted that said information be absorbed and claimed by his readers. As an ethnologist, La Flesche inhabited the role of "translator" in a government process that was intent on stripping Native peoples of the languages and cultures that he labored throughout his career to preserve. La Flesche's consciousness of this project is clear from his volumes of *The Omaha Tribe*, a demanding set of texts that remorselessly require prior knowledge of the Omaha from his readers. It's also latent in the fact that he preserved letters he received posing questions about Omaha and Osage language.

From these letters, it becomes clear that La Flesche understood how his role as translator undercut his agenda as an Indigenous intellectual. How could he work as an ethnologist, which gave him access and leverage and resources, while trying to foil the white supremacist land-grabs toward which the project of translation was geared? Requests for the translation of names of bodies of water recently claimed from the Omaha by the US government were not infrequent,[47] and each anticipated an answer that would authorize the transfer of land

[47] Two such examples: from Mr. F.W. Hodge, July 9, 1914, and from E.S. White, July 14, 1914.

ownership.[48] By "understanding" Omaha land through language, prospectors and geographers could claim it for their own, and La Flesche, as a Native ethnologist (and both employee of and participant in allotment), was enlisted in this project. The relationship between Native language and land ownership is most explicit in a letter from the Ethnologist-in-Charge at the Smithsonian Institution's United States Geographic Board. Writing in 1912 to request information about the river in southern Kansas that ran through "territory ceded by the Osage," he asked with emphasis: "will you kindly give me, as soon as possible, the proper form and the meaning ?" Gilded by propriety and anticipating the translation of "form and meaning" onto a government map, the request uses translation to finalize and disguise the "ceding" of Osage territory. La Flesche seems to respond to most of these requests; he even offers Omaha sayings to inscribe in front of the Nebraska State Capitol Building for the same H.B. Alexander who wrote him about the "primitive" mind (8 May 1922). It seems likely that work like this—imperialist work that was difficult, if not impossible, to subvert—might prompt La Flesche's search for new modes of signification. Why not the increasingly visible genre of the "Indian Play"?

III. The "Indian Play"

[48] These requests, addressed to La Flesche in his capacity as an ethnologist, exist in concert with preservation initiatives of Woodrow Wilson in the early twentieth century, which used preservation as a foil to gain ownership of Native land. In 1916, Wilson signed the act that created the National Park Service (NPS) as a federal bureau. The act describes how the initiative was passed in order to "promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations." By including reservations in the preservation initiative, the Act proclaims the Federal government's intent to control Native land. The act justifies its inclusion of reservations by metastasizing them with the parks as a broader initiative of nature preservation. Rather than mentioning the humans living on the reservation, the act's "purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wild life therein." The idea that would have circulated during this two-year period seems to have been that Native land was available for white use without worry about Native peoples.

It's possible to chart the history of the "Indian Play" in America by beginning as early as the Boston Tea Party (*Playing Indian*, 2-10). Here, I tell the story of the genre as I see it being reciprocally constituted in the fields of drama and ethnography at the beginning of the "Indian school," the Dawes Act, and the professionalized discipline of folklore (which I pinpoint in the introduction to the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1888). As dramatic reenactments of competing visions of Native life—and "eleventh hour" ethnographic narratives of Native death—gained popularity across various public stages, white and Native actors worked within and against the grain of those popular visions of Native America. Beginning around 1880 and ending in about 1931, when Cherokee playwright Lynn Riggs published *Green Grow the Lilacs*, government-funded anthropologists, Indian Academies, film, and "amateur" dramatists worked reciprocally (if not together explicitly) to create competing ideas of Native-ness. Within this framework, Francis La Flesche staked a subtle but forceful claim to self-representation and creative self-fashioning.

By the early twentieth century, the realms of science (anthropology, eugenics, folklore) and popular culture (film, music, children's camps) were the principal producers of "Indian" images, visually and sonically revivifying the attitudes first articulated in the nineteenth century by agencies of the United States government in order to perpetuate hostilities between white settlers and local tribes (Pisani 164, 161). In the popular sphere, images and performances of Indianness were steeped in imperialist nostalgia, purveying the myth of Native extinction that enabled the United States government to safely write Natives out of existence using allotment, blood quantum, and marriage restrictions. According to a eugenicist logic of extermination, Boy Scouts "played Indian" to sate the savagery of their youth, before maturing into a later stage of development. Adults purchased pottery, weaving, and beadwork to create "Indian corners" in

their personal spaces, importing the preservationist policies of the US government in the early twentieth century—which assumed that Native land and culture needed the maintenance and approval of white interlocutors—into the home.

If these popular films, images, and dramatic representations flagrantly dramatized a narrative of disappearance that was widely, pervasively received as fact, scientific images of native cultures produced by folklorists and anthropologists also manufactured and dramatized the necessity of ethnography in Native cultures' "eleventh hour." Of a generation of ethnographers that viewed their fieldwork as an objective approach to culture and their field as a laboratory for that work (Retman 272, FN 3), anthropologists like Franz Boas and the Indigenous intellectual George Hunt (Tlingit and English) and preservationists like the photographer Edward Curtis leave behind photographic evidence of their attempts to simplify Native scenery. To make the space seem pre-modern, Curtis famously erased a radio from a domestic scene in a teepee. Years earlier, in an attempt to disguise an embellished patio and a white picket fence, Boas and Hunt were photographed improvising a blanket as a backdrop for a Kwakwaka'wakw woman spinning yarn and rocking a cradle (Bruchac 6). And for the "Indian Civilization" exhibit in the New Orleans Exposition of 1885, Alice Fletcher required people from the Omaha tribe to dress in traditional costumes, staging a few scenes that masked from viewers the Omaha practice of polygamy (Lorini iv). Ethnographers dramatized their scenery in a process of meaning-making that is also at the surface of ethnographic drama. A few degrees removed from drama like Hurston's, which involved actors portraying a version of their own culture, staging presence—not absence—of its people in the world, the "Indian Plays" reflect the desire of a white interlocutor to remove, reframe, and inhabit the figures of Native America for a consuming public.

Over-determined expectations of Native primitivism filtered into the popular sphere in reciprocal relation with the legal apparatus that privatized and sold off Native land and disenfranchised Native peoples. In the face of increasing social and political disenfranchisement, Native performers were compelled to be attentive to the reception of their performance of Indian-ness by white audiences. Before contact, the idea of "Indian plays" had no resonance in tribal life. Which is not to say that Native cultures were without performances; as Sidoní López has outlined, Native people have always dynamic, variant oral traditions and literatures. These traditions are ancient and dynamic and new, and include:

> Numerous stories, accounts, tales, myths, legends, epic narratives and songs about indigenous cultures that were orally transmitted in order to educate, entertain and preserve Native American cultural traditions. When these stories were told, they were usually accompanied by songs, dances, music, pictographs, wampum, dramatic presentations and a close and direct communication between the storyteller or performer and the audience…making use of certain theatrical elements such as distinct intonation patterns and rhythm, visual images, introductions to tales, word exaggeration, gestures and body movements, which, handed down from generation to generation to bear witness to the performance and dramatization of Native American oral storytelling traditions and their similarities and closeness to theater. In this sense, the Native American art of storytelling consisted of a solo performer, who had no props or costumes, telling a story to an audience and passing down important cultural values and tribal histories through the generations (94).

According to López, it wasn't until 1931 (the same year as Hurston's first performance of *The Great Day*) when Rollie Lynn Riggs published *Green Grow the Lilacs*—famous, now, for Rodgers and Hammerstein's adaptation *Oklahoma!*—and *The Cherokee Night* three years later, that "Native American Theater" was recognized as a genre. Mary Frances Thompson Fisher (Chickasaw), better known as Te Ata, often performed Native readings, stories, and dances alone, accompanied by classical renderings of Native music in the "Indianist" style that was

popular in the early twentieth century.[49] The first Native woman to earn her theater degree from the Oklahoma College for Women who performed a few shows on Broadway, Te Ata repurposed Native themes and stories for larger, majority-white audiences around the time that Riggs published his first play. In some ways, traditional storytelling performances like Te Ata's and the many Native vaudevillians working on traveling tours as well as on film constitute an early history of Native drama. Manifested in the guises of music, ceremony, and dance (what Hanay Geiogamah has called "the recurrent rituals of daily life"), these elements that comprise the genre of Native drama were each outlawed over a hundred years before Native actors took to the popular stage.

I believe Native engagement with the genre of dramatic performance began in Indian schools, which came into being at almost the exact moment as folklore solidified as an academic discipline. The first was at Hampton Institute, a Black college established on the vocational model of its white founder, Booker T. Washington's mentor Samuel Chapman Armstrong, in 1878. Students in the Indian Program were Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Arapaho men transported against their will on what Jen Graber has called the "prison to school pipeline" from Fort Marion Prison in St. Augustine, Florida. Eventually, Native children from sixty-five additional northern and western tribes entered the school, making it (along with the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and the Sherman Indian School in southern California) one of three Indian schools in the nation. The goal of Hampton was not education so much as it was assimilation. In 1899—just one year before Helen Kane would write her first two pieces for

[49] Te Ata was encouraged to act by Frances Densmore, a white folklorist interested in Native life and culture. Her work is evidence, in a different way, of the relationship between Native drama and the ethnographic input of white women at the turn of the century (Harris, "Te Ata," *Oklahoma History Center*).

Hampton Institute's journal, *Southern Workman*, titled "Sakajawea of the Shoshones," Pt. 1 and Pt. 2—Federal Indian Policy was articulated by Commissioner of Indian Affairs T.J. Morgan in 1890:

> The settled policy of the government is to break up the reservations, destroy tribal relations, settle Indians upon their own homesteads, incorporate them into the national life, and deal with them not as nations and tribes or bands, but as individual citizens. The American Indian is to become the Indian American (Porter III, 116-117).

Hampton Institute and its institutionalized genocide is a connective cite between Kane, Fletcher, and La Flesche. Helen Kane's physical proximity to Hampton when she lived in Elizabeth County towards the end of her life (1920 U.S. Federal Census)[50] and her multiple publications in their journal seem to ally her somewhat to the school. Alice Fletcher collaborated with Hampton and Carlisle to advocate for Indian rights. And three of Francis La Flesche's siblings—Susan, Marguerite, and Cary—were students at Hampton. While Native students took advantage of available resources within the constraints of these increasingly pervasive Indian schools, the schools themselves instrumentalized every activity as a course by which to "incorporate students into the national life." While Native people became increasingly public figures on stage and in the political sphere, Indian schools were encouraging students to act. For the duration of these schools' existence—roughly 1880 through 1920 for Carlisle (PA), Hampton (VA), and Sherman (CA)—students costumed and character'd themselves for the public, often in preparation for a career in vaudeville or in Hollywood.

By the nineteen-teens, many vaudeville actors had graduated from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School; to name a few, Joseph Morris (Oneida) (Student File, 1895), Harry Cole

[50] Kane also lived in nearby Newport News, Virginia in (and possible around) the year 1917—it seems likely that she moved to Elizabeth County from Newport News directly. This timeline could potentially extend the time of involvement that she may have had with the Hampton Institute's Indian educational program.

(Cheyenne) (Student File, 1899), and members of the Iroquois Nation William Dominick "White Deer," Elijah Tahmet "Dark Cloud," and John Talkino "Little Thunder" (*Carlisle Indian* 1912). Their experience began at Carlisle, and could have started in a number of plays or pageants. As early as 1890 (*Indian Helper* 1890), for example, an all-Native cast featuring Carlisle students Laban Locojim (Apache) (Student File, 1884), Frank Everett (Wichita) (Student File, 1880), Carl Leider (Crow Nation) (Student File, 1883), Mark Evarts (Pawnee) (Student File, 1883), and Robert Mathews (Pawnee) (Student File, 1914) as a female character, starred in a "most ludicrous representation of a 'Summer Outing'" for an audience of Carlisle students. Twelve years later, Carlisle's local paper *The Red Man and Helper* printed a piece in celebration of a program including actors performing in "different schools or classes in which they had been aided by their several teachers respectively," featuring a band, piano music, a choir, and fourteen actors on stage. While most details of each performance are unclear, one reviewer gathers quotes applauding the actors' skills and, particularly, speech.

> One piece was described as having been "well spoken," then others as "loud and clear," "good," "very good for No. 1," "good and clear," "loudly applauded," "slow and distinct," "well-rendered," "very good with a considerable amount of Porto Rican accent," and "one as "Best"[sic]. Each actor can pick out his or her own without causing any jealousy from the others, if the shoe fit, while all may be excited to renewed effort for future occasions, but the efforts of Tiffany Bender [Washoe] and one or two others were noted for their impressive delivery, in a clear tone of voice and with such distinct utterance as to elicit general commendation (*The Red Man and Helper*).

The author's obsession with elocution is rooted in the assimilationist project. Strikingly, a turn-of-the-century performance featuring Native actors working in what the article indicates were a variety of acting schools, genres, and—from the "Porto Rican accent"—ethnic characters, would have been staged by Carlisle as something of a corrective to popular renditions of "Indian" dialect spoken by white actors during the same period. Elocution in this sense was levied by reviewers as a corrective to the idea that Native people could not speak "proper" English based

on dialect that was fabricated by the same apparatus that staged the correction. Drama, then, was a public stage on which Natives were encouraged to perform whiteness (via elocution, costume, setting) for white people and for each other.

The stage was also a place to dramatize citizenship as a public initiation rite. In *Citizen Indians*, Lucy Maddox describes one such performance at the 1904 celebration of Citizenship Day at the Hampton Institute. In acts that included Black students and Native students from the Indian School, the extensive celebration included a choral presentation of "Indian melodies," dramatic readings of pieces of (and responses to) the Dawes Act, and three dramatic tableaux. Reminiscent of the pageant form, tableaux featured Native students in three stages of transition: "The American Indian, A Host," "The Reservation Indian, A Ward," and "The Indian American, A Citizen." At Hampton as well as at Carlisle, students were compelled to perform roles that dramatized the translation from Native outsider to American citizen, staging the discipline that was likely taking place at many of the at least 257 government Indian schools in operation by that year (Maddox 18-19).

Since the US formally acquired Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory under the terms of the Treaty of Paris just four years before Carlisle's newspaper lauded a student's "Porto Rican accent," the reviewer's praise pinpoints a surprising link between anti-occupation struggles. Eric Lott has famously argued that blackface performance by working-class Irish men 1830s and 40s had the potential to access solidarity between black and Irish workers that then, in turn, could have led to an antiracist solidarity struggle. Whether or not this is the case—and I'm not convinced that it is—the apparatus of mimicry and minstrelsy by the turn of the century was not forgiving. What's compelling in this accented moment is that it indicates an insight into the assimilationist logic: that even as race is imagined in this period as biological and inherent, it's

also accessible through a series of gestures. With that series of gestures, Native actors might have the opportunity to whittle away at the logic that places them in early stages of social development. Even though whites might collapse them with other cultures, actors might use those alignments in solidarity struggles in the future, as Charles Eastman did in 1911 at the Universal Races Congress at the University of London when he repurposed Du Bois's language of "the color line" while the two shared seats on the panel (Vigil 35-36).

Ethnic mimicry was in the fabric of turn-of-the-century drama, and Indian school plays were no different. The Sherman Indian School, for example, staged a variety of performances between 1920-1950 featuring Natives dressed as Hollywood-style Indians, pilgrims, characters in the nativity scene—and in blackface. Circa 1920, Sherman staged some kind of Christian play featuring young Native children in a variety of costumes including two little girls in wigs, "blacked up" on their faces, arms, and necks. A jarring initiation into the world of racial mockery, the play puts on physical display the creator's desire to distance Native and Black children from each other. In this moment, blackface served as an instrument of division imposed by agents of colonialism, inflicted on these children in an attempt to create an irreconcilable division (rather than to maintain one). Solidarity between these children would have posed real danger to the hegemony of a place like Hampton's Indian School: which, unlike Sherman, was also a Black industrial school. Caroline Andrus, the head of Hampton's Indian School program, refigured that danger into a fear of miscegenation when, in the same era as the blackface performance at Sherman, she explained why she'd decided to end Hampton's "Indian Experiment."

> some of the other Indian girls flirted so with the
> colored boys that it made for a good deal of gossip
> of a kind I hate and despise. Now, there will
> probably be no Indian boys at the school this year and

> ...I am afraid this sort of thing will be worse than before and you know how the Indian people feel about it...the changed conditions made me feel I could no longer conscientiously bring children on from the West and that is the reason I resigned" (Lindsey 261).

White fear of contact between Black and Native people was so strong in the 1920s that it literally precipitated the end of Hampton's Indian School program. And at Sherman, the perverse decision to paint Native children black marks the difference between the relationships that seem to have been forged between students outside of the white gaze and those that white administrators displayed on the stage.

Instructions for "Costumes" printed in the early pages of Kane's *The White Dove of Oneida* are evidence that the ideological cruelty of the Sherman Indian School play was not relegated to Indian schools; more likely, "Indian Plays" were co-created within and outside of them. Kane's "Costumes" section reads:

> NOTE. The Indian dresses are easily made of tan-colored cambric, the edges being cut in strips for fringes, an excellent imitation of leather, with decorations of beads and feathers. TIORATA'S Indian complexion of face, neck and hands is acquired by the use of face paint of the necessary tint.*
> ...
> *Face paint (Indian, No. 17) can be obtained from the Publishers, price 35 cents.

The availability of "Indian, No. 17" indicates how common "redface" must have been as a component of an "Indian play." It was also common practice for publishing houses to advertise sets, costumes, and makeup for purchase in their play booklets, particularly at a time when minstrel shows were still in vogue.[51] As an expression of mockery and desire, minstrelsy is a

[51] Emerging in the United States at the beginning of the 1830s (5), blackface minstrel performances have shifted guises and experienced ebbs and flows in popularity. According to Eric Lott, it "came to seem the most representative national art" in the late 1840s into about 1854 (8-9), and sustained a "boom period" in and around the mid-1880s (31).

white performance of difference from and accessibility to a mimicked, imagined black body. In a play about the unidirectional accessibility of racial crossing, redface makeup would likely have emphasized the whiteness of its lead actress, but in a modified form: this whiteness is altered by its proximity to, or transformation into, the actress's painted performance of originary American-ness. Saidiya Hartman has brilliantly described how the blackface minstrel mask indicates the "fungibility" of blackness: the minstrel likens a Black body to a vessel primed for occupation (21), abstracting and commodifying Blackness in service of white supremacy. The particular Native and indigenous history of colonialism and displacement in America might indicate that redface signifies a similar fungibility and receptiveness to yet another form of colonial occupation. In Kane's case, that occupation performed the possibility for a white actress (and her white female viewers) to ally her oppression under patriarchy with that of Native peoples under patriarchal racial colonialism, claiming national belonging at the expense of the Native people in whose image she paints her face.

Dustin S. Tahmahkera has charted the lineage of redface from "Indian-inspired men's and boy's clubs" that—as Shari Huhdorf explains—gained traction in the decades following 1840, through "dime novels of the 1860s, Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in the 1880s and 1890s, radio programs of the early twentieth century, and Hollywood movie representations throughout much of the twentieth century" (4-5), to which we might also add the more private gatherings of the campsite, the parlor, and the study. White representations of Native peoples were occasionally featured on bigger dramatic stages,[52] but dramas, comedies, and romances

[52] In addition to the Indian Operas that I mention on page 104, see Karantonis and Robinson's *Opera Indigene* and Pisani's *Imagining Native America in Music*. "Indian Plays" that incorporated music that weren't "Indianist" opera pieces seem less common, but might include Phillip E. Hubbard's adaptation of *The Barrier*, a romance set in Native America based on a

centering representations of ethnically non-white characters seemed to have been just as common.

By compelling Native youth and children to perform their colonizers, other races, and "Hollywood" versions of themselves, Indian school instructors attempted to indoctrinate their students into an ideological approach to Indianness that stood in opposition to whiteness and civilization. Natives were forced in this process into a kind of racial double-bind: assimilation meant loss of Native identity, but Native identity meant primitivism and a symbolic loss of access to the world that they were being trained to enter. And while the primitivist socio-anthropological approach to Native culture creates an imaginary Indian to supplant real, living people, that imaginary-ness becomes a playground for white children "playing Indian." It's not just the permissiveness of imaginative *play* that made this imaginary realm accessible, for the duration of the performance, to children in the eyes of their adult contemporaries. Biological and racial understandings of social progress undergirded the association of white children to Native people. Philip Deloria describes this phenomenon succinctly:

> Primitives, imagined as being in close contact with nature, were thought to be able to mime the natural world more accurately than moderns. In their rites, celebrants did more than merely imitate in an offhand way. Their archaic mimetic skills were powerful and allowed them to become something Other—animals, gods, natural forces. *Primitivist Indian play, grounded in ethnographic detail, resuscitated archaic imitational skills that were the special province of children. Children imitated the meanings locked into Indianness, one of which was the idea that a person could make significant connections with the world by mimicking it* (emphasis mine, *Playing Indian* 117).

The notion that Native life is particularly accessible to children scaffolds the burgeoning genre in Kane and La Flesche's era of the "Indian Play," which was typically performed by children and by amateurs. Social evolutionary theory maps white children's gradual socialization through

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novel by Rex Beach, which was performed at New York's Lyric Theater and featured in the popular journal *The Play Pictorial* in 1913.

school onto a diachronic, teleological vision of raw violent socialization of Native people into capitalism through the Dawes Act and the rise of the Indian school. In other words, in a primitivist schema of racial biology, ideas of social and intellectual maturity were mapped onto entire groups of people based on their age and skin color. As "younger" civilizations, children and people of color were considered to be closer to nature, and farther from so-called modernity. It's for this reason that Kane's series of three "Indian Plays"—*Yot-Che-Ka*, *The Capture of Ozah*, and *Yagowanea*—were mostly intended for performance by kids.

In the early twentieth century, Native people also often represented themselves, particularly in vaudeville and on film, working within and, especially in the case of silent films from around 1900-1915 (Aleiss 2), defying stereotypes.[53] Actors like Nipo T. Strongheart (Yakama) and Luther Standing Bear (Sicangu and Oglala Lakota Chief) both used the fame they garnered as performers on Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show to advocate for Natives on increasingly public platforms. Others used the vaudeville circuit to jump-start careers in film. Perhaps because the industry hadn't yet consolidated into central corporations, Native peoples enjoyed relative freedom on-screen in the early silent film era (*Reel Injuns*), and Native actors like Abenaki chief Elijah Tahamont (stage name "Dark Cloud"), Lillian Margaret St. Cyr (Winnebago, stage name "Red Wing") and her husband James Young Johnson (Nanticoke, stage name "James Young Deer"), Jay John Fox (Chickasaw, stage name "Edwin Carewe"), Mary Alice Nelson Archambaud (Penobscot, stage name "Molly Spotted Elk") and others found fame

[53] For more on early "Indian" films, see M. Elise Marubbio and Eric L. Buffalohead, *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013, and Kiara Vigil's upcoming book, *Natives in Transit: Indian Entertainment, Urban Life, and Activism, 1930-1970*, as well as the films *Reel Injun*, dir. Neil Diamond and Catherine Bainbridge, 2009, *Imagining Indians*, dir. Victor Masayesva, Jr., 1992, and *Inventing the Indian*, prod. Rich Hall and Dallas Goldtooth, 2012.

in the early nineteen-teens acting in Westerns and working various other jobs in Hollywood.[54] As Philip Deloria has noted, in the early twentieth century Native actors understood that film was developing to reach a massive audience and chose to locate their struggle on the "cultural front," working in popular media to effect socio-political change. Natives "realized as well," he argues, "that political and legal struggles are tightly linked to the ideologies and images—the expectations—that non-Indians have built around Native people," and worked to refigure those images on stage (*Indians in Unexpected Places* 104).

IV. Ethnographic Drama and Indian Boyhood in Francis La Flesche's Written Works

It was necessary that Native authors, activists, and—in La Flesche's case—anthropologists at the turn of the century worked in multiple registers both within and against the grain of white interpretations in order to represent their people and fight social and political disenfranchisement. By the early nineteen-hundreds, La Flesche was respected in the field of ethnology, but turned as well to that of slightly fictionalized autobiography. One year before *The Middle Five*—La Flesche's autobiographical boyhood story—was published by Boston, Small, Maynard & company (with an illustration by Winnebago artist and activist Angel de Cora), Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, Dakota Sioux) published "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" in the *Atlantic Monthly*. One year after *The Middle Five*, McClure published Santee Dakota physician, writer, and reform activist Charles A. Eastman's *Indian Boyhood*. While La Flesche didn't end up publishing the book of short stories that he'd aspired to put out,[55]

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[54] James Young Deer was also a director, writer, and producer, Frank Montgomery directed eighty-two films and acted in twenty-eight, Edwin Carewe was also a director, producer, and screenwriter, and Molly Spotted Elk was primarily a dancer.

[55] In 1995, James W. Parrins and Daniel Littlefield, Jr. published *Ke-Ma-Ha: The Omaha Stories of Francis La Flesche*, which includes a selection of La Flesche's unpublished stories (and all of

the fiction that he did circulate is a testament to his interest in communicating his ideas of Indian-ness to different people in different ways.

Similar to his work in his *Osage* series, La Flesche used his fiction to communicate the universal humanity of the Omaha; this time by deploying the language of childhood. A short story of the friendship of five boys enrolled in a Presbyterian mission school in northeastern Nebraska, *The Middle Five* (1901) was dedicated to the "Universal Boy." "The Buffalo Ride," one of the three short stories that La Flesche was able to publish in his lifetime, was additionally rejected by *Youth's Companion*, a popular and long-running children's magazine birthed from the early twentieth century's obsessive association between children and "primitive" peoples. In the context of the anthropological theory of "social evolution" that dominated anthropology until Franz Boas's cultural and historical approach to the discipline overtook it in the 1920s (Scherer and DeMallie 21), La Flesche's interest in boyhood and universality had a reformist agenda. Against something like Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), a textbook study of the Iroquois of western New York and the Plains tribes, which argued that all people evolve from "primitive," or "savage," to "civilized" states of being, La Flesche's focus on boyhood refigures this associative relationship by manipulating subject matter and readership.

La Flesche achieves this reconfiguration across his fictionalized memoir by toggling between his life at home and at school and focusing on the fraught terrain of translation and forced acculturation rather than writing a simple narrative of socio-cultural progression. It's in his "Preface," however, that he sets up his story as a *performance* for his white readership. Describing "the Indian" in the language of costumed drama, he anticipates his audience's

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his previously-published stories) under University of Nebraska Press. Many of these stories center on the themes of Indian boyhood.

framework, introducing *The Middle Five* as a sort of boyhood "Indian Play." In the first paragraph, La Flesche inhabits his reader in order to explain why, as an author, he chose "to write the story of my school-fellows rather than that of my other boy friends who knew only the aboriginal life":

> The paint, feathers, robes, and other articles that make up the dress of the Indian, are marks of savagery to the European, and he who wears them, however appropriate or significant they might be to himself, finds it difficult to lay claim to a share in common human nature. So while the school uniform did not change those who wore it, in this instance, it may help these little Indians to be judged, as are other boys, by what they say and do (xv).

To mitigate premature judgments stemming from what he later describes as "an ignorance of the Indian's language, of his mode of thought, his beliefs, his ideals, and his native institutions" (xviii), La Flesche chose to write about Indian boyhood by putting Indians into costume. Against "the paint, feathers, robes" that register as a costume "to the European," La Flesche stages a different setting in anticipation of the assumption that Natives existed for white observation, analysis, and pleasure. Describing the "genuine" relationship between his book and lived reality, La Flesche similarly uses the language of drama to describe the birth of his characters: "each little actor, including the writer, made his entrance upon the stage of life in the "tee-pee" (xvi). Rather than indicating a simple capitulation to white desires for displays of Indianness, these crucial moments in La Flesche's "Preface" to *The Middle Five* elaborate his grasp of the stakes of dramatic reception of Indianness, particularly when that Indianness is always already received by white viewers as predetermined, costumed, and created for consumption. Drama, according to La Flesche, is a predetermined register with some potential for subversive reconstruction.

Alice Fletcher's biographer Joan Mark argues that La Flesche began writing fiction in part because of his lack of recognition in Alice Fletcher's monographs (Mark 263-64). While Fletcher did want La Flesche to succeed—sending his *Middle Five* manuscript to publishers,

presenting alongside him when he read it to the Folklore Society of Baltimore, and mailing him epistolary encouragement—she wasn't willing to describe the depth of his involvement in their shared projects in print (James W. Parrins and Andrew F. Littlefield Jr. xix). It seems to me insufficient to limit La Flesche's interest in fiction and autobiography to this frustration, although it may have played some part in the switch. Instead of, or at least in addition to, Mark's telling, La Flesche seems to have turned to literature more out of frustration with the ideological limits of ethnology and of translation. Beginning at least at the turn of the century, La Flesche experimented across multiple genres, grasping and loosening the conventions of autobiographical fiction as well as, importantly, of drama.

La Flesche's contributions to the field of Indianist opera at the height of its popularity mark the beginning of his engagement with musical drama, just one year before he and Helen Kane copyright *Adita, son of the Sioux*. Mark, Parrins, Littlefield, and Sherry L. Smith have carefully documented La Flesche's short time writing fiction, but his work as a playwright and librettist has only been discussed in the context of *Daoma*, the Indianist opera for which La Flesche constructed the plot. *Daoma* was composed by Charles Wakefield Cadman with lyrics by librettist Nelle Richmond Eberhart, but the play was conceived by La Flesche. Cadman's treatment of Native songs drawn from Alice Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song* and performed as *Four American Indian Songs* had drawn La Flesche's attention. After encountering Cadman's arrangement, La Flesche suggested that Cadman should collaborate with the librettist Nelle Eberhart to compose an opera based on a traditional Siouan legend. La Flesche would write the setting himself (Perison, "The 'Indian' Operas of Charles Wakefield Cadman," 23). In turn, Cadman assured La Flesche that the work would be "purely Indian;" that as a composer, he would stay close to the Native songs collected and catalogued by La Flesche and Fletcher

(Perison, *Charles Wakefield Cadman: His Life and Works*). Songs for the opera were sourced from three printed collections including *Indian Story and Song* and *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*. Cadman also used songs that he collected and catalogued on the Omaha reservation at Walthill, Nebraska in the year 1909. There, though technically his employer, Cadman assisted La Flesche, who made cylinder phonograph recordings and transcriptions for several weeks (Perison, *Charles Wakefield Cadman* 23). La Flesche would go on to employ Cadman, to make notational transcriptions of Osage music for La Flesche's books (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 191). Though La Flesche only shares the credit for writing the libretto in *Daoma*, his involvement as historian, ethnologist, sound engineer, and author are evidence of his interest in the possibilities of Native song and history as they could be transmitted in the form of the Native musical.

Although it was conceived at a prolific (if early) moment in the history of Indian operas, in between Arthur Nevin's *Poia* in 1907, Victor Herbert's *Natoma* in 1910 (Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 98), and William Hanson's *The Sun-Dance Opera* from 1912-13 (Karantonis and Robinson, 178), *Daoma* was never performed. Feeling under-credited for the amount of work he contributed to *Daoma*, La Flesche took a more peripheral role with *Shanewis*, whose draft he corrected for production. Cadman completed the opera in collaboration with Tsianina Redfeather Blackstone, a Creek-Cherokee singer whose fictionalized autobiography became the foundation for the opera's libretto. In both plays, Cadman seems to have chosen to work with La Flesche based on La Flesche's expertise as an ethnologist who was deeply versed in the history and custom of the Omaha and, particularly, of their music. As with his fiction, Sherry Smith has suggested that La Flesche volunteered his expertise for the opera "to reach a different audience from those who read either his anthropological or his autobiographical works" (Smith 595). But

why did La Flesche choose Cadman? Or more pertinently, what was it about the opera? What was it about the stage?

While he was working on *Daoma* in the beginning of 1908, the name "Helen Kane" begins to appear in his diaries. Those diaries are about the size and thickness of a pinky finger—not built for extensive recording—but one entry is explicit: on January 15, he "went to see Mrs. Kane at noon about manuscript." That year, La Flesche and Kane occasionally saw each other socially,[56] until one afternoon in the middle of July. At La Flesche's house in Washington DC, Kane stopped by to "read him what she had finished of the play" (July 11, 1908), and a month later La Flesche and Kane's play *Adita, son of the Sioux* went under copyright. I believe La Flesche's work on *Adita* was similar to that which he did on *Daoma*: namely, that he contributed a setting to a play that was then adapted and embellished by a white female writer. I believe he drafted a "manuscript" based on the same research on the Sioux that he used as the foundation for *Daoma*—research that he undertook as an interpreter for Alice Fletcher and continued while adding to the Peabody Museum's collection of artifacts in the early 1880s (Rhode)—and that Helen Kane adapted that manuscript into a play that she copyrighted under both of their names.

While the manuscript of the play of *Adita, son of the Sioux* is lost, La Flesche's and Kane's other plays shed light on the first copyrighted Native-authored play. While La Flesche has been documented as a co-author of the foundation and libretto for *Daoma* and as an expert with the knowledge of Native song and story necessary to revise *Shanewis*, it has yet to be noted that these were not La Flesche's only dramatic projects. La Flesche's friendship with Kane and his expertise in the field of Omaha and Osage ethnology primed him to "criticize" Kane's

[56] On January 1, 1908, La Flesche "went to Helen's." On April 1, "Mrs. Kane" and a couple whose names are unfortunately unintelligible, "spent the evening."

"Indian Plays," and his flexible approach to communicating "accurate" portrayals of his culture led to his own experiments in writing what we might see as a very early form of Native drama.

Native playwright, producer, director, and professor of theater Hanay Geiogamah (Kiowa-Delaware Tribes) distinguishes "The New American Indian Theater" from this early history. According to him, "the most important function of the Indian dramatist is to communicate with his own people" (5). A robust history of Native drama that's centered on Native audiences would begin with *Green Grow the Lilacs* but accelerate in the Indian cultural revival of the 1940s (Geiogamah 2). I contribute this pre-history to Geiogamah's lineage of Native theater not to contradict his terms, but to broaden the history of Native engagement with a genre that was commonly leveraged against them, and to complicate the ways that we have known Native ethnographers to engage with white dramatic work about Native peoples. La Flesche did not publish his own plays, but he did contribute to plays published about Native peoples, and his creative ethnographic work marks a significant contribution to the history of American Indian Theater.

La Flesche drafted *Daoma* the same year that he worked on *Adita*, and actually seems to have used the character of "Adita" in both. *Daoma* is the story of a love triangle between the Indian maiden Daoma, Nemaha—the suitor who betrays her—and Aedeta, the suitor who wins her love. Rather than replicating the heterosexual love story of *Daoma*, *Adita* seems to tap into La Flesche's interest in Indian boyhood: its title centers a male figure, modifying the name "Adita" with "son of" in order to highlight the character's status as a child *and* as a progenitor of a Native tribe.

The youthful character of "Adita" actually seems to have preoccupied La Flesche in his creative writing: he appears in "Adita's First Hunt," and two drafts (the longer, handwritten

untitled), called “A-de´-ta and Thaddeus.” “Adita’s First Hunt” is written in apparent haste; scribbled on the back of a typed draft of a different story, it covers four pages and culminates in an elk hunt. Drafted and revised in pencil and ink, then partially typed into a different draft, “A-de´-ta and Thaddeus” received more care. Each dramatizes Native boyhood; the first through encounter with an animal and the second, with a white boy. Neither was published, neither explicitly mentions a tribal affiliation, and neither includes a date. The existence of both is evidence of La Flesche’s interest in creatively reinterpreting Native life in different ways for different kinds of audiences.

In “Adita’s First Hunt,” Adita and his mother are hungry. After walking together to “a small lake” to dig up the “youngest and sweetest” turnips, the story is subsumed by a musical reverie. Above Adita’s head, a bird ushers this startling moment of poetry into a story otherwise driven by action. “The little fellow hummed a tune as he worked” while, perching nearby, the meadow lark “sang and chatted with his mate as he swayed to and fro with the motions of the wind.” La Flesche describes their conversation: “‘so do I wish that winter may never come,’ said the bird, for the people say that the bird sings ‘I wish winter may never come.’” Their reverie is interrupted by a herd of elk, against which Adita turns his mother’s knife. As I’ll discuss in relation to Helen Kane’s plays, likening the Native peoples to animals is a common trope in primitivist literature. Setting the specter of “winter” in contrast to the bucolic scene of conversation and bounty, the poetic center of “Adita’s First Hunt” works both within and against this analogy to communicate two arguments at once. First, that song is language and second, that musical language has value and meaning in nature as well as in “civilization;” that Native song and language can have meanings beyond what a white person is able to interpret.

Like "Adita's First Hunt," "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus" tempers and reorganizes the social biological analogy of Native people to nature. By contrast, though, the draft of "A-de´-ta" is lengthy, carefully revised, and dense. While the script that Kane wrote for *Adita, son of the Sioux* seems to be lost, the two drafts "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus" seem to me to be two likely candidates for the setting of the *Adita*. "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus" is structured through parallels, demonstrating La Flesche's craft and lauding *The Middle Five*'s "Universal Boy." "On a bright Sabbath morning," a white family brings their son Thaddeus to "be ceremonially named," and "While Thaddeus was being christened another ceremony was being performed in a tee-pee not far (away) from the missionary cabin. It was very different in character although the ideas embodied in it were the same."[57] The "Indian boy," named A-de´-ta, goes on to initiate La Flesche's story of boyhood friendship, inaugurated in the woods.

When little Thaddeus, or "Thaddy," finds a dirty doll hanging from a fence, he decides to bring it into the forest to behead it, using the guillotine his father had rigged up for butchering chickens. Just before he performs his execution, Thaddy is surprised by "a little brown boy." By contorting their faces into the same shape, each becomes a mirror for the other.

> Thaddy cautiously approached the mysterious visitor. Thaddy made a face after he had stared at the stranger for a while and instantly the little brown face was puckered up in response to the peculiar greeting.

By modifying their physical features temporarily, both Thaddy and A-de´-ta are able to perform a "peculiar" sameness. No longer reified by social status in their parallel communities, their identities shift from "white" and "Indian" to "boy" and, as Thaddeus's initial resentment turns to

[57] In pencil, La Flesche wrote a note that's only partially intelligible above the part of the sentence beginning "the ideas embodied…." It reads: "with worthy/worldly distinction from its white birth [f…] […] the town."

excitement, “he galloped towards Adita with joyous yells forgetting all about the injunctions of his mother to stay in the yard.”

Having instructed his characters to violate the rules of adulthood, La Flesche next shears them of the constraints of adult-meaning making. “Neither one could speak the language of the other,” La Flesche explained, “and their only means of communication was pantomimes.” As they hunt and climb trees together until Thaddy’s mother calls him home, La Flesche’s interest in sound and in language is refracted through their silent explorations. Far from his *Dictionary of Osage Languages*, this story argues for the dignity of Native peoples by moving outside of social (or adult) paradigms of value. After waiting a few days to approach Thaddy again, Adita and Thaddy perform their transformation into the guise of one another: “the two boys stuck their tongues out at each other” and “made for the dark ravine,” approaching the door of a tent before the story cuts off.

It’s the world of boyhood in “A-de´-ta and Thaddeus” in which Indian-ness and whiteness are leveled in the field of performance. Significantly, that performance would probably have appealed to a white audience: by constructing a friendship through the actions of pantomime, the story permits the act of “playing Indian” that was so common to amateur children’s performances in summer camps and at schools in the nineteen-teens and twenties. In the story, the realm of boyhood is Adita’s purview, and it’s Adita who leads the adventures through the woods, inaugurating Thaddy into various interactions with nature. In order to level with one another, Adita and Thaddy choose a form of communication outside of Siouan and English—even outside of spoken language. In this way, La Flesche stages a form of social equality literally through the language of dramatic performance rather than that of verbal communication. The play also represents another moment in La Flesche’s search for the way to

overcome the oppressive binds of ethnology and translation, whereby his indigenous knowledge is exploited against his own interests. By constraining the act of leveling white and Native person to childhood, he ran the risk of unintentionally endorsing the notion that Indian culture existed at the stage of white childhood.

It's this story that I believe may be the foundation of *Adita, son of the Sioux.* Based on Helen Kane's life experience and dramatic productions, it's likely that some of the subversion of "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus" would have been lost in translation; modified or supplanted by a white supremacist elevation of white motherhood, the literary device of the marriage plot, and the vehicle of amateurism.

V. The Life and Work of Helen P. Kane

Helen Kane's personal history, social context, and writing uniquely situate her life and work to be a window into dominant ideologies of race, gender, drama, ethnography, and perceptions of Indian-ness in the volatile turn-of-the-century moment in which she and La Flesche were writing. As La Flesche's dramatic collaborator, she represents a divergence between the goals of La Flesche and those of the white women Nativists of that era.

Helen Kane was born Nellie Craft Pooke in Charlestown, Massachusetts on April 14, 1851. After marrying James John Kane, a Canadian-born Chaplain of the United States Navy ("New Hampshire, Marriage and Divorce Records, 1659-1947"), she moved from Brooklyn, New York, to Boston (1880 U.S. Federal Census), to Washington, DC (U.S. City Directory 1897, and US Census, 1900, 1910). Kane's frequent movement can be attributed to her

relationship to the Navy[58] and to the wealth she accumulated through inheritance and marriage. Living with her parents and without her husband more or less from 1890 onwards (U.S. City Directory, 1890 and 1900 U.S. Federal Census) and without her two daughters in the house only a few years later,[59] Kane was afforded both wealth and leisure. Her father's death in 1901—right around the time she adapted the status of widowhood, though her husband seemed at this point to be estranged, not dead—would have added to her subsistence as a philanthropist and writer.[60]

An active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and an erstwhile author of Revolutionary War fiction and poetry; author of assorted "Indian Plays" and fiction as well as of eleven parlor plays; and volunteer on government-funded committees supporting Indian anthropology and folklore, potentially with peripheral involvement in the Hampton Institute, Kane used her writing to co-constitute ideas of Native America and of white nationhood. In that writing, Kane dabbled in the nascent genres of folklore and ethnography—sometimes in collaboration with Francis La Flesche—in order to iterate white female agency through the figure of the Native woman and that of the Native boy. In her work, it's through the language of the parlor play that the genre of the "Indian Play" comes into being, and through her figuration of Native people that she configures her own agency as a white woman. While the "Indian Play" came into being through the work of both white and Native actors, and while La Flesche

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[58] In addition to her husband's work, Kane's father Samuel Hartt Pooke was a Naval Constructor (*Daughters of the American Revolution Lineage Book* and *Magazine of American History*) and her grandfather was a Commodore in the Navy (*Magazine of American History* 33).

[59] Kane did move in with one of her daughters in Pennsauken, New Jersey, from as late as 1930 until at least 1940 (1930 U.S. Federal Census, 1940 U.S. Federal Census). She died on April 27, 1943 in nearby Merchantville, NJ (*Find a Grave index*).

[60] In total, Dick & Fitzgerald usually paid her $10 or $15 a play—about $270 or $400 today—based, according to Kane's own calculations, on price per book as determined by the publisher: a $0.25 book is worth $25, $0.15 is $15, and so on. Her books were often printed without royalties. (Kane, letter to Dick & Fitzgerald, 26 November 1909).

attempted to intervene in the genre's often hegemonic ideas of whiteness, Kane's plays represented a specific form of "playing Indian" that used ethnographic detail to validate a nineteenth century Victorian ideal of white womanhood through Native characters.

Around 1903—a decade when the relatively new discipline of folklore met with a growing national vision of preservation and conservation through the United States government—Kane became an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). That year, she printed the only poem she'd ever publish:[61] "Our Flag—June, 1777," written for Betsy Ross and printed in *American Monthly*, the DAR's magazine.[62] In "Our Flag," Kane wove together feminine and masculine labor, placing an unnamed Ross sewing the American flag at its narrative center while simultaneously creating that flag as a metonymic site of wartime struggle. Strong, resourceful women preoccupy Kane in her later writings. Her other preoccupation is enfolded in the phrase she pens towards her poem's conclusion: "ad astra, per aspera," "through hardships to the stars." A motto meant to signify the tireless spirit of the pioneers, the poem sentimentally locates the origin of American history in white settlement, where nationhood was defined by bloodshed and, in turn, defines "American-ness." Here, Kane cites the Revolutionary War as the original site of modernity. As I will discuss, the second site of

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[61] In a letter confirming her contract with the publishers Dick & Fitzgerald for her play *The Perigrinations of Polly* in 1910, Kane included a poem, "which does not count for anything but friendly greeting"), called "Chimes." Given the seven years' difference between this and her first published poem, it seems likely that Kane continued to write poetry during the interim.

[62] While Kane published "Our Flag" in the sixth and final issue of the 1903 volume of the *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*, the first three issues each featured her serialized story, "The Daughters of Mistress Ruth," which won "$65 in a contest held by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution for the best short story founded upon facts of revolutionary times" (*The Spirit of '76*, 183-184). Narrated in Revolutionary wartime, the story is as much a heterosexual romance as it is a drama amongst women. As a portrayal of willful and contentious young white women at odds with an older generation, the story is a direct precursor to her parlor dramas and her "Indian plays."

modernity in her work is alive in what Philip Deloria has described as "the heuristic encounter with the primitive" (*Playing Indian* 105); a subversion of which La Flesche offered in "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus." Together, these visions of American history tell a specific story about whiteness, heroism, and sympathy.

Kane additionally acted as the Registrar in the office of the Vice-President General in Charge of Organization for the DAR until, at fifty-nine years old, she began to refocus her efforts into playwriting and Indian folklore.[63] Her interest in folklore, however, actually began at least a decade before she joined the Daughters. In 1892, Kane joined the reception committee for the third annual meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society. (At the time, Alice Fletcher sat on a few different boards for the Society and gave a paper at the meeting, titled "The Haethuska Society among the Omahas" and based on the research she'd just begun with Francis La Flesche.) That summer, Kane published a brief anecdote in *The Journal of American Folklore* (*JAMF*)'s "Folk-Lore Scrap-Book" (April-June 1892). A selection of transnational folklore written in decontextualized snippets, the "Scrap-Book" bridges the contemporaneous studies of folklore and anthropology to the curiosity cabinets that were each science's precursor. Titled "RECEPTION BY THE DEAD," Kane's piece is exceptionally abstract:

> —Among certain negroes, locality unknown, a custom prevails of a reception by a dead person. The corpse is dressed as if for a festival, in its best clothing; the user announces, 'The corpse will now receive his friends;' and those present enter and depart with greetings and farewells, given as if the dead person were capable of comprehending (148).

[63] Kane remained in the office of the Registrar of Chapters until 1912, when she completely lost sight in one eye and began to go blind in the other. She continued working in that office in a different capacity despite her blindness (*The American monthly magazine* 136), and seems to have supplanted that work by publishing her plays, consistently, from 1908-1914.

Within the logic of the "scrap-book"—a far cry from La Flesche's Omaha books—Kane's anecdote is brief and deracinated, then recontextualized by its proximity to other folkloric anecdotes. It gains clout not from definitive reference to a moment or history, but instead from the minstrel trope of reference itself. Kane's anecdote not only belies her interest in scripting her own version of the rituals and customs of Black people, but also survives as the inaugural document of her experiments performing folkloric "others" in text. The unknown and the unknowable, according to her awed and lightly derisive tone, are nonetheless available for adaptation in writing.

In addition to her poem and her anecdotal claim to ethnographic knowledge, Kane published four short stories and fourteen plays in her lifetime [IMG 1]. Her first eleven plays were published by major east coast publishing houses: six with the New York publisher Dick & Fitzgerald, three with Philadelphia's Penn Publishing Company, and two with Walter H. Baker & Company in Boston. Hers are "society comedies" and romantic dramas, deftly crafted, spanning one, two, or three acts. In each, Kane is enamored with scene and costume and pithy dialogue, and the drama unfolds in the parlor; a formal and ideological genre-structure that she would go on to import into her "Indian Plays."

A space where the privacy of the Victorian home and the public sphere collided through the figure of the hostess, the parlor was often the site in which "drawing-room plays" were set. Beginning as an aristocratic pastime in Britain and the United States, "private theater" gained popularity in the middle classes in the second half of the nineteenth century. These parlor plays were performed, often in private, as a means for amateurs to play-act class ascendance by inhabiting the gestures of social elites (Weig 174). An "aspirational, polite space" (Weig 174), the drawing room set the scene for domestic entertainment that was often scripted, played, and

hosted by women who could afford both space and leisure. As such, they were frequently attacked by male modernist authors and critics—George Bernard Shaw once described the fatigue of watching "a tailor's advertisement making sentimental remarks to a milliner's advertisement in the middle of an upholsterer's and decorator's advertisement"—but they were widely popular, particularly amongst female audiences. Appropriately, Kane's plays often fell under the marketing category that Dick & Fitzgerald titled "Plays for Female Characters Only" (including her earliest play about a Native character, *The White Dove of Oneida),*[64] populated by quick-tongued, resourceful white women. When in 1914 the Samuel French Publishing Company published Kane's "Indian Plays" on the "Great American Authors" imprint, they pitched the plays to "amateur" players and lay audiences similar to those of the parlor dramas.

Kane's "amateur" dramas perpetuate the tradition of the parlor play across various settings, negotiating her lead female characters' whiteness against the specter of non-white characters and laying the groundwork to transpose the parlor into the northern edge of Lake Erie. The ways that Kane's characters undertake this negotiation represent a version of the ways that white female Indian folklorists and anthropologists of the same era—for example, Alice C. Fletcher—negotiated their race and gender through their relationship to their Native subjects. Reading Kane's plays contextualizes the pervasive folkloric phenomenon[65] in a literary genre

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[64] *The White Dove of Oneida* is advertised under "Plays for Female Characters" in the early pages of Kane's other plays published by Dick & Fitzgerald, including *The Future Lady Holland*, *The Upsetting of Jabez Strong*, and *Under Sailing Orders*.

[65] While "Playing the Folk" traces this negotiation through the works of Helen Kane, Alice Fletcher, and Natalie Curtis Burlin, it's actually at the surface of a breadth of folkloric and anthropological writings by white women (about Black and Native peoples) from the 1880s through the 1940s. For two other examples, see Francis Densmore's *The American Indians and Their Music* (1926) and Abigail Holmes Christensen's *Afro-American Folk-Lore* (1892).

whose amateurism bears relation to the contemporaneous accessibility of folklore to untrained white female practitioners.

Kane seeks white feminine self-actualization in her parlor plays through the marriage plot and by contrast to the sounds of nonwhite, or off-white, femininities. At the surface of her non-"Indian Plays" is a persistent fascination with race and ethnicity, particularly as she could manipulate them to define and celebrate whiteness.[66] For example, *The Peregrinations of Polly*, a one-act parlor comedy for female characters, features a woman, her friend, and the woman's servant Siva, who speaks in a heavy, unplaceable dialect. A figure of ignorant complaisance, Siva is referred to alternatively as "Indian" and "Aboriginal," and her inherent, biological servility becomes a comedic metaphor for the lead's inevitable marriage: "There's nothing the aboriginal woman understands so well as master, master, in large Roman text," describes the master in question, "and I have noticed we're most of us aborigines to a certain extent." Polly and her friend find themselves eventually, by way of their eventual marriages and their consistent on-stage contact with, and differentiation from, the language and songs of their non-white female servants. On the rare occasion that one of Kane's stories does not feature a servant—like *Under Sailing Orders* (1912), a one-act comedy published by Dick & Fitzgerald—an exotic setting with allusion to "beguiling" foreign women provides the possibility for white western characters to momentarily disavow social norms, ultimately reentering society through, you guessed it, a marriage.

[66] For more on the ways that whiteness is constituted through its imagined opposition to blackness throughout American literary history, see Toni Morrison, *Playing In the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992).

Save for a dialect story called "News From Car'Line County"—which she wrote and appended to a copy of *Yagowanea* and sent to La Flesche, describing it as "a bit of nonsense"[67]—neither Black men nor women appear in Kane's narratives. What does "appear" is a sonic rendering of fabricated blackness: the minstrel song. If "to listen is to be straining toward a particular meaning," to quote Jean-Luc Nancy (Steve 14), then one register of these minstrel plots' meaning aligns seamlessly with Kane's larger project of self-expression through the guise—and approval—of fictional nonwhite voices. Muted in Kane's *A Russian Romance* (1907) except for a brief bout of dialect expressing a "mammy" character's ineptitude as a surrogate mother (compared to that of her counterpart, a wealthy Russian woman disguised as a tutor), the minstrel sound is loudest in *A Bundle of Matches*.

Wilhelmena, a young white woman who plays the jokester in the play's bevy of eligible bachelorettes, enters her first scene singing and strumming her banjo. Her and the play's first song is a number from Seymour Hicks and Harry Nicholls's musical comedy *A Runaway Girl*, which had a successful run of 593 performances at the Gaiety Theatre in London beginning in May of 1898 (Johnson). A duet between a horse jockey named Flipper and a maid named Alice, the song caricatures "little colored piccaninnies" too scared of goblins and elves to "share a kiss/ In the dark, alone" and to "steal de ripe bananas." Registering primarily as nonsense, the song mainly introduces "richly and showishly"-dressed Wilhelmina as a taboo-breaker. In a play about romance and rejection, Kane's minstrel fantasy of Black children kissing in the dark—performed by the character who flouts decorum—treats Black sound as a dangerous sexual

[67] By contrast, according to James W. Parrins and Andrew F. Littlefield Jr, when Francis La Flesche sent his manuscript to Macmillan, the publishing house suggested that La Flesche tell his stories in the style of Uncle Remus; as frame narratives, presumably with the trappings of dialect (language, and maybe also rural setting). Blackness and Indigeneity were specifically, explicitly associated in the fabric of primitivism in this period.

counterpoint of an otherwise polite parlor comedy, and endows Wilhelmina with the racialized danger of sexual unpredictability.

If the first song is meant to serve as an interruption, reminding the viewer of what these women are not, then the song carrying the second half of the play is expository; encouraging and emphasizing the romance plot's forward motion. "I Love you my Love I do" was included in the New York theater run of *A Runaway Girl* (recast as "The Runaway Girl" a year before it was produced in London), as well as in *The Circus Girl*, also at the Gaiety Theatre. Some sheet music editions include an "English Version" on the first page of text, printed in numbered poetic stanzas and written—like the minstrel breaks in *A Bundle of Matches*—in "standard" English in order to accentuate by contrast the minstrel dialect printed above the song's notation. It's the dialect version of the song's first line, "I's in love, and my dove is de sweetest gal you's ever seen," that's reprinted almost exactly as the concluding words in Kane's play. As a way to shape the narrative through complement (as does this song) and contrast (as does the previous song), and by contributing additional language and melody to modify the narrative's dialogic frame, music can give the impression of being a uniquely liberated register of communication. In *Segregating Sound*, Karl Hagstrom-Miller adumbrates how, beginning around the turn of the century, the recording industry fabricated racial categories of music that were in reality neither biological nor inherent (*Segregating Sound*). In this context, Jennifer Lynn Stoever notes that the "listening ear" is trained to flatten complex sounds and anticipate racial categories of the voice. It's in this context that rich, white, wealthy Wilhelmina takes the stage with her banjo. It's also in this context that Kane stages Native America, and that La Flesche attempts to re-present Native music in an ethical way.

Before her three "Indian Plays" in 1914, Kane published only one play with Native characters: *The White Dove of Oneida*, "a romantic drama" issued by Dick & Fitzgerald in 1907, just a year before she copyrighted *The Capture of Ozah* and *Adita, son of the Sioux*. That the play didn't sell particularly well may explain why she waited seven more years before publishing her series of "Indian Plays" under a different publisher.[68] Like Kane's parlor plays, *The White Dove of Oneida* takes place primarily in the home of "Mistress Fairchild," the wife of a Colonial officer, in the former Oneida territory of northern New York state. Set in 1794, Kane's play commemorates the Treaty of Canandaigua between the Oneida and the United States by transubstantiating the scant recompense that the US gave to the Oneida—$4,500, a saw-mill and "one or two" overseers, a church, and official (and, as it turned out, temporary) recognition of the tribe's ownership of their land ("Treaty With the Six Nations, 1794" and Herndon and Sekatau, 174)—into drama of the nuclear family.

Kane deployed this logic in her parlor plays, which used the trope of contact to facilitate a uni-directional white female bildungsroman at the expense of nonwhite female characters. Of Kane's parlor plays, only *The White Dove of Oneida* dramatized that contact (and reconciliation) between white and Native characters. In *The White Dove of Oneida,* Kane makes Indianness accessible to her white female characters and to her audience by dramatically rendering white and Native contact through the lens of female empathy. In this way, *The White Dove of Oneida* represents the folklore of her moment as well as her own interpretation of the social Darwinist associative relationship between Natives, nature, and women. Kane's white female characters'

[68] At the end of a letter to Dick & Fitzgerald, Kane notes that she'll accept any price for *The Future Lady Holland* knowing "how little mercantile value such work has," then lamenting that *The White Dove of Oneida* disappointed in its own sales: "as in the case of the 'White Dove' — which I hope will make up to you some day, in a thing which will sell" (13 January 1911).

innate ability to experience empathetic connection with nonwhite women is another version of their sonic differentiation from nonwhite, often working-class, female characters in her other parlor plays. Both use women of color as vessels for white female self-actualization. In keeping with the folkloric desire for Native authenticity, however, only this play explicitly presents Native characters actively welcoming white access to their personhood. Using the vehicles of sympathetic communion and—as I'll discuss in Kane's 1914 suite of "Indian Plays"—of music, Kane's plays dramatically give permission to white women to "play Indian."

Set in a colonial-style room in Mistress Fairchild's home and, briefly, at the colonial outpost, *The White Dove of Oneida* unfolds just after the Treaty is signed; according to Kane's narrative, about fifteen years after a battle between Colonial troops and the Oneida that left "prisoners captured on both sides." Because it's difficult to grasp the depth of Kane's understanding of the Oneida peoples (though it's clear that she fabricated the names of her characters and the battle she references did not actually happen), it's also difficult to understand her choice of the Oneida as a subject of her play. The play takes place more than thirty years after the French-Indian War, when the Oneida allied with the British as a part of the Iroquois Confederacy. It's possible that Kane's choice of the Oneida peoples has to do with their history of reform leading up to the year of the Treaty. According to David J. Silverman, by 1770 the Oneidas increasingly lived in nuclear family units rather than in matrilineal longhouses, growing livestock and English crops and worshipping in a two-story Christian meetinghouse built a little before the Revolution. "The Oneidas's purpose in their reforms was not to exchange one culture for another or to disavow their traditional values," he writes, "but to adjust to the encroaching colonial order. The Oneidas's future as a people depended on it" (94). If Kane studied the people about which she wrote—a distinct possibility which I'll discuss shortly—then the Oneida might

have appeared to be a kind of interstitial tribe that could be narratologically, dramatically rendered as a bridge between Native and white people, in the figure of Dorothy.

Known as the "white dove of Oneida," Dorothy represents an interstitial figure who embodies the possibility of inhabiting a Native identity as a white woman. As she's represented in "Synopsis" of the play, Mistress Fairchild's infant daughter, Dorothy, was captured during the Treaty. Early on, Dorothy enters the play alongside her adopted mother Tiorata, wife of the Oneida chief, as fifteen-year-old Chioresta. *The White Dove of Oneida* dramatizes Chioresta's return to her white family, and relies on the trope of sentimental conciliation to perform the relationship between whites and Native peoples while staging the primacy of white social and emotional structures. Translating the hint of her character's guilt for her complicity in Native genocide into a personal drama resolvable through biological, feminine empathy, Kane stages forgiveness and restores white colonial social structure (as she reimagines it for a sentimental, Victorian drama). Or, as Kane concludes in her own "Synopsis": "The working out of the drama portrays the gradual, but irresistible mother-love breaking down Tiorata's intense hatred of the white race, and Dorothy's voluntary reunion with her true mother and sister." Unlike two of the three "Indian Plays" in which La Flesche was involved (the third of which involves no children), *The White Dove of Oneida* chooses white and Indian girlhood instead of Indian boyhood as a central plot-point. This shift may indicate La Flesche's hand in the setting of the "Indian Plays," based on Kane's otherwise consistent interest in the figures of young white women.

Patience and fidelity differently compose the moral center of each mother character in *The White Dove of Oneida*. Because the play argues that interracial community is ultimately subservient to biological family—because racial sociality is rooted, in this developmentalist framework, in racial biology—it's Mistress Fairchild's patience and loyalty to her daughter that

ultimately restores her family unit. On the other hand, Tiorata's loyalty is to her husband, who ordered her to return her adopted daughter in order to *adopt* the terms of her tribe's treaty with the United States government. Not only does Kane elevate the role of the US government as an ethical entity (an absurd claim in the face of their role in the systemic genocide and subjugation of Native peoples,), she also ultimately celebrates Tiorata's character not just because Tiorata feels "mother-love," but also because she respects the power structures that disenfranchise her. In the end, Tiorata learns to have patience with, and respect for, white custom, and Mistress Fairchild regains her biological child.

In *The White Dove of Oneida*, Kane uses music to reinforce the values of patience with, and fidelity, to a white supremacist social system. Printed with notation on the first page of the play's text, the song "Golden Slumbers"—written by Thomas Dekker for *Patient Grissel*[69] and published in 1603 (Collier 61)—hinges on Griselda's fidelity to the social structures that require her to defer to her husband at all costs. As is the case in her parlor plays, Kane deploys Dekker's song is a vehicle for framing and advancing the plot, which also advocates for fidelity to structural oppression. "Golden Slumbers" also invokes for the reader the supposed biological and hence, social difference between white and Native peoples. Mistress Fairchild renames "Golden Slumbers" as "Dorothy's cradle-song," performing it first in a reverie about "the old days!," and one last time to remind Chioresta of her biological origin as Fairchild's infant, white daughter. At first Chioresta moves towards her Native mother (who sanctions the song's action by requesting that Mistress Fairchild sing it). But then something in Chioresta changes:

> *As the song goes on, she lays her finger on her lip, as if puzzled and trying to remember. She sways slightly, and gradually moving, as if drawn by an invisible force, approaches*

[69] *Patient Grissel* is a variation of the "Patient Griselda" story, famously but not exclusively written by Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* and by Bocaccio in his *Decameron*.

> *her mother, who, as she sings, bends towards her, but does not otherwise approach her. At the end she throws herself into her mother's arms* (11).

Through a physical rather than social connection to the music, Chioresta reverts back to being Dorothy. The trance-like memory-state that translates Chioresta's presence into pure physicality is incited through the song's imperative—printed in the play—to "sleep":

> Gol-den slumbers kiss your eyes; Smiles a-wake you when you rise;
> Sleep lit-tle wanton, do not cry, And I will sing a lul-la-by.

The translation between song and act is literal: Chioresta loses consciousness of her social setting for the duration of the song, awakening with a new impression of her relationship to her white mother. Something about the medium of song, specifically, incites in Chioresta a Proustian revisitation of her past life; a reminder of the family—the race—that constitutes her physicality, so that "swaying slightly…as if drawn by an invisible force," she physically reunites with Mistress Fairchild by "throwing herself" into Fairchild's embrace.

If *The White Dove of Oneida* dramatizes the concept of racial biology as a way to divide white and Native peoples, it also permits the white performance of racial crossing. In fact, the play's central reconciliation is not that between the white family; instead, it's in the Native mother-figure's acceptance—even active approval—of the possibility of white people understanding and crossing over temporarily into the role of the Indian.

In Kane's rendering, Tiorata is the only ethnically Oneida character in the play. As a member of the older generation, she embodies fidelity to Kane's imagination of Oneida social structure. The play ends with Chioresta in Western dress, her sister preparing to teach her a minuet; Tiorata insists, throughout, on sitting cross-legged on the floor in Native costume. "For the Indian," she tells Chioresta, confirming the daughter's role as a hybrid figure, "only children wear strange garments with ease." And it's only Tiorata's character who receives stage

directions: in a dramatic description of a thunderstorm, Kane has Tiorata perform the weather with her own physicality—"(*As she speaks her action should repeat the scene*)"—dramatizing the myth that Native people are closer to nature (and farther from "civilization") than whites. In this way, Tiorata performs what Jean M. O'Brien has called "lasting:" "a rhetorical strategy that asserts as a fact the claim that Indians can never be modern" (107), that Indians were the last to do a series of things that they actually continue to do. By rendering Tiorata as a figure of the past, amicable to whiteness as the biological rendering of the present, Kane narrates Native ontology as both natural—of nature—and static. In a representation similar to La Flesche's Native boys at school in *The Middle Five* and Adita in "A-de´-ta and Thaddeus," Kane similarly presents Indian girlhood as one of dynamism and transition by contrast. In this way, the representational difficulties that La Flesche would have faced in ethnographic drama—representing adaptability and modernity without reifying his people—are at the surface of Kane's essentialist play.

In her narrative, Indianness is preserved as a set of physical props to be staged. *The White Dove of Oneida* doesn't deconstruct the concept of identity, but it does define whiteness, gendered feminine, as mutable; available to be reconstructed through a set of Indian props. Kane's play stages the desire—hers, perhaps—for absolution of any culpability a white lover of Indian culture might feel for the power they've accumulated from their place in the history of genocide, displacement, and disenfranchisement of Native peoples. Reminiscent of Indian anthropology and folklore by white women of the period, this argument was also staged at the height of the "Indian craze" (Hutchinson, 2009), when people across the United States began collecting and displaying Indian arts and crafts for display in their homes and in museums. *The White Dove of Oneida* presents a group of white women accumulating "Indian objects" and using

them to perform their own Indianness with the approval of the "pure" Native character of Tiorata. When she's first introduced as Tiorata's adopted daughter, Chioresta's Indian costume is described in great detail. Later, her sister Prudence begs her mother to make her a wampum belt like the one she found at Tiorata's, before Tiorata acquiesces by expertly tailoring her a buckskin dress and matching pair of moccasins. Used historically for adornment, governance, and condolence by Iroquoian (and Algonquin) people and as a means of diplomacy with French, English, and American colonial leaders, wampum belts were incredibly desirable and expensive aesthetic objects for collectors by the twentieth century (Bruchac, 15 January 2019). Kane's reference to the belt locates her in the tradition of salvage anthropology, the primitivist practice of collecting artifacts to memorialize a so-called "disappearing" culture. While salvage anthropology was often touristic—undertaken by white anthropologists and collectors—Francis La Flesche also collected ceremonial objects from his tribe to donate to the Peabody Museum (Liberty 3). His own salvage work does not translate cleanly into the salvage costuming featured in Kane's play, but does stand as another moment of compromise while working within a government hostile to Native life.

In *The White Dove of Oneida*, Prudence is "playing Indian," but her dress is just one part of that narrative arc. Kane's play relies on the idea of the "premodern" past to which it relegates the tribe, to stand in opposition to the assertion of an association between whiteness and modernity. The beginning of *The White Dove* of Oneida is marked by Tiorata's insistence that Chioresta is "of *my* people," transubstantiated by mother-love into Native personhood. Chioresta reciprocates this assertion by retaining her Indian name even when she returns to her white family at the play's finish. As Chioresta "becomes white" again, re-civilized by her white mother and sister through gesture and dress, her Indian name and garments are authorized by her Oneida

mother. Tiorata not only lends her approval to Prudence's and Chioresta's acts; she also exists as a vehicle for Mistress Fairchild to imagine her own Indian-ness. When Tiorata passionately confesses the hatred she'd harbored towards colonizers, the Mistress replied: "(*gently*). My race has much to answer for. Had I been an Oneida, I should have hated, too." In one fell swoop, Mistress Fairchild does the work of demonstrating how feminine sympathy—"mother-love"—facilitates a particular connection between white and Native women; a sympathy that has potential for transcendence for white figures like Chioresta, but never for Native people.

VI. Sounding Indian: Motherhood, Boyhood, and Feminine Sympathy in Helen Kane's "Indian Plays"

Helen Kane's three "Indian Plays" similarly privilege white and Native motherhood over Native mothers, in three stories about Native women who are required to flout Native tradition in order to preserve their history in the present. Offering narratives that mobilize ethnographic detail in order to validate and lament Kane's idea of Native extinction, each play sheds light on turn-of-the-century representations of Indianness, and each complicates La Flesche's position as creative interlocutor in the dramatic sphere. Each also idealizes Native boyhood; highlighting La Flesche's presence or, at very least, influence, in the plays. Circulating in schools and in "amateur" spaces, Kane's "Indian Plays" extended into and from contemporaneous, primitivist associations between children and Native adults. Kane's "amateur" dramatic stage recapitulated ethnographic and popular myths through intertwining performance of sentimental extinction and Native boyhood.

Because two (if not all) of her "Indian Plays" were sold without royalties—and because the Samuel French Company occasionally sold their plays in "bundles" based on series, not title—it's difficult to know exactly who purchased and played Kane's pieces. As early as a year

after publishing *The Capture of Ozah*, *Yagowanea*, and *Yot-Che-Ka*, though, each began to appear in various anthologies across the United States.[70] Each anthology ascribed the "Indian Plays" to the rarefied and bound spaces of amateur theater, public school, and summer camp. Alternately released in collections of plays for "little theater," "contemporary one-act plays" (Shay and Loving, 569), "plays for the country theatre" (Drummond 569), "plays for amateurs" (New York Drama League 16), "well-tried short plays for beginners, no royalty" (Drummond 277, 280), "American festivals for elementary schools" (Barnum 236), and "plays for children" (Mackay 99 and Hazeltine 316). Kane's "Indian Plays" were frequently grouped under the headings of elementary and high school performance, again favoring the association between white children and Native adults. Sometimes procured for "young people's" (Bulletin of the Library Association of Portland 128), "young folk's" (St. Louis PL Monthly Bulletin 250), or "juvenile" (Bulletin of the Indianapolis Public Library 41) books sections, *Yot-Che-Ka* was often distinguished from the other two as a "child-play" (Bulletin of the University of Minnesota 5, Mackay 99), intended for "intermediate and grammar school grades" (Davis 7). *Yagowanea* and *The Capture of Ozah*, the drama and the romance, are alternately listed under "plays for high schools" (Mackay 8), and "one-act plays for men and women" (New York Drama League 5).

Not all drama is realism, but Kane endowed her "Indian Plays" with a seriousness that she explicitly distinguished from the romantic comedies and dramas that she typically published. While *The Capture of Ozah*, *Yagowanea*, and *Yot-Che-Ka* were published in what seems to be a

[70] Kane's works are included in anthologies of plays for "little Theatre" published in Cincinnati (Shay 59) and New York (Shay 41). Reference to the three "Indian Plays" appeared in collections published in New York City, Chicago, Boston, Ithaca, and St. Louis, and in libraries in St. Louis, Providence, Portland (Maine), Indianapolis, New Haven, Chicago, the University of Minnesota, and Pratt Institute. Concentrated in the northeast and midwest United States, Kane's plays garnered increased interest to specific publics.

series by amateur play specialist Samuel French, she'd first pitched *The Capture of Ozah* to Dick & Fitzgerald. In a letter written five years before the "Indian Plays" were published, Kane described what she found to be the appropriate price for her "amateur play" called *The Upsetting of Jabez Strong*, then pivoted to the only "Indian Play" for which she held a personal copyright:

> "The Capture of Ozah" — I cannot gauge by that rule, [sic]It was written for professionals, for a special matinee, to play 50 minutes. — Circumstances prevented the matinee. The work is unique, and may have no market value, as it may appeal to a limited class. I would prefer you to judge its money value in the trade — if any.[71]

Here, Kane aligns market value with popularity, detaching her play from the culture industry and communicating a kind of Frankfurt School-understanding of mass media as something that panders to an indistinguishable and broadening group of generic consumers. Rather than suggest that the value of *The Capture of Ozah* exists outside of the market economy, though, Kane reinscribes the relationship between value, status, and money in her appraisal of her play. In her letter, the "unique" nature of *The Capture of Ozah* is reciprocal to its value for "a limited class," its intended performance by "professionals," and its planned "special" performance. Although its subject matter would have been popular in the nineteen-teens, it's also likely that she

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[71] Of the three "Indian Plays," *The Capture of Ozah* sold the highest, beginning at thirty cents and increased to fifty with a stamp on its front cover. That would have been forty cents more than her typical parlor play and fifteen cents more than *Yagowanea*. Since Samuel French held copyrights for her other two "Indian Plays," the increase might have to do with the copyright that Kane shared with the publisher. It might also be a manifestation of Kane's suggestion to Dick & Fitzgerald that the play would not have a popular audience; it might have needed to create its own status by spiking its price.

Not only was Kane versed in the particular interests of her publishers; she was also acutely aware of the marketability of various dramatic types. In a different letter to Dick & Fitzgerald concerning one of her later plays, she expressed chagrin at their request for her input on a set price for the booklet, noting "how little mercantile value such work has" and sharing her regret that another of her earlier plays did not sell well (13 January 1911). "I might be able to produce something that would give you less pleasure, and more profit," she wrote three days later (16 January 1911). It may be for this reason that more than half of her first eleven plays are comedies, and all are scaffolded by marriage plots.

distinguished *The Capture of Ozah* from her parlor plays through a gendered understanding of anthropology at a time when Boasian ethnography was distinguishing itself as being more "scientific" than it had been in the late nineteenth century, when its undertakers were primarily wealthy white female abolitionists, philanthropists, teachers, and enthusiasts.[72] But the question of why she would want publishers, viewers, and players to take it more seriously than her romantic dramas and comedies—particularly since *The Capture of Ozah* exports the genre conventions of the "parlor play" from living room to teepee—might be better approached with a closer look at the plays themselves.

While Kane rarefies the status and value of *The Capture of Ozah*, its plot is actually strikingly similar to her romantic dramas. Featuring a Seneca woman named Ozah and three Mohawks—her female friend Orijia, and her two suitors Kahouji and Atakea—the play flows a marriage plot, propelled forward by the vehicle of dialogue between two women. Like Yagowanea of Kane's eponymous play, Ozah is "the Peace-Maker," living alone until she's approached by two men locked in conflict with each other. Ozah is alone because, as she puts it, "I have heard the love-song:—but 'twas not well sung. When it is, I shall answer" (4).

As she did in her parlor plays, Kane uses music in *Ozah* as a vehicle for staging other-ness, but with a difference: not a single one of her "Indian plays" features a single white character. Rather than consolidate the whiteness of other characters by proxy, Kane uses music

[72] For some examples of the white women doing fieldwork without anthropological training, see chapter 1 of Roshanek Kheshti's, *Modernity's Ear* (NYU Press 2015), Leslie Poling-Kempes, *Ladies of the Canyons* (University of Arizona Press, 2015), Scott B. Spencer, *The Ballad Collectors of North America* (Scarecrow Press, 2012), David Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine* (UNC Press, 1983), and biographies on Natalie Curtis Burlin (Michelle Wick Patterson, Nebraska University Press, 2010) and Alice C. Fletcher (Mark, Nebraska University Press, 1988) for some examples. I have presented on a selection of these women at the 2018 Pop Conference at the Museum of Popular Culture in Seattle, WA.

in the "Indian Plays" to separate the players from their white audience. Music in *The Capture of Ozah* is neither anathema to nor outside of the trappings of language; instead, it's presented as being lucid and primal, in opposition to the performances of acculturation and elocution of, for example, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School plays. By representing "Indian" dialect with language unembellished by adjectives and brief, clunky pacing, Kane presents Orijia's lover's, Kahouji's, and Atakea's love songs as a form of pure communication. Each song communicates "naturalness," arguing that Native music brings the characters closer to nature than would "civilized" language. Similar, in fact, to the songbirds in La Flesche's draft of "Adita's First Hunt," song transubstantiates the Native characters. Even the lead character—who, as in Kane's parlor plays, is a bright, attractive young woman with the most compelling dialogue in the script—speaks and sings in fragments.

Punctuated rhythmically and imbued with the language of the land and the sky, Kane's music naturalizes its speakers, mythologizing the relationship of Natives to nature in a dialogic of ideation and dehumanization. Songs for Orijia bookend the play: where the first, "Song of Orijia's Lover—No. 1.," is a call ("O-ver the hill-tops I seek thee!/ Come to me! Come to me!" (4)), "Orijia's Lover—No. 2." is a response, "Hé-hé-mer-ri-ly: Hé-hé-cheer-i-ly: Hies the love-er/ on his way, on his way. Where he hies, sunshine ev-er soft-ly lies" (14). Synchronizing Orijia's movements with those of the sun, the steady pacing of his songs literally puts nature and Native into step with one another. This dialogic relationship is at the surface of "Love-Song—Atakea," sung by the Mowhawk warrior Atakea to Ozah:

> Si-lent comes the dawn-ing: Winds are soft and low:
> Soft and low: Soft and low! Love, re-fus-al scorn-ing,
> Leaps the crystal-tal flow! Leaps the crys-tal flow!
> Dar-ing weal or woe! Weal or woe! (12).

Here, scorned love is torrid water, a "weal," or blemish, on the "crystal flow" of the water's body. The couple's union, these songs insinuate, would bring peace for them *and* for the natural setting. Here, Kane endows song (rhythmic language and melody) with the particular ability to minimize the translation from a Native person's body to a body of water. Further, by presenting Ozah's choice between officially uniting with or rebuffing the advances of Atakea from within a setting of inevitability—the "silent dawning" and ceaseless "crystal flow" unrelenting in their repetition in the world and on the page—Kane lends an air of inevitability to his and Ozah's union. Unlike the syllogistic plot devices of Kane's minstrel parlor acts, Atakea's song is the invisible glue between the setting, the characters, and the plot. That inevitability actually presents *The Capture of Ozah* as a marriage drama. Rather than write a play that progresses towards civil union and public ceremony (as was the case with her parlor plays), Kane writes the consummation of Atakea and Ozah's love in a non-consumerist variation on the wedding ring: to consent to their union, Ozah "winds her braids about his neck." Rather than centering a white female character, then, *The Capture of Ozah* presents a Native woman with features Kane typically attributed to white womanhood—resourcefulness, independence, intellect—in order to make Indianness recognizable and accessible to the viewer while still preserving primitivist ideas through music.

Unlike *The Capture of Ozah*, *Yagowanea* and *Yot-Che-Ka* both diverge from the parlor play's romance plot, but both preserve its sentimentality. Marketed specifically to young children, *Yot-Che-Ka* is significant less for the way it—like *The Capture of Ozah*—perpetuates the dangerous myth of the "noble savage," than for its recuperation of that myth in the service of historicizing the myth of Native extinction. Absent a young female character, the play features three Oneida boys, a boy formerly of the Erie (or as Kane calls it, the Eriga) tribe, and the boy's

adopted Oneida mother. It takes place, according to the frontispiece, in the "*16th century. After the annihilation of the Eriga (Erie) tribe*" (3). Kane's choice of tribe and of time period are striking. Rather than choosing a group that existed in her present (albeit in a form that she might not recognize as being "Indian enough"), Kane chose a people who were both part of and conquered by the Iroquois. During the "Beaver Wars" in the middle of the seventeenth century—not the sixteenth, as Kane wrote—the Erie tribe allied with the Huron against the Iroquois for control of the fur trade. The decision to center her narrative on an Erie character would seem to reallocate guilt of extermination away from white people and towards Natives themselves. Of course, that war was precipitated by the fur trade, which was inaugurated by non-Native colonizers entering the continent, and to source the violence wreaked on Native communities in the communities themselves is itself another form of violence. Susan Kalter has noted that even characterizing "a peaceful or warlike conception of the universe" (37)—in this case, to assume that the "Beaver Wars" can relegate (and regulate) ontological tribal statuses to "wartime" and "peacetime"—ignores the situational aspects of the decades-long conflict. Focusing on a historical moment attributes to the play a sort of ethnographic lilt. Perhaps this marks La Flesche's hand. Ultimately, unfortunately, it serves to validate the ahistorical narrative of the "vanishing Indian."

Kane's play is a masterful mind-bend in that it both acknowledges that the Erie actually didn't die out, and still manages to convey the myth of extinction and implicate Natives as both ideological and physical murderers of their own kind. Yot-che-ka, the little Eriga boy, runs into the first at the tail-end of his mother's "Weaving-Song," and immediately enfolds himself in a blanket, and a drama, of memory:

> Yot. (*Coming over*) Hi! Is that my blanket!— Wait till I fold it around me—(*strutting as if holding a blanket*) Not a boy in the tribe will be so fine! That is fine enough for Chief of the Erigas (6).

Thus ensues a point-counterpoint between Yot-Che-Ka and his adopted mother Toika; Yot-Che-Ka insisting on his memory of his tribe, Toika warily rebutting him: "You remember nothing. There is nothing to remember" (6). As Yot-Che-Ka grows increasingly animated, they spar back and forth, punctuated by Toika's and the young Oneida boys' songs. When it's revealed that, of the three boys, it was Yot-Che-Ka's arrow that killed a fox, Yot-Che-Ka "(*laughing and lifting the fox exultingly*)" cries out "I dare!—It is the Cat of the *Erigas*!," and sings the "Song of Triumph" for the nervous children. The play (and its audience) are relieved when Toika laughs in approval: "The Chiefs may make a decree, but an Indian cannot forget!—The Eriga must be Eriga still!—Give him the honors, boys, he won them fairly.—He has the *right* to remember" (12).

By metonymizing Native identity and Native memory, then placing a threat to the validity of that memory in a Native character's mouth, Kane's play attributes both the onus of and threat to Native existence to the same Native characters. In a play without any white people, white people cannot be held responsible for Native extermination. And the myth of extermination does provide structure for *Yot-Che-Ka*, even if the final "Song of Triumph" celebrates Yot-Che-Ka's ownership of his Eriga identity. *Yot-Che-Ka* acknowledges the alternate modes of existence that Native peoples occupy for survival when they're denied previous ways of being: Yot-Che-Ka's tribe was defeated, so he became a member of another tribe. Still, it's the idea of extermination that's meant to make the play poignant: The Erie survived two hundred fifty years ago, but now they're gone.

Of the Samuel French "Indian Plays," only one early manuscript remains. In the Christmas season of 1910 (right around the time of Francis La Flesche's 53rd birthday), Kane mailed La Flesche a hand-bound copy of *Yagowanea*. While the dramatic text of the manuscript is identical to that of the Samuel French edition, La Flesche's copy distinguishes itself by being more primitivist. Its thick brown paper cover, handwritten title, and rough-hewn rope binding attributes an earthen quality to the play. To every character's name, Kane added accents by hand; Yagowanea as Yágowanéa, Gachee to Gáchee, etc. Both the printed and personal editions additionally include more ethnographic detail than all of the other "Indian Plays": the front pages list the "Time: 1655" to situate the reader and, reminiscent of an anthropological tract, Kane includes a section detailing the "Significance of Indian Names" in single-word definitions. The care with which Kane packaged the play for Francis La Flesche, and the rhetorical modes of ethnographic authentication that she included in this and the published version, point to *Yagowanea* as an important link in the chain of dramatic and ethnographic performance in the early twentieth century. The fact of this hand-bound copy's existence points to the difficult position that La Flesche navigated as a Native ethnologist who sought out a particular kind of veracity of subject matter but also resisted simple, digestible narratives of white consumption being offered by anthropologists, dramatists, and government officials.

Mailed just two years after she'd copyrighted *Adita, son of the Sioux* under both of their names, in Francis La Flesche's personal copy of *Yagowanea* Kane includes only her "Indian Plays" (rather than her parlor romances) in a list on the frontispiece. She also includes a note.

> For Francis.
> Not "authentic", but you may like it.
> and it goes with good wishes, as always.
> *Helen Kane*

Intimate and brief, Kane's letter distinguishes her writing from La Flesche's using the rubric of "authenticity" and marks the beginning of her text's authentication process. If La Flesche read the play, discussed it, or even responded with comments, she might have asked that he look also at *Yot-Che-Ka* and *The Capture of Ozah*. Maybe he knew about those stories before he received this package. Either way, its design deploys an ethnological aesthetic that treats it as a salvaged ethnographic object. Kane imports this attempt at ethnographic validity with her reference to La Flesche on the cover of the Samuel French edition. Each cover in the first and final printing includes an evocative note: "This play was criticized when written by Francis La Flesche, of the Omaha Tribe." The phrase "criticized when written" is unusual, and seems to signify La Flesche's unusual role in constructing these plays. I believe that Kane uses the names of La Flesche and, to a different degree, Fletcher, to validate the proximity of her play to her idea of Native reality: a minstrel ideality that's enacted in the fabric of the play itself.

Further attributing to the play a semblance of historical accuracy, Kane seems to have pulled *Yagowanea* from a brief moment in David Cusick's *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations*, one of the first pieces of oral literature of the Iroquois nation to have been recorded in the English alphabet. The son of an interpreter and member of the Tuscarora nation of the Iroquois, David Cusick was a physician, artist, writer, and member of the missionary Samuel Kirkland's congregation who served on the American side in the War of 1812 (Kalter 11). According to Susan Kalter, Cusick's text carefully demarcates a boundary between outsiders and the Iroquois—with the exception of Iroquois "Queen" Yagowanea. After receiving word that two Canandaigua warriors had just "killed a young prince of the Messissaugers," Yagowanea betrays the Canandaigua: after they smoke "the pipe of peace," she advises the Messissaugers to kill the warriors. "This offence[sic] was too great to pass without condemning the murderers" (31),

Cusick wrote, before describing how Yagowanea went on to form an alliance with "the Naywaunaukauraunah, a savage tribe…to unite against the five nations" (32). When the Mohawk chief ordered an army of five thousand to aid the Canandaiguans against the Erie, Yagowanea sued for peace, succeeded, and then dropped out of Cusick's narrative.

Kane showed sustained interest in Cusick's story, publishing both a short piece of fiction and a play about Yagowanea.[73] By developing the story of *Yot-Che-Ka*, the play pursues the impression of historical validity through dramatic world-building. Sustaining its focus on the character Yagowanea, *Yagowanea* tells the origin story of the child Yot-Che-Ka's loss of tribal selfhood by exploring Yagowanea's social death through the eyes of her son. Like most of Kane's writing, the play focuses on a woman. Yagowanea, the "Keeper of the House of Peace," betrays "the Sanctuary of the Six Nations" when her son Kaga convinces her to let two Mohawk warriors into the sacred space to kill two Seneca who'd just murdered a young, unarmed Erie. In retribution for her crime, two "Seneca warriors" strip Yagowanea of her title of "Mother of Nations." In Kane's dramatic framework, the loss of motherhood is the loss of everything. As the warrior Gachee tells the audience, "for this, the Peace lodge of Yagowanea shall be destroyed!…For this—the Council-fire of the Erie shall be put out—…And their name and lineage lost!" (8).

Yot-Che-Ka picks up in the aftermath of *Yagowanea*'s "loss," processing it in the words of the Native boy Toika. In order to explain Yot-Che-Ka's new tribal identity, his adoptive mother Toika recounts:

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[73] The short story, titled "The Lost Tribe of the Erigas: A Tragedy of 1653" and published in *The Southern Workman* five years before the play, gestures more directly to Cusick's text, removing Yagowanea from the narrative conclusion and scripting the site of betrayal as "a great boulder of the island which was their last stronghold, inscribed in the picture-writing of that old time, men read to-day the tragic story of the Lost Tribe of the Erigas."

> TOIKA. There was a woman—she has no name—of the Tribe which is forgotten——
> YOT. The Erie!
> TOIKA. (*repeating with emphasis*) Which is forgotten! She did a strange and terrible thing. She was Keeper of the House of Peace——
> YOT. (*interrupting*) She was called——
> TOIKA. (*interrupting him*) She *is* called Nothing! A man came to her for safety, and she betrayed him. For this, her Tribe was destroyed. And it was decreed——
> YOT. (*interrupting*) What is "decreed?"
> TOIKA. "Decreed" is that which the Chiefs say when they sit in council.—It was decreed that it was forbidden to the Five Tribes to remember——
> YOT. (*interrupting*) But I am not of the Five Tribes! I am of the Erigas!—And I cannot forget—— (10).

Permeated by the language of destruction and loss, both passages delineate the end of the Erie tribe. And as with Yot-Che-Ka, it's Yagowanea's son Kaga who resists Yagowanea's insistence, over and over again, that after the destruction of the Erigas, "I have no name!," "I am neither living nor dead!" (12, 13). Markedly, in each play it's the Native mother who narrates the Erie's demise to their resistant young sons. Yagowanea and Toika are knowledge-bearers but, as we learn from the sentimental intrusion of each son—Kaga bent on validating his mother's humanity by communicating his love for her, Yot-Che-Ka insisting that his identity is contingent on the existence of his tribe—each mother's knowledge is faulty. Each play insinuates that the older generation does not understand how to preserve itself in the same way that the younger generation might, and contrasts Native mothering from both Native boyhood and from the white mother-love that Kane proposes in her other plays. In *Yagowanea*, Kane imported the idea that the older generations of Native peoples could not control their own survival—that their survival was somehow insular to their tribes and not a tooth-and-nail battle against settler colonialism—into a 16th century story about a mother who imagined her son being murdered, and violated the rules of the "House of Peace." Neither play's disposal of the older generation of Native mothers necessarily contradicts Francis La Flesche's interest in exploring the literary and dramatic

possibilities of Native boyhood.[74] For this reason, both plays stage the hegemonic narrative of Native erasure in concert with the fraught and often contradictory attempts by reformists and Native ethnographers like La Flesche to assert Native survival within the framework that contradicts it.

The sentimental undercurrents of *Yot-Che-Ka* and *Yagowanea* flow from the same source as those of *The White Dove of Oneida*. "Mother-love" is the exalted center of each narrative, but in each narrative that love is counteracted by Kane's ideas of Native custom. Custom, in fact, is interchangeable with the structure of law in these dramas. It's Native law that counteracts Native mother-love, communicating first that Native law is faulty (mother-love should never be contradicted)[75] and second, that Native law endangers the biological relationship of Natives to one another. In both plays, Native law writes itself out of existence. In *Yagowanea*, obeying those laws means acceding to social death, separating mother from her son in perpetuity. In *Yot-Che-Ka*, the only way that the mother can validate her son's identity is by flouting the law that she believes in and that he repudiates. A perverse collapse of ideas of biological race and biological family structures, these plot-lines argue maternalistically (rather than paternalistically) for the abdication of Native custom, for preservation of Natives who have endangered their own cultural livelihoods, and for Native boyhood as the privileged position within these paradigms. In

[74] Each play's primitivist interest in Native childhood can be sourced in biographies like La Flesche's and in the youth schools and summer camps where "Indian" plays were often performed (like, for example, "Camp Yagowanea," which opened as early as 1921 and featured "the usual camping activities, including…Nature Study, Manual Training…[and] Amateur Dramatics" (Porter Sargent, *The Handbook of Private Schools*, 7th ed., Boston, 1921-22, pp. 824)).

[75] As producer and product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century deification of the white mother-figure as "the angel in the house" (Coventry and Patmore), sheet- and recorded music advertising and celebrating motherhood abounded. Kane leverages Native mothers against Native law within this framework of white Victorian motherhood, limiting the scope of her characters in order to explain and justify reformist attitudes about preservation and citizenship.

this way, both plays stage the same settler-colonial logic of extinction that propped up the Indian schools and the Dawes Act—that Native law is incompatible with the survival of Native youth—while still preserving the figure of empathetic relatability so central to ideas of white womanhood at the turn of the century.

As a "structure of feeling," an ontological space that reflects and refracts the desire of white women to articulate their struggles and successes under the patriarchy through analogy to women of color, mother-love actually functioned in similar ways across drama and anthropology.

In *The White Dove of Oneida*, *Yot-Che-Ka*, and *Yagowanea*, Kane's contemporary white female viewers were encouraged to link themselves *empathetically* to Native women, by way of a white (amateur) actress performing the role of a Native woman who loves her children. As Alessandra Lorini has described, evolutionary ethnology (or social evolutionary theory) provided an opportunity for female ethnographers to import the language of nineteenth-century white women's charity work into their work as anthropologists. If, like white children, Native peoples were at an early stage of development, then mothers were uniquely suited to ethnographic fieldwork. Recall, for example, Alice Fletcher's work in the 1880s and 1890s alongside her unofficial adoption of Francis La Flesche in 1891.[76] In each of her "Indian Plays," Kane stages a perversion of this feeling, using *music* as a vehicle to communicate in the registers of sentiment and ethnography, each in concert with the other.

[76] Ironically, at the turn of the century (just after she "adopted" La Flesche), Fletcher reverted to a language of anthropological professionalism to distance herself from the feminine language of motherhood. She used this shift as an excuse to avoid writing a preface to Francis La Flesche's book *The Middle Five*, noting that she stood "for Science, rather than letters." Littlefield and Parrins postulate that Fletcher encouraged La Flesche's shift to fiction-writing because she didn't want to credit him adequately, despite her wanting him to gain success (Introduction, xix-xx)

Across Kane's "Indian Plays," song operates on these two seemingly oppositional planes at once. In the realm of sentiment, the "Indian songs" work in a different, complimentary register to the dramatic narrative by moving and embellishing the plot. In *Yot-Che-Ka*, for example, the "Song of Triumph" stands in for Toika's adoptive son Yot-Che-Ka's successful performance of resistance, sanctioned by his mother's approval. And in *Yagowanea*, Kaga ends the play in response to Yagowanea's "Song of Appeal." To Yagowanea's begging: "on thy flood, On-guah-ra, Sweep me on! Sweep me on! Might-y One! Take thy Child," Kaga sings "*as the curtain goes down*," two lines from the play's opening song, "Salutation to Onguahra," which was initially performed by Yagowanea: "Onguahra-Ohé! Pour thy thunders down!/ Onguahra-Ohé! Shine thy misty crown! (14). When Yagowanea pleads with the "Mighty One" to banish her from her tribe and her son, her plea is to be "swept" on the "flood." Similarly, when Kaga submits to break decisively from his mother, he too asks the god for a flood and then for its "misty" aftermath. As in *The Capture of Ozah*, Kane uses water—turbulent, ceaseless, and unforgiving—in order to communicate the inevitability of tribal loss. And as with her other plays featuring Indian characters, music and the fragmented, primitivist dialect-poetry of the song inures the characters in the seasons, eliciting emotional response from the audience by associating nature with poetry and with sentiment. Music compliments the story, but it's also presented as a register that's somehow less "structured" than the narrative drama, and hence better suited to representing a primitive vision of Native life.

It's also in music that Kane locates the sentimental potential for cross-racial unification, ultimately for the benefit of the white, female viewer. The sentimental, in these plays and in this period, was also ethnographic, and the ethnographic—particularly when it was produced by white women—could be validated and professionalized though the language of sentimentality.

While the lyrics in each "Indian Play" are Kane's, each title and frontispiece announces the origin of the musical notation: "The music used in this play is from the collection of Indian music by MISS ALICE FLETCHER." On *Yagowanea* and *Yot-Che-Ka*, the Dramatis Personae includes an additional note at the bottom:

> Accompanying music----Original Indian Songs,
> by special permission,
> From the collection of ALICE C. FLETCHER.
> copyright 1900 (2).

Published in 1900, Alice C. Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* included thirty songs and an extended, feelingful description of their mythologies, released so that, according to Fletcher, "the general public may share with the student the light shed by these untutored melodies upon the history of music" *Indian Story and Song* viii) rather than dig through specialist publications.[77] Blurring the line between popular and ethnographic press, the text became the primary source material for "Indianist" composers in the early twentieth century, who sought to develop the sound of American musical modernity that relied on the myth that Natives were anti-modern and, therefore, extinct.

By drawing songs from Fletcher's collection without signifying her own fictionalization of what, again, was already a translation of ritual song, Kane imports additional ethnographic validity to her dramas, while her maternalistic representation of what was actually a period of political resistance and artistic exploration for Native people both borrowed from and to some degree informed the practice of Native anthropology. It's difficult to match Kane's songs to Fletcher's, because even though the attribution in the Dramatis Personae insinuates that the

[77] "Until the Omaha Music Congress in 1898," Pisani notes that "most transcriptions of Indian music could be found only in specialists' journals and bulletins, such as those published by the Bureau of Ethnology or the Peabody Institute" (176).

play's songs are direct musical transcriptions, the songs that Kane chooses are actually adaptations of the "originals" (which are, themselves, already translations from interpreters and informants like, for the Omaha and Osage songs, Francis La Flesche).[78] Take, for example, "Love-Song—Kaga," from *Yagowanea*. The song includes two verses accompanying eight measures of notated music at six beats per measure, where the eighth note takes the value of one beat [IMG 2]. Its source is "A Pawnee Love-Song" [IMG 3]. Like Kane's, the first two measures of music are in 6/8; unlike Kane's, those measures are immediately followed by a time change to 9 beats per measure, and back to six for the ten measures that follow.

Kane keeps the key in E flat major, but removes the dots ("•") that she and the music scholar John Comfort Fillmore originally included above the musical notation to "signify pulsation of voice," and elides Fletcher and Fillmore's tempo suggestion ("spirited," marked in the top right corner). Kane shortens the song, adds depth to the harmony by including bass clef notation, and loosens the melody. Fletcher's first two measures in the treble clef are intact in Kane's translation. In the treble, Kane modifies the third by removing two extended notes (but preserving the 6/8 time signature), punctuating the third beat in the fourth measure, holding the fourth note and exciting the fifth in the fifth measure. In the sixth and seventh measures, Kane reverts to Fletcher's original. Finally, Kane fabricates the final notes herself: three E flats harmonized three full octaves apart and punctuated by the vocal "O-hé" in both verses. Kane's

[78] While it is possible that Fletcher collected and assembled the majority of the material from this publication, Katie Graber notes that it's also "clear that she used material from earlier collaborations. La Flesche only appeared in occasional footnotes, such as on page 8, 'The translation given is by my collaborator, Mr. Francis La Flesche.' The dedication for the book is eight, 'To my Indian friends, from whom I have gathered story and song'" (122). In this and to varying degrees in other publications, it's difficult to pin down exactly how Francis La Flesche was involved, but we *can* infer that his work shaped all of Fletcher's Omaha and Osage publications.

revisions harmonize what was originally transcribed as a song for a single voice, creating a sound that, to a western ear, would signify resolution and romantic harmony. Her lyrics—particularly the exclamation "O-hé," in what seems to be her version of Native dialect—primitivize that sound, creating a friendly, accessible version of Native-ness in which young, white actors could partake.

If the intention of Indian schools was to teach Native students to perform "civilization," validating the myth of erasure and clearing the stage for white impersonations of so-called "past" versions of Native life in the process, then Kane's plays performed Indianness as a mode of socialization of white women into equal citizenship with men. A performance validated by the presumption of sympathetic proximity, these musicals deployed contemporary ideas of Native music and white femininity in order to stage a version of Indianness that was both constructed through and validated by ethnographic convention.

In the adaptation from ethnography to drama, Kane's "Indian Plays" retain the air of authenticity lent by the Indigenous intellectual Francis La Flesche, while simultaneously diminishing the capacity of other Indigenous intellectuals to intervene in that representation of Indianness. The "Indian Play" is an incredibly fraught genre: created based on white ideas of Indian life, language, and music, and staged in the repressive institutional setting of the Indian schools and in hegemonic spaces of restricted access like white children's schools and summer camps, Native people moved to intervene in its production and performance on stage, in film, and—in the case of Francis La Flesche—by contributing ethnographic accuracy to dramatic settings. While those contributions may have validated Kane's own project of white female self-fashioning through Indian characters, they were markedly different when La Flesche wrote an Indian play for, and by, himself.

V. “Rattling Their Rattles”: Francis La Flesche’s Ethnographic Fantasyscape

To me, Francis La Flesche’s collaboration with Helen Kane strategically acknowledged the necessity of different kinds of performance to the deliberate acts of survival and resistance that Gerald Vizenor has called Native “survivance.” As an ethnologist, La Flesche would have been keenly aware of the possibilities and pitfalls of performance as a way to communicate meaning both within and across cultures. Collecting songs while enlisting his tribe in the allotment program alongside Alice C. Fletcher would have made him keenly aware, or exercised his prior awareness, of the paternalism inherent in the preservationist project. Even participant observation itself was itself a kind of performance, in which the ethnographer or ethnologist followed the lead of their subjects. (Included as [IMG 4] in the appendix is the one image in Francis La Flesche’s archive that puts his dual position as a titled ethnologist and as a Native person: in it, he demonstrates some sort of ceremonial action while wearing a three-piece suit). The dominant mode of ethnographic research in La Flesche’s time—of which Fletcher was an early pioneer—participant observation relies heavily on the knowledge of informants, but is often presented as the knowledge of the researcher (Graber 121). As the first “official” Native ethnographer, La Flesche troubles the binary, but even he often went uncredited, and his hand almost disappears completely in the emergence of the “Indian Play” as a genre.

White performances of Native ethnography have a longer history that’s inextricable from popular media-creations of Indianness: by the mid-nineteenth century “playing Indian” in, say, a fraternal organization, was increasingly considered to be at odds with the player’s reputation as an ethnographer. As I’ve described, however, even the antiracist ethnographer Franz Boas

retained a dimension of performance and pleasure on the surface of his fieldwork.[79] Similarly, "Indian drama" was neither Native-born nor particularly welcoming to Native actors and dramatists. By writing and assisting in the composition of dramatic works, La Flesche inserted his perspective into these white renderings of Native life, at a time when he was doing the same work in the registers of ethnography and, to a smaller audience, of fiction. While he wasn't able to pull the needle of Kane's drama very far, La Flesche's interest in dramaturgy is evidence of his depth of knowledge of, and interest in, the relationship in his time between ethnography and the stage.

Aside from the various dramatic ethnographic play settings that La Flesche drafted over the course of his writing career, he also wrote at least one draft of one play. Untitled, undated, and scribbled across a handful of slim notebook papers, the draft begins in the second scene and diverges into two different endings. Where Kane's white characters and white viewers are absolved of the guilt of colonial encounter in the fabric of her narratives, La Flesche's own play presents an encounter that would've been unheard of in the contemporary form of the "Indian Play": one that moves fluidly into the realm of fantasy.

Immediately, scene II introduces the themes of boyhood and of song.

> Ta-daí-lá,[80] the boy captain is discovered sitting on a rock weeping. Teepees in the distance. Voices of children are heard approaching. They appear following one another and singing. Ya-hoe-ae ya-ae ha ra o ha ya ha yo oe ya ha o ha etc.

Nah´-gu, the leader of the band of children, begins to tease Ta-daí-lá mercilessly. "His name is The Wind but it ought to be Rain from the way he's crying." "He's afraid to lift his head." "Look

[79] See this chapter, page 89, for details.
[80] La Flesche's handwriting is not always completely legible, but he seems to alternatively write the name as "Ta-doe-ta" and "Ta-daí-lá." I have preserved his spelling throughout, but they seem to refer to the same character.

out he's going to blow." Each phrase is hurled back at the "boy captain" by Nah´-gu's followers. And when Ta-daí-lá invokes his father to threaten them, Nah´-gu rebuffs him, they fight, and Ta-daí-lá runs into the woods.

La Flesche preserved two diverging drafts of the following scene [IMG 5 & 6]. The first finds the boy in a new setting. With "forest and marsh in background," Ta-daí-lá sings in what seems to be a Native language, though since this is a personal notebook he doesn't note which. Exhausted, the boy "drops upon a fallen log," sobs, and "falls asleep."

After signaling to the audience that "voices are heard," La Flesche does something unprecedented: he introduces a troupe of fairies to his Indian play.

> We are spirits of the marshes.
> Night and day we sing
> Ka-rump, Karump
> Ka-ra-rum.
>
> We are sprits[sic] of the marshes.
> Rain or shine we sing
> Ka-rump, Ka-rump
> Ka-ra-rum.
>
> Goggle-eyes[sic] sings.
> I am the monarch of the marshes etc.

One difficulty of telling Native history is that it's often received as and relegated to the realm of myth. Native authors and playwrights often expertly manipulate this possibility, but white authors at the turn of the century—including sympathetic ones like Kane—use this aura of myth to invalidate Native history, making Natives seem timeless, in step with nature but out-of-step with reality, indelibly past but never in the present. La Flesche's story explodes these binaries, reaching into the realm of Shakespearian drama to Indianize a fantastical western landscape and to incorporate a "monarch" fairy. This visual trick is also audible: using onomatopoeia as a musical fairy language, La Flesche writes a play that works in multiple registers and languages at

once. The fairy song also pushes the viewer to move outside of the modes of recognition and signification to which they would have been accustomed when confronted with "Indian" entertainment.

The second version of the play's conclusion picks up in the middle of a conversation between Ta-daí-lá and the fairies. In this version, the fairies "nod" or "shake their heads" to Ta-daí-lá's questions, convincing him that they're good, that they're his companions, and that he should stay with them. Then, the plot of the two drafts meet, when each fairy reveals their "tambourine-like drum" and "deers hoof rattle." In the first version, the fairies "form a circle around Ta-doe-ta, [sic]They raise their rattles high in the air and bring them down with a crash upon the drums. Ta-doe-ta springs up to a sitting posture. He rubs his eyes."

If the denouement of the first version leaves the possibility of the fairy's existence open to interpretation, the second version doubles down on the fantastical world. In the second:

> Wings, the Fairy king approaches him from behind and places in his left hand a tambourine-like drum, and in his right a dears[sic] hoof rattle, and then holds him firmly the wrists. Then the Fairies start in a trot over the stages rattling their rattles as they go.

As the fairies walk in procession, playing fairy music on their Indian instruments, the "boy captain" joins them. Then "S. strikes drum again and the fairies turn forward and disappear among the woods." In both versions of his play, La Flesche puts into the hands of mythical creatures of human appearance, objects that would register as being Native—the "tambourine-like drum," the "dears[sic] hoof rattle"—in order to associate the fairies with Native peoples in their shared setting of the woods. Rather than exoticize the overdetermined relationship between Native people and nature, La Flesche's play redraws it as one of creative, fantastical, and literary possibility—pitched, in its fairytale form, to children. In the second version's final scene, those possibilities are uncharted, unresolved, and uncontainable by the stage of the performance.

Taking with them the signifiers of Indianness, the “boy captain” and the “Fairy king” lead their new community off the stage.

Appendix to Chapter 2

IMAGE 1:
Complete bibliography of Helen Kane's writing, compiled by Sophie Abramowitz, 2019.

Published Works:
Plays:

- Kaine, Helen [Helen P. Kane]. *Best-Laid Plans.* Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1904.
- Kane, Helen P. *A bundle of matches : a society comedy in two acts*. New York: Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, 1909.
- Kane, Helen P. *The Capture of Ozah: An Indian Play in One Act.* New York : Samuel French Company, 1914.
- Kane, Helen P. *Dianthe's desertion, a seriocomedy in one act*. Philadelphia, The Penn Publishing Company, 1909 & 1918.
- Kane, Helen P. *The Future Lady Holland*. New York, Dick & Fitzgerald, 1911.
- Kane, Helen P. *Her nephew-in-law elect; a farce in one act*. Philadelphia : The Penn Publishing Company, 1906.
- Kane, Helen P. *The peregrinations of Polly, a comedy in one act for female characters*. New York : Dick & Fitzgerald, c1908.
- Kane, Helen P. *A point of honor; a comedy in two acts*. Boston, Walter H. Baker & co., 1906.
- Kane, Helen P. *A Russian romance; a drama in three acts*. Boston, Walter H. Baker & co., 1907.
- Kane, Helen P. *Under sailing orders; a comedy in one act*. New York, Dick & Fitzgerald, 1912.
- Kane, Helen P. *The Upsetting of Jabez Strong*. New York, Dick & Fitzgerald, 1911.
- Kane, Helen P. *The White Dove of Oneida: A Romantic Drama in Two Acts and After-Scene*. New York, Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, 1907.
- Kane, Helen P. *Yagowanea: An Indian Play in One Act.* New York: Samuel French Publishing Company, 1914.
- Kane, Helen P. *Yot-Che-Ka: An Indian Play in One Act.* New York: Samuel French Publishing Company, 1914.

Stories:

- Kane, Helen P. "The Lovers of Mistress Ruth." *American Monthly Magazine*. Vol XXII, no. 1-3, January - March 1903, pp. 215-221.
- Kane, Helen. "The Lost Tribe of the Erigas: A Tragedy of 1653." *The Southern Workman*, Vol XXXVII, No 4, May 1908.
- Kane, Helen P. "The Return of the Matacha." *Southern Workman*. Vol. 39, no 8, August 1910.
- Kane, Helen P. "Sakajawea of the Shoshones, Pt. 1." *Southern Workman.* Vol 38, January 1900.
- Kane, Helen P. "Sakajawea of the Shoshones, Pt. 2." *Southern Workman*. Vol 38, February 1900.

IMAGE 1 cont'd:

Published Works cont'd:
Poems:
- Kane, Helen P. "Our Flag—June, 1777." *American Monthly Magazine.* Volume XXIII, July-December 1903, pp 432.

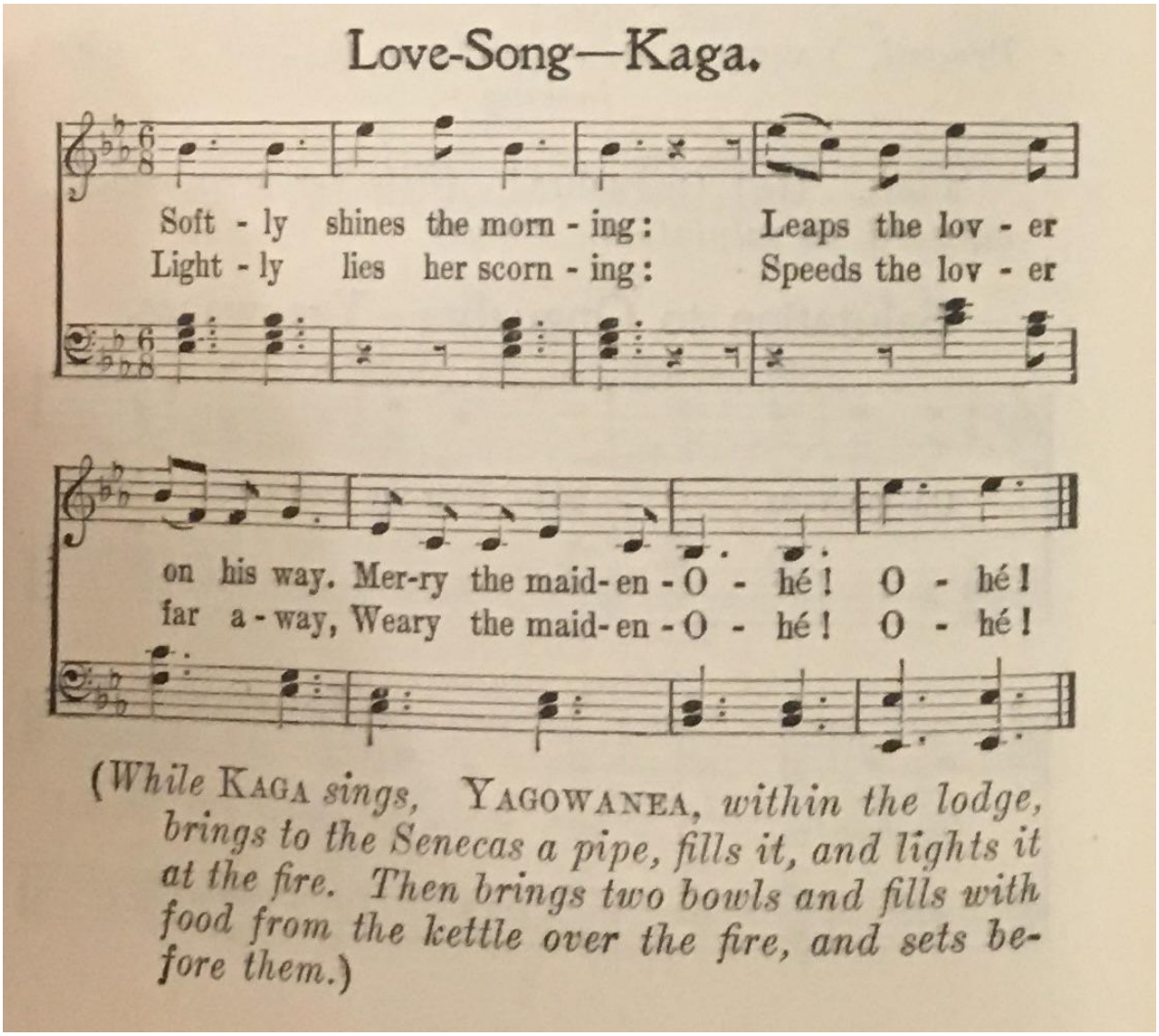
Miscellaneous:
- Kane, Helen P. "Reception by the Dead." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 5, no. 17, April - 3 June 1892. Pp. 148.

Unpublished Works:
Plays:
- Kane, H. *A Day in the seraglio, a little comedy in 1 act*. Washington; D: 4680, Mar. 4, 1904; 2c. Apr. 23, 1904. 10127.
- La Flesche, Francis, and H. Kane. *Adita, son of the Sioux: an Indian drama in three acts.* Typewritten. 98 p. obl. 16mo. Entry 27771 in the Library of Congress Catalogue of Copyright Entries Volume 5, July-December 1908.

Stories:
- Kane, Helen P. "News From Car'Line County." Sent to Francis La Flesche, Christmas 1910. In the Francis La Flesche Papers, National Anthropological Archives, Library of Congress.

Poems:
- Kane, Helen P. "The Chimes." Sent to Dick & Fitzgerald, 28 January 1910. In the Dick & Fitzgerald unaccessioned papers, Amherst College Archives.

IMAGE 2:
"Love-Song—Kaga." A song printed in *Yagowanea* (1914) (pg. 4), one of three "Indian Plays" that Helen P. Kane published that year. The play was "criticized when written by Francis La Flesche," and the song includes Kane's original lyrics and notation that she adapted from Alice C. Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900). Courtesy of the Amherst College Archives, Amherst, MA.



Love-Song—Kaga.

Soft - ly shines the morn - ing: Leaps the lov - er
Light - ly lies her scorn - ing: Speeds the lov - er

on his way. Mer-ry the maid- en - O - hé! O - hé!
far a - way, Weary the maid- en - O - hé! O - hé!

(*While* KAGA *sings,* YAGOWANEA, *within the lodge, brings to the Senecas a pipe, fills it, and lights it at the fire. Then brings two bowls and fills with food from the kettle over the fire, and sets before them.*)

IMAGE 3:
"Love-Song (Pawnee)." A song printed in Alice C. Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900), page 87. Intended for popular consumption, the songs from this book were frequently adapted by composers.

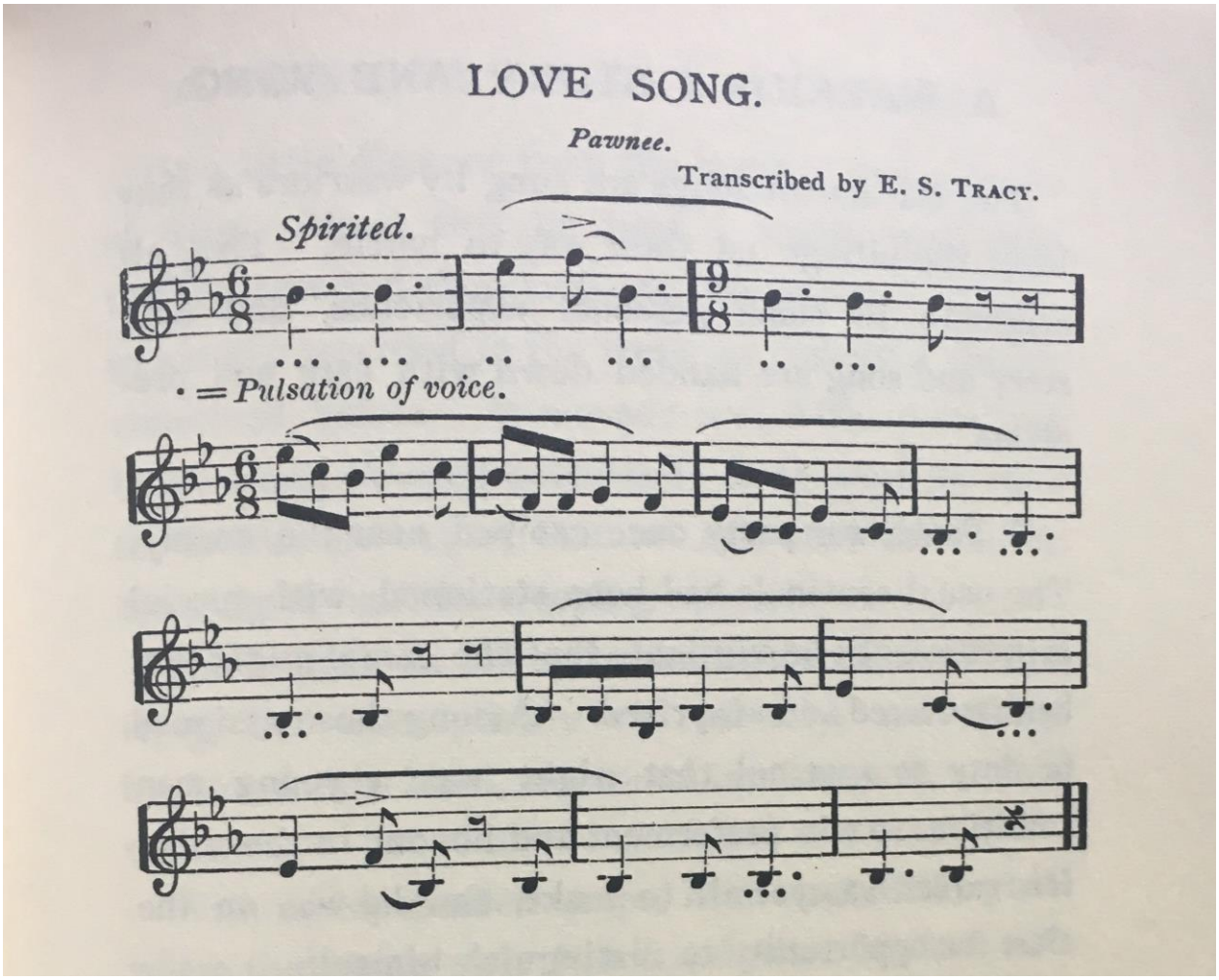


IMAGE 4:
[Untitled] photograph of Francis La Flesche wearing a suit and demonstrating some kind of ceremonial action, n.d. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Washington, D.C.

IMAGE 5:
Francis La Flesche's Untitled Draft 1. This is the first* of two drafts of Francis La Flesche's untitled story featuring the character Ta-daí-lá/Ta-doe-ta. I include the pagination that La Flesche inscribed onto the notepad on which he wrote these drafts.

* This is order is arbitrary; it's impossible to tell which of the two drafts he wrote first, and which of the two drafts he preferred.

[p.3]
II II
Forest and marsh in background, Ta-doe-ta discovered standing in foreground with his right-hand raised to the sky. He sings,

Wa-llan da the-thu
Wah-pa-thu´oh tou he.
Wa-llan-da the-thu
Wa-pa-thu´oh tou he.

He drops upon a fallen log, hires his face in his arms and sob. He falls asleep. Voices are heard [eng…] in the mask.

We are spirits of the marshes.
Night and day we sing
Ka-rump, Karump
Ka-ra-rum.

We are sprits of the marshes.
Rain or shine we sing
Ka-rump, Ka-rump
Ka-ra-rum.

[p.4]

Goggle-eyes sings.
I am the monarch of the marshes etc.

Sprits of the marshes all sing.
Fiary[sic] drops with a thud from the lim of a tree.
All become silent. Fairy becomes right and left and other fairies steal out of the woods. Each carries a tamborine-like[sic] drum in his left hand and on his right - a deershoof[sic] rattle. They form a circle around Ta-doe-ta, They raise their rattles high in the air and bring them down with a crash upon the drums. Ta-doe-ta springs up to a sitting posture. He rubs his eyes.

IMAGE 6:
Francis La Flesche's Untitled Draft 2. This is the second* of two drafts of Francis La Flesche's untitled story featuring the character Ta-daí-lá/Ta-doe-ta. I include the pagination that La Flesche inscribed onto the notepad on which he wrote these drafts. [??] indicates that a word is indecipherable.

* This is order is arbitrary; it's impossible to tell which of the two drafts he wrote first, and which of the two drafts he preferred.

[p.4]
[…]and the [??]. They didn't plague me as these hateful boys and girls did.
Fairies shake their heads silent.
S. Do these trees and those marshes [own] their [healing] to you
Fairies nod their heads.
S. Then I guess I'll go. I wanted to be all by myself, but I can't find any place where there is nobody.
Fairies shake their heads.
S. You don't want me to go?
Fairies shake their heads.
S. I don't believe you are people, if you were you would want me to go.
Fairies shake their heads.
S. I think you are kind of spirits, good spirits.
Fairies nod their heads.
S. Then I guess I'll stay.
Fairies nod their heads.

[p.5]
S. What are you going to do with me?
Wings, the Fairy king approaches him from behind and places in his left hand a tambourine-like drum, and in his right a dears hoof rattle, and then holds him firmly the wrists. Then the Fairies start in a trot over the stages rattling their rattles as they go. When they had gone a little distance, Wings makes [Shanoho??] strike the drum, all the fairies half-sound tambourines and he cries [??], wings then places himself at the head of the line of fairies and motions [Shanoho??] to strike the drum. S. does so and the fairies again start off in a trot rattling their rattles as they go. Shanoho

[p.6]
strikes the drum of his own accord and the fairies halt. S. strikes drum again and the fairies turn forward and disappear among the woods.

Chapter 3:
Langston Hughes's Life in Music

I. Introduction

A creative polyglot working across the genres of literature, poetry, dramaturgy, criticism, political commentary, journalism, sociology, folklore, and even illustration,[81] Langston Hughes consistently revisited one genre in particular: in his writing, music is all-pervading. Still, while most readers are familiar with the ubiquity of blues and jazz in his poetry, the sheer amount of diverse musical production that he undertook during his lifetime has barely been acknowledged[82] and has gone almost entirely unexamined. To call Hughes's music writing diverse, experimental, and encompassing is to begin to acknowledge that, rather than lauding the writer primarily as a poet attuned to the rhythms of blues and bop, parsing his dense musical archive can reveal a broader and more multi-faceted version of his musical and formal investments. Acknowledging that Hughes honed his intersectional ear throughout his work can expand and variegate current understandings of his career. This analysis can also serve as a model for reexamining other Black writers who grew to prominence during the Harlem Renaissance working, like Hughes, in multiple creative arenas at once.

Hughes's long career in music is a generous space of possibility. Of particular note within it is his unwavering attention to the collection and creation of songs. I have come to believe that Langston Hughes's principal commitments throughout his life were as a songwriter,

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[81] Langston Hughes's drawings have been neither compiled nor studied, but his practice throughout different forms of writing was, fairly consistently, to doodle. His drawings range from quick to elaborate, and he develops a style throughout his written work.

[82] W.S. Tkweme is one notable exception. In "The Texts of Langston Hughes in Blues and Jazz Music" (2008), Twkweme recommends that Hughes scholars stop asking "what has Hughes to say about the black musical tradition?" and begin to ask instead: "what has the black musical tradition to say about Langston Hughes?"

song collector, and historian of Black music, whose musical attentions were as sustained and ravenous as they were generically and geographically diverse. While scholars tend to argue that Hughes's work as a songwriter throughout his life was mostly mercenary and subsidiary to his blues and jazz poetry, attention to his protean, extensive, and startlingly under-examined music writing, to his work as a folklorist, and to his experimental archives of Black musical history sheds new light on one of the Harlem Renaissance's most prolific writers and, more broadly, on the unsung musical work of Black authors in his moment.

Operating as a literary concerto, this chapter is composed in three movements that correspond with Hughes's three main approaches to music: songwriting, archiving, and working with folklore. Under the initiative and direction of his friend Carl Van Vechten, Hughes donated his entire catalogue to the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library of Yale University, which solicited notes and ephemera in addition to manuscripts, publications, and correspondence.[83] Never before aggregated in a way that thematizes musical connectivity, I follow Hughes's lead as an experimental and multi-dimensional archivist of Black musical history to propose a "new" music archive culled almost entirely from his Beinecke collection. In form, my proposal offers a purposefully open-ended and unfinished suggestion of the extensive and elastic collection of Hughes's musical work. Because it has been commented on extensively elsewhere,[84] I will not use this space to attend to Hughes's blues and jazz poetry *as poetry*,

[83] Carl Van Vechten first mentions his intention to donate his "Negro collection" to Yale University's library in a letter to Langston Hughes dated after April 5, 1941. It is in this thread of conversation that they develop a plan for Hughes's personal collection.

[84] This has become such a commonplace in Hughes as well as in Harlem Renaissance scholarship that almost any scholar can be cited here, but for more contemporary accounts see Tkweme (FN 2); Jonathan O. Wipplinger's "Singing the Harlem Renaissance: Langston Hughes, Translation, and Diasporic Blues (from *The Jazz Republic*, 2017); Jean-Phillipe Marcoux's "Tropings and Groupings: Jazz Artistry, Activism and Cultural Memory in 'Ask Your Mama,'" (2010); and Erik Nielson's "A 'High Tension' in Langston Hughes's Musical Verse" (2012).

noting instead the myriad poems that were written with the intention of being set to music and briefly discussing the intersection of musical and poetic lyric in Hughes's work. I focus, in this section, on Hughes's investment in approaching music from multiple directions, pointing in particular to the Beinecke's catalogue of "Song Lyrics" that Hughes penned from 1928 until his death in 1966.

Next, I explore Langston Hughes's work as a folklorist. Spotlighting the figure of what Daphne Lamothe calls the "native ethnographer," scholars have recently begun to write about the ways Black authors adapt their writing across genres to the discourses of anthropology, folklore, and sociology. As described in chapter 1, Zora Neale Hurston's folkloric-dramatic productions meld her hybrid approach to anthropology and folklore with her interpretation of the Black dramatic stage. In the chapter, I discuss Hughes as an ethnographer of vernacular culture across different spaces, highlighting his work as a song collector. Born in Missouri, raised in a series of small Midwestern towns and, very briefly, in Mexico, Hughes travelled extensively throughout his life while always pointing his compass, as Claude McKay would have it, "home to Harlem." Influenced by a budding friendship with Hurston that evolved rapidly during their chance meeting-turned-road trip through the American south, Hughes took up Hurston's "spyglass of anthropology" (Hurston, *Mules and Men*, 1), collecting notes and drafting lyrical transcriptions of the languages and musics populating each environment. Hughes went as far as to collaborate with Alan Lomax, before publishing his own folklore opus, *The Book of Negro Folklore*, in 1958. And in addition to exploring, inventing, and celebrating Black "folk" throughout his creative work, Hughes also interrogated the imperialist and often racist discipline of folklore in *Ask Your Mama*, the text that frames the chapter's final movement. Hughes's creative conservation practice is constitutive of his folkloric practice: the Black folklore that he

researched and collected was not only in the service of producing source material; it was the inspiration for his work in form and in spirit.

Finally, in order to introduce Hughes's experimental and performative archival practice I'll survey a few examples of his music collections and compare two texts: *Run, Ghost, Run*, an unpublished, unstudied, whimsical and encompassing theatrical song revue, and *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz*, Hughes's dramatically avant-garde, contrapuntal, and under-investigated text of toasts, poetry, music, and critique. Attentive to the ways that Hughes's musical gestures expanded geographically (to Russia, Cuba, Mexico, and Africa); generically (to pop, folk, as well as blues, jazz, and art music); and in medium (writing musicals, song revues, radio-plays, concerts, 78 RPM hits, and more), "Langston Hughes's Life in Music" offers Hughes's musical archive in order to expand current understandings of Hughes as a jazz and blues historian, demonstrating how he undertook his non-teleological and highly exploratory approach to music in the service of presenting Black history as fluid, transnational, and utopian.

II. "Listen and perhaps understand": Langston Hughes's Musical Texts

Published in 1926, Hughes's first book, *The Weary Blues*, inaugurated the genre of blues poetry for which he became famous. The possibility of music gaining new dimension when set to the page, and of the page situating the "low-down," wildly popular genre of urban blues music within the pantheon of Black musical history as it was written by the "talented tenth," made Hughes's debut work an earth-shaking addition to the Harlem Renaissance. The chthonic, vernacular musicality of *The Weary Blues* was an essential addition to a growing movement amongst the younger generation of "New Negro" intellectuals to embrace Black life and Black creativity using forms distinguishable from the literature and music that had long denied the

existence of Black history and Black art (Gates, Levering-Lewis). *The Weary Blues* and his poetry that followed were so formative, in fact, that their existence has come to signify Hughes's commitment *above all else* to representing music in text.

As Jahan Ramazani has written, however, even while Hughes incorporates blues lyrics inflected by blues syncopations, interjections, vernacular, and call-and-response song patterns in his poetry, he also affects "the social and medial distance the poem straddles between literary speaker and blues singer," scripting the act of listening—"I heard a Negro play," "I heard that Negro sing"—into his poems (Ramazani 187). It's not only from within his poems that Hughes represents this distance. In his manifesto of the Harlem Renaissance, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," for example, Hughes reanimates the moment of listening: appealing directly to "the colored near intellectuals" to "listen and perhaps understand" "the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing the Blues." Text alone can't access sound in Hughes's pantheon. Here, he articulates clearly that to hear rhythms of vernacular performance requires actually listening to music.

Within his own archive, Hughes has often transitioned fluidly between the forms of song and poetry. An undated list in Hughes's handwriting called "BLUES BY LANGSTON HUGHES as set to music by composers listed below" includes songs *and* poems under the "blues" umbrella. Another document, "Twelve songs to Poem by Langston Hughes," was filed alongside his orchestrated blues poems and sent to Moses Asch (of the Archive of American Folk Song) and his longtime friend and collaborator Margaret Bonds. From inside a folder of poetry ideas, notes, and other fragments from around 1957, Hughes similarly pencils in the title of one of his pieces as "Song or Poem." In a personal note, he even critiques the forms of language and music together. Livid in the face of fascism in 1942, he wrote: "words can be used like music, to put so

lovely a veil over reality" that Jim Crow and abject poverty could be hidden from view. Evidence of the cross-pollination between Hughes's poetry and songwriting indicates that he may have been less concerned with the representation of music in text than he was willing—even enthusiastic—to work through different mediums.

Hughes's music purchases throughout his life additionally display his variegated approaches Black music as a creator, collector, anthologizer, and listener. For example, under her patronage early in his career, Hughes was required to record his expenses (down to each carton of milk!) for "godmother" Charlotte Osgood Mason. Instead of recording book purchases, the notebooks that survive this period—1927, 1929, 1930—show Hughes to have been consistently building his record collection. Recorded simply as "records" (and "Cuban records" during his time abroad), Hughes's records (in both senses) ascribe both significance and mundanity to his listening practice, which was as essential as milk for sustenance and paper for his poems. Twenty years later, after Hughes learned that he could write off music purchases as a work expense on his taxes, he spent lavishly (relative to his income) on things like music copying, audio recorders, tapes, a record player, and records.[85]

As a poet of vernacular sounds and modernist experimentation, Hughes explored the formal possibilities and limitations of both sonic and written media throughout his work as a

[85] In 1952, Hughes spent the substantial amount of $125.40 on what he calls "MUSIC COPYING, RECORDS, ETC.," as well as $175.26 on "RECORDER, TAPES" from the long-defunct Merit Music Company. In his Schedule C 1040 Tax forms from 1956, he wrote off music records as work expenses along with books, and his "income tax figures for 1946" show that he spent nearly as much on books and music as he did on travel. In addition to these expenses, Hughes included a separate payment category in his papers for his records and record player. In 1949, he included the expenditures of "MUSIC (Copied, piano tuning, radio repairs, etc.)" and, unfortunately, the amount he paid to purchase his own songs. His itemized draft of that list specifies and expands it to "Tape Recorder & Tapes" from the Merit Music Shop, "Record Player and Repairs," "Test records," and the "music copied, Radio, Phono" of the previous list.

poet, lyricist, and dramatic librettist. While Hughes worked through varying forms of blues and jazz poetry throughout his lifetime, his multi-faceted career in music is so under-recognized and so encompassing that I will pivot from most Hughes scholarship to dedicate the rest of this chapter to that work. Committed to experimenting with lyrical forms as a librettist for many genres and interpretations of Black music; as a folklorist; and as a chronicler of Black musical history; Hughes was "living with music," to use Ralph Ellison's phrase, in ways that readers and listeners have only just begun to imagine. For this reason, exploration of his extensive, multiform engagement with music as a collector, writer, and archivist-historian is essential to engaging with his work across genres.

As Hughes expanded his purview to include different forms of Black music after the publication of *The Weary Blues*, his writing simultaneously inclined towards the stage. Hughes seems to have written his first libretto that same year—1926—in an eventually-thwarted attempt to stage a musical called *O Blues!* in collaboration with Paul Robeson. Having suffered an agonizing rift from Zora Neale Hurston over copyright claims to *Mule Bone* in 1930 and becoming increasingly active in the Communist Party during the decade, Hughes channeled most of his nineteen-thirties playwriting towards communist anti-racist dramas rather than song and dance. He had drafted no more than one or two librettos before 1940. In 1941, however, when he began his song revue *Run, Ghost, Run*, he committed wholeheartedly to writing performances about and around music. After writing three shows in 1940, Hughes began work on six musicals for radio and stage, with others already underway.[86] It's in this decade that Hughes commits

[86] In 1939, Hughes worked as a librettist with composer Clarence Muse for the Hollywood film *Way Down South* and wrote *De Organizer: A Blues Opera in One Act* (Rampersad 132). 1940 marks a year of three unaired musicals: "Blues Sketches," a group of blues song-poems strung together into a short play that included one song—"Third Floor Airshaft Blues"—that he placed

wholeheartedly to the project of Black musical vernacular performance across different stages.

Hughes's engagement during the period also began increasingly to encompass writing that described and historicized music rather than composing it. This writing about music can be loosely (though by no means consummately) categorized into three different types: songwriting, folkloric song collecting, and anthologizing (including the genres of children's book and song revue). Together, this triumvirate of musical writing displays a radical understanding of Black musical history that defies generic and geographic borders.

III. "That's some song! It's gonna spread all over the world"[87]: Langston Hughes as Songwriter

In his definitional biography, Arnold Rampersad attributes Langston Hughes's commitment to songwriting in the nineteen-forties to the financial trouble that would plague him intermittently for the rest of his life. Shifting away from the radical political verse that characterized his writing on the "cultural front" of the nineteen-thirties, Rampersad writes that beginning in 1942—during Hughes's time at the writer's colony Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY—"mostly [Hughes] worked on songs, in a deliberate gamble that one would bring him wealth" (Rampersad, *Langston Hughes: Volume II*, 48). Records show that Hughes joined the

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in *Run, Ghost, Run* a year later; and *Jubilee: A Cavalcade of the Negro Theatre*, which Hughes wrote with Arna Bontemps for the Chicago American Negro Exposition with *Tropics After Dark*, a song revue engaging with popular forms of entertainment alongside the form of the blues (*The Collected Work of Langston Hughes* 149). In 1941, Hughes's musicals include: *The Amazon Queen* (a dance survey), *Bill of Rights* (a script of broadcast about W.C. Handy for CBS), *Carmelita and the Cockatoo; A Ballet Libretto*, *The Saint Louis Blues: A Ballet Libretto*, and *Run, Ghost, Run.*

[87] From the script for *The Birth of the Blues: An Episode in the Life of W.C. Handy*, written by Langston Hughes & Arna Bontemps (located in the James Weldon Johnson Collection, Langston Hughes Papers (Box 279, Folder 4583, page 44), Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library).

American Society for Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) as early as 1936[88] in order to standardize the way he received money from his publishers (Suisman 171). "The Lord has blessed me with ASCAP," Hughes would write in late 1941; and in 1942, "Let's hope some one of [his songs] makes some money $$$$$$." According to Rampersad, "when record-making was suspended as a war measure, [Hughes] was crestfallen: "But my *determination* is to keep on! Just like dice, you have to pass *sometime*—if your bankroll will just hold out till 'sometime' comes!" (Rampersad, *Vol II*, 49).

While Hughes often made a significant portion of his money through ASCAP, that money rarely sustained him. From 1936-1941, extant records seem to show that Hughes accrued at least $110 after $10 in dues annually. While $120 made no significant dent in his overall income during this period, according to Hughes's personal income summary, in 1942 his $620.57 in ASCAP royalties accounted for the greatest share of his earnings, beating out his lecture circuit by just $3. 1942 was also the year that Hughes associated songwriting with his "bankroll" ("$$$$$$," as he'd put it) and the only year that ASCAP yielded his highest source of income. By the following year, a combination of music and book sales comprised a substantial 38% of his income; a higher percentage was sourced in lecture tours and supplemented by his regular column in the *Chicago Defender* (a position he had accepted the previous year). In 1944, a similar story: the money Hughes made from writing music was significant, but ASCAP revenue only covered about 10% of his total income for the year, or 14% including revenue from

[88] The first ASCAP receipt in the Langston Hughes Papers at the Beinecke is dated 1936; while there may have been others, only four of the hundreds of songs in Langston Hughes's catalogue are dated before that year. Those four songs include "My Treasure Chest for You" (1928), "To You" (1930), "Lovely Dark and Lonely One" (1935), and "Ethiopia Marches On" (1935). As I will elaborate, Hughes was additionally "collecting" and transcribing music well before 1936.

Decca Records. The pattern continues: in 1947, ASCAP was his third-highest income source after the *Chicago Defender* and Knopf Publishing Company,[89] and in 1948 it falls behind a weighty sum from his literary agent. Outside of ASCAP, Hughes's music publishing royalties were often absurdly miniscule. As Hughes wrote across a "Royalty Collection Plan" slip from 1963—a $0.74 payment redacted by dues into an unpaid balance after deductions of $0.04—those were "The art of no returns."

It's true that ASCAP provided Hughes with a reliable income—unlike his myriad fellowships, royalties, and advances from the publishing industry, trysts with Hollywood, and other sources of remuneration. It's also true that music that played to the popular tastes of the period had a higher chance of selling than, for example, the stark and politically challenging work that Hughes was producing in the 1930s. The claim that Hughes's songwriting was purely a fiscal pursuit, however, is untenable. And even if it were more profitable, the essential role that songwriting played in his persistently tenuous financial security does not preclude his pleasure and investment in the process and products of his work. What Hughes's ASCAP records actually evidence can be encapsulated in a letter he wrote to Tom Rutherford in September of 1942: "I've always wanted to be a songwriter. Words to music reach so many more people than mere poetry on a printed page" (Rampersad, *Vol II*, 49).

Of the composers with whom Langston Hughes collaborated throughout his songwriting career, his closest friendship seems to have been with Margaret Bonds. An innovative classically-trained composer and pianist and the first Black American soloist to appear with the Chicago Symphony, Bonds's work included orchestral compositions, accompaniment for

[89] Specifically, in the year 1947 Hughes made $796.41 from ASCAP, against $1236.75 from Knopf and $1870.00 for the *Chicago Defender*.

theatrical productions, and traditional spiritual arrangements. In 1965, she wrote Hughes a letter to rib him about his songwriting**.** "I think writing music is a wonderful hobby for you, and men with whom I've been associated often changed roles——Andy Razaf 'made-up' tunes, and Harry Revel wrote lyrics. Occasionally they would come forth with something really 'smashing'—so why not you?"

Written two years before his death, Bonds's letter about 63-year-old Hughes's songwriting "hobby" comes in what seems to be a response to a topic that Hughes's preceding (and currently lost) letter introduced: the possibility, whether in jest or in a moment of confession, that he might transition fully into music writing. In its suggestion of joining the ranks of Black composer, lyricist, and poet Andy Razaf and white British musical theater composer Harry Revel by writing what Bonds later calls "a 'hit,'" Bonds's letter documents Hughes's commitment to music writing, particularly in its trajectory towards the dramatic musical stage.

Just shy of a year after Bonds wrote this letter, Hughes was honored by *The New Amsterdam News* with a headline that proclaimed: "ASCAP Hails Negroes: Songwriters in Top Ranks As Creators Of Our Music." With his photograph nestled next to Fats Waller, above Shelton Brooks, and caddy-corner to Andy Razaf, Hughes's bio presents him as the "distinguished poet, author and playwright" who was a leader in the Harlem Renaissance's musical scene. In the article, Hughes is celebrated specifically for his "poems, 'Freedom Road' and 'Songs To The Dark Virgin,' [which] have been set to concert music," as well as his "lyrics for the musical version of 'Street Scene' and the libretti of the operas, 'Troubled Island'…and 'The Barrier.'" Introduced as both poet and librettist, Hughes's only claim to the title of "songwriter" comes from the article's summary header. His status as Harlem's "distinguished poet, author, and playwright" seems to have made his songwriting permissible only from under

the banner of Hughes's illustrious high art career; specifically as it was enacted on the dramatic musical stage.

Hughes's representation in *The New Amsterdam News* squares with his own self-presentation. Pitching his children's book *Famous Negro Music Makers* to the publisher Dodd, Mead & Co in 1955, Hughes credentials himself (in third-person) with reference to his musical work as "poet, lyricist and librettist":

> As a poet, many of the author's poems has attempted to incorporate into poetry the rhythms and nuances of Negro music. As a lyricist and librettist, he has written operas and many songs with many composers. In 1955 his short history of jazz music, "The First Book of Jazz" appeared. Mr. Hughes has recently been asked to do the libretto for an operatic version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The interchange of forms in Hughes's proposal puts forward the idea that songwriting endowed him with authority as a historian and poet, just as his work as a poet and author enabled him to write lyrics and librettos. Aligning his children's books with the broader category of his musical work, Hughes goes on to present three different ways that he wrote or wrote about music: representing "the rhythms and nuances of Negro music" in poetry; writing librettos and lyrics for operas and other compositions; and writing histories of Black music.

If Langston Hughes was a dedicated and adroit musical auteur, then songwriting was one of his primary occupations. As a librettist, Hughes moved his songs from art music concert arrangements to Hollywood, the Newport Jazz Festival to NBC Radio, and the Broadway stage to the experimental jazz LPs of the nineteen-sixties, leaving song drafts, proposals, and even his own compositions unspooling throughout his archive. To separate the genres and avenues through which Hughes propelled his music would be an injustice to his musical career. I will instead engage with a few of his multi-dimensional songs, noting the places to which he pitched them and the genres and spaces that he intended to synthesize with their production. Hughes

experimented with a variety of subject matter, genres, and geographies—often but not always from within the loose classification of "blues" and "jazz"—in a search for ways to communicate the specificity and diversity of national and diasporic Black experience.

Scholars have rightfully turned their attention to Hughes's role in the jazz scene of the nineteen-fifties and sixties, particularly from within the Black Arts Movement, whose younger Black writers Hughes was a tireless advocate.[90] Elevating Hughes's contributions to jazz music *as a songwriter* with a vast knowledge of traditional songs and song forms to the same level as Hughes's more widely-recognized work as a jazz historian, critic, fiction writer, and poet, W.S. Tkweme catalogues the prominence of Black musicians, scenes of music-making, use of the blues form on the printed page, and deployment of characters expressing themselves in traditional songs and song forms in Hughes's writing, tuning his analysis to a selection of his jazz songs set to music. Offering historical case studies of the ways his lyrical compositions were adapted by Abbey Lincoln, Nina Simone, and the Gary Bartz Ntu Troop, Tkweme posits that Hughes's most significant contribution as a librettist is to jazz music. Tkweme's expansive engagement with Hughes's jazz collaborations can be expanded by John Lowney's analysis, which speaks to the broader scope of Hughes's music career, arguing that Hughes's African diasporic experiment in jazz text displays "an inclusive understanding of jazz" that reveals the ways "blues, swing, bebop, and rock-and-roll are more closely related than most of his peers assumed" (Lowney 568).

Although jazz music pervades Hughes's work, the genre has been overemphasized within the pantheon of his writing. Prioritizing his jazz librettos over the massive amount of songwriting

[90] For an extensive study of Hughes's relationship to the Black Arts Movement, see James Smethurst, "'Don't Say Goodbye to the Porkpie Hat': Langston Hughes, the Left, and the Black Arts Movement," *Callaloo* vol. 25, no. 4, Fall 2002, pp. 1-14.

that Hughes did outside of the Black Arts movement—occasionally under the less glamorous banner of the popular stage—limits our understanding of Hughes as a lyricist. The hybridity and the Blackness of jazz music were what excited Hughes. Beginning to encompass forms recorded in port cities, pressed in Great Britain, and exported back to what Michael Denning calls the "archipelago of colonial ports" for sale, "jazz" as a popular form in the early twentieth century came to signify for music critics like Theodor Adorno, "as for many listeners and many musicians," a composite of "jazz, rumba, hula, and tango," among many other genres (Denning, *Noise Uprising*, 90). As a moniker for a genre that also encompasses Afro-Cuban and African musics and the pop strains of Tin Pan Alley, jazz held the possibility for telling and performing variegated forms of Black cultural, political, and musical history at once. In Hughes's songwriting archive, the blues also emerges as a form that Hughes instrumentalized to similar ends, diversifying the genre and geography of what he found to be a spiritual and political center of Black life. Opening Hughes's vast songwriting archive to a reassessment of his encompassing vision of Black music celebrates Hughes's fascination and engagement with the genre of jazz and blues music while also creating space to explore his more diasporic and experimental understanding of its form, history, and preoccupations.

As "the most prolific black poet-translator of the twentieth century" (Edwards 59), Hughes turned his promiscuous pen to a bevy of transnational genre-songs. "Bay of Mexico" is an undated ode to the Mexican coast, and while I have encountered no songs in French—a language from which he translated the poetry of Léon-Gontran Damas, Jacques Roumain, David Diop, and many others—Hughes's interest in setting the language to song is apparent in his unattributed and catalogued transcription of "Parlez-moi d'amour," a song written by Jean Lenoir and made famous across the Atlantic in 1930 by Lucienne Boyer. Positioning a Persian

shah against the French and American dance hall-cabaret, songs like "No Shah Like My Man (A Can Can)"—which Hughes sent to Mary Lou Williams in 1951 in hopes of setting it to piano accompaniment—evidence an interest in settings of audible and topical transnational contact that appear, notably, in composite dramas like *Run, Ghost, Run*. And in addition to the Caribbean themes that pervade Hughes's work,[91] he wrote at least twelve calypsos, which he sent out to 23 composers and singers by February 5, 1957. A genre rooted in the traditions developed by West Africans enslaved in the Caribbean, Calypso had its first commercial recordings in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, overlapping with Hughes's three visits to Cuba in 1927, 1930, and 1931. A vernacular form used as "a means of communicating and interpreting political events, and a primary news source for many islanders" (Ramm), Hughes seems to have found resonance between the Caribbean calypso and the rhythms and resistance he found in Black blues and jazz. One song from that suite called "Calypso Dixieland Blues" makes this connection explicit: handwritten just above the title, Hughes includes an instruction for performance: "(Music should combine calypso rhythms with the blare of Dixieland and the feeling of traditional blues)."

Hughes's ear to a breadth of musics, languages, and cultural spaces functions doubly. First, his traveling songs could be contextualized by the popular "tourist" songs of the mid-twentieth century; when the mid-century "Hawaiian craze" met the wildly popular interracial love songs of the twenties through the sixties,[92] and the fraught post-war era films depicting the

[91] "Jamaica Ginger," written in 1957, for example, and "Pretty Flower of the Tropics," written in collaboration with Arna Bontemps with music by Margaret Bonds, whose score describes that it be performed "in the style of a beguine," the foxtrot of the West Indies. Hughes also famously wrote the libretto for *Troubled Island*, an opera about the Haitian Revolutionary leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines written by William Grant Still that Hughes began drafting in 1936.

[92] I am grateful to Joseph Thompson, whose paper at the 2018 MoPOP conference, "Foreign Love: U.S. Soldiers, Country Music, and the Gender Politics of Transnational Sexual Encounters," introduced me to this national postwar trend.

excesses of empire through colonial contact abroad.[93] While tourist songs might seem unexpected from the "black poet-laureate," Hughes's investment in populous drew him throughout his career to the popular, sometimes penning songs that were explicitly "pop."[94] That same investment also locates his work on what Michael Denning has called "the cultural front" through Hughes's musical collaborations with Josh White,[95] Paul Robeson, Alan Lomax, and many others. Second, Hughes's focus on ethnic and racial multiplicity within and outside of Black music is part of his creative approach to diasporic Blackness. As someone who'd lived and

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[93] For more information on these colonial and decolonial films, see Jon Cowans, *Empire Films and the Crisis of Colonialism, 1946-1959* (2015).

[94] One pointed example of Hughes's attempt at a pop genre-hit was his song "Cool Saturday Night." Written in 1946 and revised over the course of four years, the bridge of the song intimates the whole:

I WALK
STOP AND TALK,
DON'T SEE YOU AROUND.
FOLKS CHAT
AND GAY CAT—
YOU CANNOT BE FOUND.

Using language that was "hip" in the abstract, the song is less interesting for its diction than for its intended singer. Included in his drafts folder are two copies of a typed note:

PATSY PAIGE
Mercury Records
"With My Eyes Wide Open"
Interested in "Cool Saturday Night"

While Mercury Records never signed a "Patsy Paige" to their label, "With My Eyes Wide Open, I'm Dreaming of You" was the first million-selling single for the wildly popular American pop and country-crossover singer Patti Page. A top-charting female vocalist and the overall best-selling female artist of the 1950s, Page was widely famous for being the first recorded singer of the "Tennessee Waltz," and the novelty song "(How Much Is That) Doggie in the Window." With her commission, Hughes would have broken into the recorded popular music market.

[95] In a riff off of the traditional fiddle song of the same name, Langston Hughes wrote "Cindy" (1952) with longtime collaborator, Popular Front activist, and bluesman Josh White. Hughes also developed White's song "Black Eyed Susans," and the two collaborated on Hughes's 1944 radio operetta, *The Man Who Went to War*. Josh White would go on to perform Hughes's "Freedom Road"—first aired on a *March of Time* radio broadcast in 1942—and "Red Sun Blues," which Hughes also included in "Did You Ever Hear the Blues," the album of blues songs he wrote for Big Miller (with liner notes that he penned himself).

travelled through Mexico, Cuba, France, and parts of Africa and the Caribbean, Hughes's songs reflect his movements, and his intent on embracing his own artistic versatility.

Hughes situated one song in particular at the nexus of themes of "foreign love" and diasporic Blackness. Composed by Margaret Bonds as early as 1940 and included in later drafts of *Run, Ghost, Run,* Hughes's "Sweet Nothings in Spanish" is an ode to a Spanish-speaking interlocutor and to the possibility of sensual, extra-linguistic contact. I reprint it here in full:

> Down in rhumba land
> It's hard to understand
> If you don't know the lingo.
> But when you speak to me,
> I'm as lucky as can be.
> I always seem to comprehendo
> This game must never end tho':
>
> My heart is burning
> And I've let the moon vanish
> While I've been learning
> Your sweet nothings in Spanish.
> Don't know what the words mean,
> But I know what your eyes mean,
> I don't know your customs,
> But I know my heart homes.
> It's beating in a way
> That's so very Americanish.
> While I listen to your
> Sweet little nothings in Spanish.
>
> You say "yo te amo"
> And tho' I don't know Spanish
> Your lips tell me, "I love you so"
> And all my fears vanish.
> When you say "si, si",
> And when you look at me the way you do,
> Then I know I could listen forever
> To your sweet nothings in Spanish,
> To your sweet nothings in Spanish.

In "Sweet Nothings in Spanish," a mix of English, Spanish, and Spanglish renders a dramatic and often farcical relationship in which the narrator's love for their sweetheart is entangled with

a love of the Spanish language. Hughes's use of the word "comprehendo," a hybrid of Spanish "comprendo" and English "comprehend," insinuates that "to understand" is to meet between languages. Matching the word with a rhyme in nonstandard American English ("end tho") advances Hughes's celebration of vernacular, hybrid, Spanglish contact. For the "Americanish" protagonist, to understand (or to "comprehendo") seems to require hybridity rather than translation.

But who is the song's subject? "Rhumba-land" would indicate some kind of Afro-Cuban space, but the east coast rhumba craze ushered in by big band jazz and the film "Rhumba" in 1935 dissipate some of that specificity. And as Sandhya Shukla has noted:

> In the early twentieth-century Harlem that Hughes gazed at, cultural and political groups that could be called "Spanish" included Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Spaniards. Notably, this Spanishness was heterogenous, just as Harlem's blackness—composed of African Americans, West Indians, and Africans—was (766).

By abstracting them, Hughes leaves open the possibility of attributing multiple races, and genders, to his Spanish-speaker. The song argues, then, for the possibility of cross-cultural, interracial contact through music. It also opens the representational field of Blackness, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain, offering an indiscreet heterogeneous view of each.

In the 1950s, Hughes was also experimenting with rock 'n' roll as the field shifted on the popular stage between white and Black artists. His most explicit pantomime comes in 1955 with "Plymouth Rock and Roll," set to music by his collaborator David Martin that September, just two months after Chuck Berry released his earth-shaking "Maybelline."

> PLYMOUTH ROCK AND ROLL—
> Where the waves of rhythm beat
> Is the beat that's in my soul.
> Yes it's the rhythm in my nest
>
> PLYMOUTH ROCK AND ROLL—
> Where the solid saxes sound.
> It's the heat that won't grow cold.

Man, I'll never put it down.

Yankee Doodle doodle-ooo
And Swanee River blues
Tang-tang-tangled up together
In a rhythm that's hot news.

While the song sets its listener in the rock 'n' roll present—"Music like we have today/ The Pilgrims did not know"—the song also asserts the genre's roots in Black music. Incorporating language that could easily have been lifted from his blues and jazz poetry by making direct reference to the blues and jazz tradition—the "rhythm" and the "beat," "solid saxes" and "hot news"—the song is a meditation on mixing.

If the "Plymouth Rock and Roll" is the "tang-tang-tangle" of "Yankee Doodle" and the Swanee River blues, the song that he began that same summer, "Money, Mississippi Blues," toys with the musical idioms of R&B and rock and roll to communicate a subject whose gravity is out-of-step with the genre's typical fare. On August 28, 1955, Emmett Till was lynched in Money, Mississippi, and in commemoration and outrage Hughes wrote the poem "Mississippi—1955" and published it in his weekly column for the *Chicago Defender* at the end of that September. Beginning that month, Hughes also began to collaborate with composer Jobe Huntley on what is technically the earliest song written about Emmett Till and the trial of his murderers, called "Money, Mississippi Blues." While Huntley's score is now lost and the song was never recorded, according to his notes Hughes was invested enough in having it performed to plan to pitch it to twelve artists, including cultural front blues musicians Brownie McGhee, Josh White, and Billie Holiday. From poem to song, the title changes from spatio-temporal coding (place—date) to two double-entendres: a more specified spatial marker that also demarcates the presence of racial capitalism (Money, Mississippi), and an ontology of race, genre, and resilience: "blues."

While the lines begin to bleed together in the final lyric pages, Hughes's earliest draft of

the song emphasizes his intent to legibly, explicitly to incorporate the chart-topping pop song "Money Honey" into this new song's refrain.

> I don't want to go
> To Money, honey,
> MONEY, MISSISSIPPI!
> No, I wouldn't want to go
> To Money, honey,
> DOWN IN MISSISSIPPI.
> Pity, sorrow, pain
> IN MONEY, MISSISSIPPI!
> Tears and blood like rain
> IN MONEY, MISSISSIPPI!

Originally recorded by Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters as a single in 1953, "Money Honey" stayed on the R&B charts for twenty-three weeks. Elvis Presley didn't record the song until three years later, meaning that Hughes would have been responding to a Black musician's performance of the track. Commemorating Emmett Till and decrying his violent murder in a song that celebrates variations on a theme of Black musical history, "Money, Mississippi Blues" also includes in its critique of the imbrication of capital in the state-sanctioned murder of a Black boy a nod to the place of money within the mixed-race industry of rock and roll.

The "Honolulu Yaka-Hula Dixie Blues" [IMG 1] explores racial mixing in a musical response to Pearl Harbor, while perhaps counterintuitively engaging with the history of nationalist racism and American colonialism on the island through the genre of minstrelsy. The song takes as its narrator a soldier shipping off to war, and as its narrative center; an interracial love story. Written at Yaddo in 1942, the song responds to the bombing by setting a soldier and his Hawaiian sweetheart in a minstrel music-scape. Hughes racializes his song's two protagonists, a Black singer and a Native Hawaiian subject, by associating them with its two music genres: "Miss Yaka Lula, when I come BACK,/ I'll croon your hula,/ and you can croon the blues with me—." Here, Waikiki is imagined as an interstitial space where a protagonist from

"Alabam" can "put…two songs together" when he "croon[s] the Dixie Blues." Contemporary songs about interracial love in Hawaii usually implied a white protagonist. By revising this trope with a Black or minstrel protagonist, Hughes rewrites a history of colonialism, resistance, and musical interaction.

In addition to aligning the piece with popular interracial love genre-songs, the interracial relationship at the heart of "Honolulu Yaka-Hula Dixieland Blues" also alludes to an actual musical cultural exchange. In the early twentieth century, Native Hawaiians, Cajuns, African Americans, Mexicans, and others toured together on the vaudeville circuit, creating hybrid guitar picking styles that circulated nationally and internationally during the mass recording and circulation boom of the 1920s. An exchange that ran counter to what Karl Hagstrom-Miller calls the "musical color line," which segregated recording genres from one another through marketing, there was enough acknowledged and implicit interaction between Black bluesmen and Native Hawaiian (or Kānaka Maoli) steel guitar players into the early twentieth century to confidently affirm that the sounds of kīkā kila—or Hawaiian guitar—were formative to the creation of the sound of the slide guitar blues. Further, the intertwining histories that Hughes chose to channel are explicitly political. After the missionary intrusion of 1820, Native Hawaiians began performing songs (or mele) that were explicitly anticolonial; interweaving nationalism, politics, and religion into their music. Even though, according to Michael Denning, the international vogue for Hawaiian music from at least the nineteen-twenties into the nineteen-fifties had to some degree expropriated the music for colonial and tourist exoticism, the resonances and themes of mele persist in hula music to this day, creating on the whole a contesting popular musical space. Of course, Hughes revered blues music as a source and subject at the heart of vernacular Black socio-political life. To bring these genres together attributes depth and urgency

to what otherwise manifests as a silly goodbye song.

Further, the "Honolulu Yaka-Hula Dixie Blues" is rooted in the blackface minstrel, vaudeville, and 78-era popular musical traditions that produced novelty recordings like "The Honolulu Blues," "Yaaka Hula Hickey Dula (Hawaiian Love Song)" and "Honolulu Hicki Boola Boo."[96] A wartime song sung in minstrel dialect—"Uncle Sammy, and my Mammy, and the folks in Alabamy/ Sent ME to get the enemy"—Hughes's Hawaiian love song associates the two popular American pastimes of wartime enthusiasm and minstrel performance with one another. That association is not a simple one. While Hughes rejected segregation in the Armed Forces (Rampersad, *Volume II*, 53), he did not reject the premise of the war itself. Just a month after completing his song, Hughes made his debut in the *Chicago Defender*, with a column that opposed the "reactionary force" of Japanese militarism and championed the United States as a defender of "the little people all over the world" whose vernacular cultures he celebrated in his writing (Rampersad 49-50). And while like Hurston, Hughes rejected blackface minstrelsy, he also recuperated Black minstrel performance by positioning one of its performers as the origin of early Black popular music in America.[97] The song sings the ways that race was constructed and reified in segregated wartime alongside the creation of race music. An example of Hughes signifying both incidentally and purposively on intersectional musical histories in his songs, the "Honolulu Yaka-Hula Dixie Blues" engages in the interconnections between race, genre, colonialism, and nationalism in the language of musical performance.

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[96] Respectively, each song was recorded by Peerless Quartet (1916), Collins-Harlan and Al Jolsen (1916), and American Quartet (1917) (1921 Catalogue of Victor Records).

[97] I refer here to Langston Hughes's *Famous Negro Music Makers* (1955), which includes as its first subject the composer James A. Bland, to whom he attributes the title "Minstrel Man."

At the height of Hughes's songwriting career, he was also collecting the songs for inspiration. While Hughes didn't typically annotate his sources of inspiration, two of his written pieces distinguish themselves. "Blues Heard on Lenox Avenue, July 1957," a pocketbook transcription that he scribbled down on the central Harlem thoroughfare, and two years later, "Little Song I Heard Somewhere" (1959, n.d.)—a song-poem whose spatial dislocation universalizes the experiences of bombs exploding, factory whistles blowing, and trains running against his own ethnographic collecting practice—record the process of folkloric listening and writing cohesively with that of musical making. At the height of his songwriting career, Hughes occasionally used his original songs to signify explicitly on the practice of song collection.

V. "Collected by Langston Hughes": Langston Hughes as Folklorist

It was in June of 1927, just a year after the publication of *The Weary Blues*, that twenty-nine-year-old Langston Hughes followed Zora Neale Hurston's advice about what Arnold Rampersad called "the rich folk material everywhere" (*Langston Hughes: Vol I*, 149) and set off on a trip through the southern United States and the hemispheric south. Moving from the red-light district in Memphis to Vicksburg, Mississippi, to the labor camps of Baton Rouge, Louisiana—where, according to Rampersad, "Hughes tried to record the more inventive songs"—Hughes turned folklorist, ethnographer, and collector. Running into Hurston in Mobile, Alabama, Hughes recounted the verses he'd transcribed from a stevedore named Big Mac, and compared notes on the idiomatic vernacular he'd been diligently recording in his notebook throughout his trip (151). Together in Savannah, Georgia, warned by Hurston that "you can't just sit down and ask people to sing songs for you and expect them to be folk-songs, and good ones, and new ones" (*The Big Sea* 297), the pair "coaxed new songs out of the guitar pickers and bluesmen on the docks" (Rampersad, *Langston Hughes: Volume II*, 153).

During this period, Hughes used his traveling notebook as a repository for folklore. In Decatur, Alabama, Hughes described and transcribed the chorus of what he called "the blind man playing his guitar and singing;" the sermon of "a[sic] old man named Uncle John," and the same John's daughter's gospel shout. In Huntsville, a story called "The Cat Tale" that Hughes heard in "Mr. Herndon's Drug Store" appears before a series of daily diary-style entries that shift between poetry, transcription, and even diagram of what seems to be a self-made ventilator. Hughes's traveling notebooks from this field recording trip reveal his investment in vernacular Black culture and language, with his observations of the sights and sounds in each southern town rendered in lush detail. And even as an ethnographer, Hughes's work gives the impression of being a formal experiment.

While anthropologists in the nineteen-twenties and thirties were far from mimicking the environment of the controlled lab experiment in their practice, leaders of the field like Bronislaw Malinowski argued for that level of objectivity.[98] In these inaugural years of Hughes's own ethnographic collecting, Franz Boas's theory of cultural relativism had brought ideas of basic equality between different cultural systems to bear on this imperative for objectivity, in an attempt to pivot from the racial ranking system applied by his reformist anthropologist predecessors like Natalie Curtis Burlin, folklorist and author of *The Indians' Book*. Within and against these imperatives, Hughes's notes display his attention to folkloric—and particularly musical—detail, to Black life on a transnational scale, and to the creative possibilities of the material. Like Zora Neale Hurston, Hughes consistently collected creatively with the intention not of recording empirical data but instead of adapting his materials into art that could capture

[98] For more information on the ways that scientific objectivity was idealized but not necessarily executed, see chapter 1, page 56-57, and chapter 2, page 89.

the rhythm, wit, and humor that he heard in Black folk expression. Similar to La Flesche's ethnological and dramatic efforts to overcome primitivist and extinctionist thinking, both Hughes and Hurston were fundamentally challenging the notion that Black folklore was archaic, seeing it instead as the animating force of "the folk's" momentum toward modernity. A rapacious collector and creator who often engaged in both processes at once, Hughes's folkloric work engaged aesthetically and politically with ideas of vernacular Blackness on an international scale.

Hughes integrated his vast collection of folklore into his work across media, but much of the source material that he preserved in his papers comes from his travel to Cuba. Propelled by his search for a Black composer to collaborate with on an opera commissioned by Charlotte Mason (Mullen 13), Hughes took his second of three trips to the Republic in February of 1930. The wealth of ethnographic musical detail that Hughes took home with this imperative in mind marks the ethnographic underpinnings of his musical dramatic project and conversely—in line with his epistolary correspondence with Hurston leading up to this trip—his celebration of what he saw as the dramatic quality of vernacular Blackness. During that trip, Hughes flooded his travel notebook with personal chronicles about the live performances that he attended: the Orchestra at Marianoa, for example, and a medley of cornetín, maracas, the "Bongó," piano, claves, "Guitar de tre cuerdas," guayo, violin, and flute at the Club Occidente (a "Negro ballroom publico"). At the Club Occidente, a "Negro ballroom publico," he lists the cornetín, maracas, ("a sort of gourd with a handle, used double"), the "Bongó," piano, cloves ("two sticks—bones"), "Guitar de tre cuerdas," guayo ("a corrugated long gourd"), a violin, and a flute; all followed by detailed descriptions of the dancers and their dances. Hughes's notes on the "Orchestra at Marianoa" follow a similar pattern. While the archive of his career from the

forties onwards insinuates that Hughes tended towards history books and newspaper articles to research his various projects, these experiential, ethnographic musical catalogues populate his personal papers in the nineteen-twenties and thirties in high volume.[99] Going forward, Hughes returned to Afro-Cuban music across his work and particularly, as I'll discuss, throughout *Ask Your Mama.*

Undertaken in the spirit of Black internationalism and marked by what John Patrick Leary has called "the inevitable conflicts and miscommunications that accompanied and occasionally frustrated the internationalist desires of the Afro-Cuban revival and the New Negro movement" (135), Hughes used vernacular Black music as a way to articulate a musical connection between Black cultures internationally, in his translations and in his own writing. Having first visited Cuba in 1927, Hughes's 1930 return as an internationally renowned poet cemented his place in the Afro-Cubanist movement as an enthusiastic supporter and translator.[100] As a reader, translator, and listener, Hughes encouraged the poet Nicolás Guillén to incorporate the rhythms and themes of Guillén's national Cuban folk music—the *son*—into his poetry in a

[99] For example, Hughes's notebook from a trip to Mexico in July of 1920 describes "a little peon boy […] singing something to the music of a big mandolin" extensively, calling Nuevo Laredo a "musical town," chronicling "street songs played on a mandolin…by the city band," and adumbrating the contest of "all the player pianos and victories in the vicinity" after dark.
[100] For recent writing on Hughes and translation in Cuba, see Vera M. Kutzinski, "Havana Vernaculars: The Cuba Libre Project" and "Southern Exposures: Langston Hughes in Spanish" in *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas* (2012) and "'Yo también soy América': Langston Hughes Translated" (*American Literary History* vol 18, no 3 (Autumn, 2006)), Edward J. Mullen, "Langston Hughes and the Development of Afro-Hispanic Literature: Diasporan Connections" (*The Black Scholar* vol. 26, no. 2 (summer 1996)), John Patrick Leary, "Havana Reads the Harlem Renaissance : Langston Hughes, Nicolás Guillén, and the Dialectics of Transnational American Literature" (*Comparative Literature Studies* vol. 47, no. 2 (2010), and Marilyn Miller, "(Gypsy) Rhythm and (Cuban) Blues: The Neo-American Dream in Guillén and Hughes" (C*omparative Literature* vol. 51, no. 4 (autumn 1999)).

mode reminiscent of Hughes's own use of blues and jazz rhythms. In their writing (and for Hughes, everywhere else), Hughes and Guillén channeled their indignation at racism and economic imperialism in Cuba and in America through the language and rhythms of folk music.[101]

Hughes celebrates these rhythms in a sensuous ode to Cuban painter and comic artist Eduardo Abela, succeeding his chronicles of musical instruments with a passage in his 1930 notebook that interweaves music and illustration with impressionistic flourish:

> *Abela. —*
> *Spirit of the rumba—his blues - shaded by black and browns—in oil, crayon,*
> *water color.—Fantasy of popular folk song.—heads upraised, figures in still movement—*
> *faces - maybe white, maybe black — the singing dream*

Here, Abela's "blues" are material, or ontological. Metamorphosing in the "spirit of the rumba" that's modified by "blacks and browns," the rhumba and the blues are represented together as a mode of existence for Black and brown people. The presence of these colors has the effect of darkening, or "shading," the rumba, emphasizing still further the relationship that Hughes translates between Black and Afro-Caribbean people through music. This relationship is not purely aesthetic: in early 1930, Abela had just begun satirizing Cuba's Machado government with a caricature of "El Bobo" the fool, joining a broader forum of organized dissent by labor leaders, students, and anarchs-syndicalists against the president (Benjamin 71). An outspoken communist in the 1920s, Hughes reads (and hears) Abela's impressionistic rumba through the lens of populism, focusing on "figures in still movement" blending together, the different skin tones of the painting's Cuban subjects "maybe white, maybe black." In a mode similar to

[101] While the symbolic resonance between the blues and the son resonates between Hughes's and Guillén's poetry, John Patrick Leary has noted that Hughes's choice to translate "son" as "blues" in his translation of Guillén's works elides some important cultural specificity of the Cuban music. See Leary, "Havana Reads the Harlem Renaissance," 2010.

Hughes's own music writing, Abela's "oil, crayon, water color" give form to this transnational Black music. Reminiscent of Jean Toomer's verdant prose and Emily Dickinson's dash-laden, musical poetry, these field notes are as much observational recording as they are an expression of lyric creativity. In this moment, Hughes's deep affection for musical performance, interest in its relationship to identity formation, and nontraditional ethnographic mode of transcription are at the textual surface. Here, Hughes translates "folk song" musicality through the medium of painting into text, celebrating transnational Black creativity through the figure of a "fantasy of popular song."

That "fantasy of popular folk song" is fundamental to Hughes's own music writing, in which he does away with the paradigmatic oppositional definition of "folk" and "popular" leveled by primitivists like his friend Carl Van Vechten. Beginning around the turn of the century, primitivists idealized Black (and Native) "folk" musics using a rubric that bore striking similarities to the criteria through which "high art"—typically defined in opposition to "folk" art—was celebrated. For example, Lawrence Levine has charted what he calls "the sacralization of culture" in the twentieth century through shifts in cultural standards, which begin to privilege ideas of old age over newness, originality over reproduction, and uniqueness over mass production (120-164). "Folk" music recorded by folklorists in the twenties and thirties was caught in the strange position of representing for primitivists—in opposition to "high" culture—a different kind of uniqueness, substantiated by the idea that each song provided access to an untouched and mostly inaccessible communal past (rather than a vibrant and adaptive present). This kind of idealization reified the purveyors of these musics, stripping Black "folk" musicians of agency in the present while simultaneously criticizing Black musicians whose songs gained popularity and circulation in the marketplace.

While Hughes expressed frustration at the ways Black music could be coopted by white artists and composers for profit, he located the value of Black music in its rootedness in Black life in the present, rather than in a proscriptive idea of genre. For example, his album liner notes for Black operatic mezzo-soprano Shirley Verrett[102] celebrate the "sorrow songs" (a phrase adapted from Du Bois, usually to describe Black spirituals) horizontally, as "the songs which best express [the singer's] feelings. Sometimes these are old songs—spirituals, blues and work-songs. Sometimes these are new songs written in the folk idiom, and sometimes they are popular songs." For Hughes, "popular songs" included blues, jazz, and calypso—music that he considered to have the folkloric quality of being "of the people." Only when he considered these genres to have been commodified did the term "popular" become a slur.

In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes lauds the unique cultural value of Black art by attributing that art to "the low-down folks, the so-called common element" who "are the majority—may the Lord be praised!"[103] And similarly, in *The Big Sea*, Hughes located the source of his poetry in the music of that "majority":

> I tried to write poems like the songs they sang on Seventh Street-gay songs, because you had to be gay or die; sad songs, because you couldn't help being sad sometimes. But gay or sad, you kept on living and you kept on going. Their songs-those of Seventh Street-had the pulse beat of the people who keep on going (209).

In an ethnographic flourish, Hughes ascribes a blues ethos—"laughing just to keep from crying"—to the songs of the everyday. A passage of perseverance and resolve, Hughes's sonic Seventh Street values "gay songs" and "sad songs" as foundational to Black experience. To

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[102] Hughes also transcribed "Lamento Esclavo," a song by Cuban musician Eliseo Grenet, from his personal record collection by the request of Leonard de Paur so that it could be included in an album by Shirley Verrett.

[103] Black "folk" characters also held central roles in Hughes's writing throughout his career—from the city-dwellers populating *The Weary Blues* to Jesse B. Semple of his "Simple" stories, who represents "a great many people" living in Harlem (Hughes, *The Best of Simple*, 759).

quote Lindon Barrett, Hughes's description shows how "the African American singing voice and musical production provide, if anything…a fundamental means for African American populations to extricate themselves from harshly imposed and dehumanizing silences" (Barrett 92). Hughes's songs are sites of generic and geographic interconnectivity, and they accrue meaning by tapping "the pulse…of the people who keep on going;" by telling a dynamic history of Black music and experience sourced in large part in Hughes's ethnographic ear and his folkloric song collecting.

Hughes's commitment to the practices of song collecting and ethnographic observation led him to briefly enter the discipline alongside Alan Lomax in a more conventional sense as a folklorist-practitioner. Because the field of folklore was often fetishistic, primitivistic, and unwelcoming to practitioners of color, the "new kind" of Black folklore to which Hughes (along with Zora Neale Hurston) was committed is not usually associated with figures like Alan Lomax. Black folklorists like John W. Work, Anna Julia Cooper, Louise Bennett and Lewis Wade Jones—Hughes's predecessors and contemporaries—had each collected, written, and composed at the edges of the academic field of folklore, which itself still operated in departments (like English and Sociology) that were external to the field. Not only did Hughes never call himself a "folklorist," but to think of him—as Meta DuEwa Jones has explained—"as a totemic figure whose pedestal is primarily built on his 'authentic' rendering of African-American forms of vernacular and musical expression" would also be a mistake. "Heavy emphasis on Hughes's poetry's linguistically authentic African-American 'folk' and urban characteristics," she explains, "has tended to over-simplify his corpus." Hughes's corpus of mixed-genre writing interprets and incorporates his sources, and speaks to a project that exceeds that of purist preservation. Similar to Hurston (though their processes diverge from one another), Hughes's

folkloric work is *conservational*. By creatively reinterpreting and synthesizing Black vernacular sources across musical performances—many intended for the dramatic stage—Hughes creates performative Black vernacular art that reinvents instead of reifies. At a time when primitivism dominated the artistic scene, Hughes's creative Black folklore presented Black "folk" art not only as modern, but as the harbinger of modernity.

Hughes, however, both influenced and was directly influenced by the predominantly white world of public folklore, participating in it briefly and directly before electing to contribute on his own terms.[104] In the 1940s, Hughes joined forces with Alan Lomax to write the libretto for two patriotic ballad opera radioplays: "John Henry Hammers it Out,"[105] for the NBC Labor for Victory radio play starring Paul Robeson as a factory worker, and "The Man Who Went to War," starring Canada Lee, Paul Robeson, and Ethel Waters for the BBC. (He also half-heartedly contributed the libretto to a "folk-opera" called *Wide, Wide River* in the late 1940s).[106] A notoriously complicated cultural figure, Lomax relayed contradictory ideas of folkloric dynamism and stasis. Writing the Music Director of the Library of Congress the same year that he and Hurston took their recording trip to Florida, Lomax lauded "commercial recording

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[104] While outside of the scope of this chapter, it merits mention that Hughes also expressed interest in the "Folk Revival" in the final decade of his life, writing favorably about Joan Baez in 1964.

[105] Langston Hughes's research files for "John Henry Hammers it Out" include multiple transcriptions of the folk song "John Henry," though their source is unclear.

[106] *Wide, Wide River: A Folk Opera* was a project that the composer Granville English initiated in the hopes of applying for a Rosenwald Grant to fund it. Their correspondence ends abruptly, but an extant letter finds Hughes describing his packed schedule of lecture touring on top of it being what he calls "my theatrical year!," with a brief apology for his absence in their correspondence. That was 1957—his final draft of the play is from 1952, though it was sent out formally in 1954, and reads as a sentimental drama between a Croatan Native American and a white interlocutor. It is distinguished from the first draft by its revised sub-header: "A Folk Opera IN ONE ACT WITH A PROLOGUE" rather than "A MUSICAL DRAMA IN ONE ACT WITH A PROLOGUE." Hughes's letter (and lack of other letters) display only a low level of interest in the project.

companies" for having "done a broader and more interesting job of recording American folk music than the folklorists," and argued that "every single item of recorded American rural, race, and popular music that they have in their current lists and plan to reuse in the future should be in our files" (Denning 221). Lomax's progressive attitude as another actor on the Popular Front—along with his fame and funding—may have attracted Hughes that year to their collaboration.

In the summer of 1939—while Zora Neale Hurston was working for the Florida Division of the Federal Writer's Project in the WPA—Lomax wrote to Hughes to thank him for sending a song transcription. "The Dupree text you were kind enough to send," he wrote:

> Is the best myself or my father have ever seen and we are encorporating[sic] most of it in American Ballads and Folk Songs, now in process of completion. It is one more example of the many that show who ought to be doing the job of collecting Negro folk-lore while it is still growing, while it still has the freshness and fertility that it now has. In the mean time, however, I should greatly appreciate any scrap, fragment, stanza or version of any Negro folk song you know, whether it has ever been published or not and let me assure you that if the Archive of American Folk Song can be of any assistance to you that is within the scope of its procedure.

In December of 1939, Hughes replied.

> I got a chance to copy out for you some of the folk song verses among my notes. Wish you'd let me know if there're any you haven't heard yourself before. I have lots more, I expect, in my trunk full of papers in New York that I can't get at now. I know I have somewhere one swell version of Frankie and Johnny that may have some variants not in the published verses that I have seen. And if I ever come across it I'll send it to you in case you'd like to have it…..I'm glad you liked the Dupree Blues I sent you. The fellow that I heard sing it is now in the penitentiary for life for hitting a man on the curb and knocking him out in the street where he got run over and killed by a passing car.
> […]
> P.S. Some of the verses that I;m[sic] sending you have already been used in various of my stories, articles, or skits. And possibly sometime I may so employ some of the others—so in case you should publish any of them, please be so kind as to indicate their source so people won't maybe think I shall have robbed the Am. Ballads should they come across them in a script of mine.

In his letter, Hughes positions himself as an expert of Black folklore by displaying the breadth of his personal collection and his depth of knowledge about (and, judging by his extended

description of "Dupree Blues," enjoyment of) each piece. Actually, this is not the first time Hughes mentions his "trunk full of papers," though it *is* the first time he lets Lomax in on the secret. Writing to Edward H. Dodd, Jr., at the publisher Dodd, Mead & Company seventeen years after this correspondence, Hughes describes his collection:[107]

> Once I started looking through my files and on my bookshelves, I was surprised at how much folk material I have at hand immediately, and how large my own personal collection has become over the years—some of which I've used in my Simple books, but most of which is unpublished.

Detailing the contents of his "folk material," Hughes claims that about half is unpublished, "gathered or so acted by" Hughes and Bontemps, "some like the urban and contemporary stuff, *completely new*." These paired correspondences between Hughes and Dodd and Hughes and Lomax, written nearly twenty years apart, exemplify the depth of Hughes's commitment to folklore; first as a disciplinary participant, and again as a defender of "the urban and contemporary stuff," of folklore in the making.

When Lomax responds to Hughes in February of 1939, he is affirming and brief. "The songs are very superior. Some I had and some I didn't. So far as I am concerned we can't get too many blues into the Archive." No specifics, and no mention of his earlier promise to incorporate Hughes's collected variations of "Dupree Blues" into *American Ballads and Folk Songs*. While the first volume of *American Ballads* was published roughly five years before Lomax and

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[107] *The Book of Negro Folklore* bears the mark of Hughes's folkloric collecting: quotidian names (a story attributed to "Ruth Rogers Johnson" (265-271)) and another to "Harriet Kershaw Leiding" (411-416)) evidence conversations had in situ; and stories located in Harlem ("Statement by Charles McCoy, Harlem January 10, 1958" (277), "a Harlem version,/ Embassy Bar 1956" of "Shine and the Titanic" (363) which Hughes actually transcribed in shorthand in October of 1955, and multiple transcriptions of sermons by Harlem's "Father Divine" (273-276)) point to the presence of Hughes and/or Arna Bontemps. One song called "Just Blues" was printed explicitly "as heard and transcribed by Langston Hughes at the Swing-Hi Club in Los Angeles, 1941" (387). The publication on the whole is a staggering, 624-page testament to Hughes's and Bontemps's investment in compiling an extended study of black folklore.

Hughes's correspondence, Volume 2, *Our Singing Country* (1941) does contain a version of Dupree Blues called "Dupree," attributed to "Langston Hughes, who heard it in Cleveland in 1936."

Lomax archived the songs that Hughes collected and sent him in a folder labeled "SONG MS - TO BE FILED" as early as 1933. Titled "American Negro Blues/ Collected By Langston Hughes" with "I" and "II" across the headers, respectively, of the first two pages, Hughes's first transcription seems to be either of a performer synthesizing a number of blues refrains *or* of Hughes patching them together into his own song—the second, a collection of song fragments with ethnographic locations bisecting them from each other. Hughes sets the scene for each of the page's four transcriptions by listing the place he heard them: "various parts of the South and in Harlem," "The Sportsmen's Club in Cleveland, Ohio," and "the Swing High Cafe in Los Angeles." The third page, titled "BITS OF NEGRO FOLK SONGS/ Collected by Langston Hughes," is fragmentary and brief; evidence of the high premium that Hughes places on even a fraction of Black vernacular poetry [IMG 2]. Different songs and phrases on each page are separated by "#########;" a formatting technique that Hughes repurposed in his miscellaneous song transcriptions [IMG 3] and, importantly, in at least four other papers that he labeled "-Song Ideas-" [IMG 4]. Appearing unsigned and undated sporadically throughout the Beinecke's vast collection of Hughes's work, these transcriptions and brainstorms represent a generative creative exchange between Hughes's songwriting and song collecting. While the original transcription of "Dupree Blues" seems to be lost, this collection probably represents only a fraction of the work that Hughes collected but did not catalogue throughout his life.

In his letter to Hughes during the "Dupree Blues" correspondence, Alan Lomax used the primitivizing metaphors of "freshness" and "fertility" to signify what he saw as the threat posed

to Black folklore by so-called "inauthentic" sources. In concert with his folkloric work across texts, recordings, and stages, Hughes's response inscribed his commitment to what Hurston had proclaimed in her letter to him 28 years earlier: "Negro folklore is *still* in the making. A new kind is crowding out the old."

VI. "Langston Hughes Records": Langston Hughes as Music Archivist

As a songwriter, collector, poet, and scholar of Black music, Hughes's processes of amassing and presenting, representing, and re-presenting songs were interactive. Hughes also pitched his original lyrics widely and consistently, repurposing material in hopes of having it performed.[108] It was from these reciprocal movements that Hughes constructed an archival practice; a "collecting stage" of dynamic and multi-use material. Manifest in the wide variety of musical collections that comprise Hughes's research *as well as in many of his publications,* Hughes's archival practice is central to his approaches to music. Hughes is unique among authors for his revision of and experimentation with representing and re-presenting history by reinventing the form of archival collections on stage, in recordings, and in text. Testing the possibilities and limitations of various kinds of archival catalogues, Hughes amassed and re-presented various documents of Black musical history in performance and on the page.

A collector and cataloguer of his own work—which he archived as he wrote for the last twenty-seven years of his life, knowing it would all be donated to the Beinecke—Hughes was a fastidious archivist, signing and dating not just rough drafts but often scraps of paper, loose notebook sheets, and even post-its. His work displays a similar attention to and experimentation

[108] The Beinecke holds a massive folder titled "List of Songs Submitted to Agents 1939-1960" that spans what I would designate as the period in which Hughes focused most heavily on songwriting. The folder includes songs sent to musicians and composers in addition to agents.

with *collection as a form of representation*. Kathy Lou Shultz has made a similar remark in her Derridean reading of Hughes's poetry, focusing on his creation of an archive of Black history within his poem "Prelude to Our Age: A Negro History Poem" (1951). Schultz argues that Hughes uses the poem to "write back" to the violent obfuscation and destruction of Black history by the state. Because the historical archive is written in what Kara Keeling calls "the grammar of violence," stemming from, compiled by, and housed in institutions of power, Schultz's notion of Hughes's "poem-as-archive" (Schultz 114) is a powerful antidote to the archival practices against which he is operating. However, her reading only skims the surface of Hughes's encompassing and regenerative archival practice. I would argue that in *form* as well as in content, one of Hughes's life's projects was to create experimental archives *of his writing*, in the sense of collecting *within* texts and songs and *of* texts and songs themselves. It would be possible to make this argument in terms of Black literature in Hughes's work, but the chapter will focus instead on his expansive archive-building in the genres of Black music. For personal use and for publication, Hughes privileged the forms of collection, compilation, and anthology.

As a curator of his own record collection as well as of his own song collections and musical productions and performances, Hughes approached his music archives by compiling them and, whenever possible, offering them to the public. In this project, Hughes manipulated the form of the anthology, producing a breadth of collections for adults and for children. Between the years of 1948 until his death in 1967 (including three posthumous publications of projects he had begun years earlier), Hughes edited and compiled all of fifteen anthologies of the Harlem Renaissance and of Black poetry, plays, performance, popular songs, humor, and short

stories.[109] While only five of these anthologies spend time on the history of Black music, his children's history book series approaches Black musical performance frequently and from multiple angles. Published by Harper Collins throughout the 1950s, "The First Books" series were created with the intent of introducing various topics to children; a sort of fun alternative to a school textbook. Like Francis La Flesche's interest in Indian boyhood, Hughes displayed a protracted interest in teaching children. Hughes drafted nine of these books, including a "First Album of Jazz" to accompany its "First Book." In addition to the jazz text, Hughes wrote books on "Africa," "Gypsies," "Negroes," "Rhythms," "Sharing," "the Caribbean," "the West Indies," and "World Prayers." While not all of these books were accepted for publication and some remain incomplete, collectively they present Hughes's transnational vision of Black musical creativity. And while anthologies necessitate some level of fixity by nature of their printed catalogue, Hughes uses different organizational methods across different books, channeling his most experimental forms into the books for children. Taken all together, Hughes's sustained interest in the anthology as a mode of representation of history and of performance should place these works within the history of Hughes's performative Black histories.

By re-presenting his music in curated segments, Hughes favors a living archive, while his own archival research compilations present a window into the way he imagined his body of

[109] Anthologies edited (and sometimes compiled) by Langston Hughes include: *Poetry of the American Negro* (n.d.), *Anthology of Contemporary Negro Plays* (n.d.), *An Anthology of Harlem* (1948-54), *A Little Anthology of American Poetry* (1948-1966), *Black Magic* (1948-1967), *Humorous Negro Verse: An Anthology* (1949), *Lincoln University Poets: Centennial Anthology (1854-1954)* (1953-54), *Anthology of "Opportunity Poets"* (1955), *Anthology of Popular Songs by American Negroes* (1956), *An Anthology of American Negro Humor* (1956-1958), *Book of Negro Folklore* (1958), *Harlem Renaissance Anthology* (1961-62), *Cats, Crickets and Stars: An Anthology of Poems For Youngsters By Negro Poets* (1966), *The Best Short Stories By Black Writers: the Classic Anthology from 1899 to 1967* (1967), *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1940; an Anthology* (with Arna Bontemps, 1970).

music. While the Beinecke still holds Carl Van Vechten's record collection (which Hughes was paid to archive), all that remains of Hughes's collection are two LP record sleeves, the LPs that he'd purchased and noted in his financial notebooks, and a list that an unknown person had transcribed in 1953 that Hughes titled "Some of Langston Hughes records" in his own hand [IMG 5]. Comprised of a mixture of R&B, blues, boogie woogie, Dixieland, and bop 78s and 45s, the diverse list of fifty-five records is in conversation with the list that he published at the end of his children's book, *The First Book of Jazz*. "100 OF MY FAVORITE RECORDINGS of Jazz, blues, Folk Songs, and Jazz-influenced Performances" documents Hughes's diverse tastes from under the umbrella of these capacious genres [IMG 6]. The recommended "Records" pages that precede his "Favorite Recordings" encompass a wide array of genres that are, as Hughes writes, "influenced" by jazz reminiscent of his songwriting genre experiments and of *Ask Your Mama*, including "Afro-Cuban" and "Cool Caribbean" musics.

Rather than drafting and preserving a master list as a catalogue for his collection (as is typical archival practice), throughout his archive Hughes revises and revisits the songs he wrote in different kinds of compilations. The longest list of his music is an unbound typewritten list of one hundred and seventeen "Song Lyrics by Langston Hughes," printed in the year 1949 and organized by genre, presumably for personal reference. More often, the songs are compiled and labeled for musical productions for television, radio, film, LPs, and the dramatic stage. Hughes also tended to experiment associatively with his catalogue without necessarily envisioning a final product. Paper mixtapes of his own song lyrics—usually covered in his expressive, minuscule drawings and labeled simply as "Tape No. -"—also populate his archive [IMG 7]. In contention with the ways that, to quote Diana Taylor, the archive's "written documents have repeatedly announced the disappearance of the performance practices involved in mnemonic transmission"

(36), Hughes's decision to re-record his materials in different forms in actual archival documents (and not exclusively through reuse in his writing) give life to the performative possibilities of his songs even while they're not in use.

This archive of potential performances is similar to what is perhaps Hughes's most performative archive: from within Hughes's catalogue of archival catalogues, Hughes produced his own version of the "collecting stage" in the format of the "song revue." A product of a longer history of vaudeville, variety shows, minstrelsy, and burlesque, the song revue ran as a compound of disjointed bawdy and often satirical skits, songs, and dances that dealt with irreverence with current affairs. At its loosest and most popular in the 1920s, the composite character of the song revue provided opportunities for emerging songwriters that were unavailable in musicals. According to Laurence Maslon, this leniency made the song revue "the greatest conservatory for popular music the world has ever seen." Becoming increasingly narratological and thematically-oriented during the Great Depression, by the 1950s revues had mostly moved to television, whose fast pace matched the ribald, slapstick nature of the genre.

In addition to his work as an opera librettist and as an early innovator of the "gospel play," in the nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties Hughes wrote and participated in at least six different song revues, including "Hot Cinnamon: An Intimate Revue in Color" (1949-50), "A Whole Lot More" (which he describes in his notes as "Preliminary ideas for a war-time revue") (1943), "Negro Tropical Revue" (n.d.), and "Social Revue" (1947). While Hughes's musicals typically engage the themes and subjects of Black musical history, the loose interconnectivity of the song revue format allowed Hughes to experiment with his Black musical catalogue in a way that the narrative play format—which he also engaged with consistently—may have precluded. It's for this reason that Hughes's most extensive song revue draft—*Run, Ghost Run: Humorous*

skits, sketches, and songs for an intimate Negro revue of social and satirical nature—is resonant with his most experimental song synthesis: the freeform poetic newsreel-turned-poetry book *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz.*

VII. "Boundaries bind unbinding": *Run, Ghost, Run, Ask Your Mama,* and Vernacular Black Musical Performance

First titled simply as "*A Revue*," *Run, Ghost, Run* is a wild amalgam of song drafts from across Hughes's body of work that he either repurposed or wrote specifically for this production. Written during a period when Hughes wrote prodigiously, the revue was comprised of what he called "dance productions, songs, sketches, skits, and running gags." Hughes approached this diversity of forms by producing multiple versions of the revue: first, Hughes sent thirty sketches as "Index for Revue" to his literary agent Maxim Lieber, followed by a twenty-song version dispatched to Powell Lindsay of the Negro Playwrights Company under the title "Run, Ghost, Run: A Negro Revue."[110] Two weeks later, Hughes sent an eleven-song version, titled "Revue Sketches," to Leonard Harper at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem and sent a thirteen-song document back "to Lieber, for white revues" four days later. When the Negro Playwrights Company tried to team up with the Hollywood Theater Alliance—the locus of those "white revues," presumably—Hughes flew to Los Angeles. Unable to decide on the angle of the production and bickering with the New Negro Playwrights, the Hollywood Theater Alliance never finished producing the show (Berry 356 Note 28, Leach 106, McLaren 141, and Rampersad, *Volume II*, 18). Still invested in the form and its content, however, Hughes continued revising and

[110] To date, nobody has analyzed any draft of *Run, Ghost Run.* Scholar Joseph McLaren and biographer Laurie F. Leach both refer to it once, quickly, under its early title of "Negro Revue." Rampersad notes that he sent the twenty skits to Powell Lindsay (*Volume II* 18).

pitching this selection of materials in various iterations at least until 1956, fifteen years after he sent in his first draft [IMG 8]. By the time the revue had reached the Apollo, "Run, Ghost, Run" had been pulled from both the title and list of songs—perhaps as a nod to a suggestion from Lieber or Lindsay, who'd received the draft early with it included. In the spirit of the spacious and abundant form of the song revue, I look to the two first and simultaneously most extensive drafts, which include the provocative border-crossing performance of "Run, Ghost, Run."

In these drafts, Hughes workshops a provisional set of sketches that represent a diverse catalogue of his work that's focused on multi-genre musical approaches to contemporary Black life and pitched specifically to the dramatic stage. The earliest drafts of *Run, Ghost, Run* include Hughes's original songs and poetry as they were arranged by Ed Walsh, Elliot Carpenter, Margaret Bonds, Otis Renee, Eli Siegmiester, and Waldemar Hille (a representative sample of Hughes's music collaborators into the nineteen-forties). Two blues skits: "Third Floor Airshaft Blues," which Hughes folded into the "Blues Sketches" that he shopped around as a play in the fifties, and a sketch about Richard Wright called "Native Son: The Boogie Woogie Man," expand Hughes's approach to the blues as a malleable musical and experiential form. While Hughes preserves both blues sketches in later drafts, a call-and-response jazz number called "Klavern of the Ku Klux Kolumn"—in which, anticipating Spike Lee's 2018 film *BlacKkKlansman*, a Black FBI agent who is improbably also a member of the NAACP infiltrates the Klan—was cut. Many of Hughes's songs and sketches grapple with and jest at the state of the working class ("Little Union Maiden Out on Strike;" "Singing Waiters;" "Song for the Working Class;" and "That Good Old Union Feeling"), while others like "Conscientious Objector," "Blood is Red," and "Alumni in Uniform" deal with Black life during wartime. "America's Young Black Joe," a military call to action sung in a "rollicking march tempo" and

placed in each version of *Run, Ghost, Run,* circulated successfully on the radio and as a 78 RPM disc. True to form for Hughes, the revue also gestured out to the popular screen with "Hollywood Mammy" as well as with "Brightly Colored," which eventually became a Hollywood script. The loosely-conscripted form of the revue afforded Hughes the possibility which he tried to capitalize on across his musical works; namely, of reworking his music across stages and texts.

From "Mardi Gras in New Orleans" to "The Sunny South" to "Harlem Debutante," the revue remains mostly within national borders. Its later iterations omit Hughes's most flagrant and ecstatic exploration of his own national imaginary as it was expressed by the original show's titular running gag. "Run, Ghost, Run" follows two characters, "a negro" and "a ghost" who meet on a "cemetery road late at night." As the man leans against a tombstone to pull a rock out of his shoe, "behind him silently and slowly a ghost floats in." Losing his shoe as he leaps back in surprise, the man accidentally scares the ghost back. After the ghost retreats slowly, according to Hughes's stage cues, "the historical has happened____Negro chases ghost." To the "noise of sirens running like the wind," the man chases his ghost across varying geographical backdrops, with a new setting marking each transition between acts of the song revue. First, to "oriental music," "Negro is seen chasing ghost along the Burma Road in China as coolies and children scatter." Next "African Tom_Toms are heard. They go silent as ghost followed by Negro pass." In what Hughes calls "Little America," the man chases the ghost "on ice around and around the North Pole." The North Pole marks the edge of the revue's geographic consciousness: this act next finds the ghost chased "across the footlights and up the center aisle and out of the Theatre." In the second act, a Mexican man "in colorful costume and large sombrero" leaps aside and cries

out "Caramba! Que esta esto? Nunca en mi vida he vista algo asi"[111] as they pass; the pursuant not just walks but *runs* on water to chase the ghost; and man and ghost speed through a war zone where they breeze past Hitler, who yells "Heil!" as they run.

Song revues do not require a through-line, and *Run, Ghost, Run* does not exactly have a plot. Instead, this running gag serves to couch the revue's focus on the wartime American imaginary of Black, working class, and Black working class citizens in a global framework to different ends. Pulling in fleeting scenes of difference, the protagonists' movements are so rapid and decontextualized that their transition scenes defamiliarize the viewer from the scenery rather than introduce them into it. In this sense, the gag solidifies rather than loosens the national borders insinuated by much of the wartime performance's other content. China, Africa, and the North Pole are given no language (though China *is* given a racial slur). Mexico's character's untranslated exclamation is one of misunderstanding. Germany is hollowed out and transmogrified into its genocidal leader. In its narrative of being chased across borders into "foreign" lands, the sketch represents a kind of WWII-era fantasy of international accessibility for American travelers that's promoted by Bob Hope and Bing Crosby in their incredibly successful "Road to…" movie franchise. The first of those movies, "Road to Singapore" came out the same year that Hughes began working on *Run, Ghost, Run,* and follows Hope and Crosby's escape to Singapore, away from the marriage and work responsibilities imposed on them in America. In performative opposition to these constraints, both characters fall in love with a Spanish woman and darken their faces and arms in order to attend a feast that's otherwise accessible only to indigenous islanders. As in "Road to Singapore," "Run, Ghost, Run" signifies

[111] The Mexican man's lines translate roughly to "Caramba [a cry of surprise]! What is this? Never in my life have I seen anything like this."

on the nonsensicality of the ability of its main characters to move effortlessly through spaces of which they have no knowledge and with which they had no prior contact, while still preserving some of the era's xenophobic tropes.

The "ghost's" transitions are also an example of Hughes's interest in accessing or alluding to interactions across ethnicity, race, and geography through music. The genre songs for which Hughes pens lyrics in the revue come from a history of sonic exchange across what Michael Denning calls an "archipelago of colonial ports," and to transition between them by expanding the borders of the song revue's setting brings the idea of *transition* and translation to the fore of the performance. This has the effect of moving the experiences he catalogues in his jazz and blues—genres which grew up in Black America but influenced and had influence on places like South America, Africa, and the Bahamas—into circulation and contact with experiences globally. A figure of this movability, the ghost's presence suggests that the viewer consider new ontologies that are possible through contact, music, and dance. In a performance that was meant to be staged during Jim Crow, these moments create a kind of fleeting solidarity between the Black protagonist, the ghost, and these spaces. In a revue that denies the viewer the pleasure of attachment to its characters by nature of its fragmented form, the unknowability of these settings effects the viewer's interaction with its characters in two ways: it exoticizes these interstitial characters, but it also denies the colonial-touristic gaze its object of pleasure.

In the revue's final scene, the ghost and the man find themselves in Harlem with jazz blaring in the background. As the tired ghost "takes off its hood," the audience and the protagonist both learn it is "a pretty girl:" Susie Mae Johnson, from "416 Hundred Fourteenth Street" in Watts, who "fell out of the attic one day washing the white folks windows" but "used to be a terriffic[sic] jitterbugger" before that. They dance fast as the "hot rhythm beats out,"

going "into a slow boogie woogie" that moves them "closer and closer together" until Jackson shoots himself, "BANG!!!!!," so they can "enter dancing madly together" for their penultimate trek through the finale.

Reminiscent of the omniscient flight of Zora Neale Hurston's "High John de Conquerer" and anticipating *Cabin in the Sky*, the boundary-crossing film that brings hell onto earth and "Little Joe" onto the Celestial Stairs, Hughes's man exceeds the boundaries that bind him. Unconstrained by time, space, or element, it is jazz and boogie that incite his dance of death, and the same tunes tie the discreet sketches of the revue together. *Run, Ghost, Run* is an imperfect, unfinished, and wacky paean to Black creative defiance.

Almost twenty years later, Hughes published a very different kind of deconstructive call to action with his long-form chap-book jazz-poem, *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz*. Like the acts of *Run, Ghost, Run, Ask Your Mama* is improvisatory and vertical, offering a chronology of "moods" rather than a teleological narrative progression. As an archival piece that animates Hughes's songwriting, song collecting,[112] and vast musical knowledge, *Ask Your Mama* is unparalleled within his collection. It is narrative, political commentary, music, geography, poetry; a text and a performance at once.[113]

Ask Your Mama mirrors the all-caps typewriter print of all of Hughes's rough drafts, giving the book the appearance of being pulled from his revisions—a nod, perhaps, to the protean nature of the poem, whose allusions, references, and modulating forms suggest

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[112] One powerful example of the way that Hughes imported his folklore into his bold, experimental texts can be found in his personal research folder for *Ask Your Mama*: Hughes's transcription of "Shave and a Haircut," a folk ditty, is filed with his historical research on the brazen and defiant Black oral poetry called "the dozens."

[113] According to the most recent edition, the book was actually republished on the occasion of the March 16, 2009 world premiere performance of *Ask Your Mama* as a concert. Its current edition actually presents it as an accompanying piece to the concert, not vice-versa.

experimental variations on a theme. John Lowney argues convincingly that *Ask Your Mama* models "a need to improvise by whatever rhetorical means necessary," as part of the urgent struggle to dismantle the structures that have so stringently hierarchized, dispersed, and oppressed Black communities who would find confederation and strength in each other. New formal, allusive, and non-proscriptive connections for a new cultural order are suggested in *Ask Your Mama* from Hughes's textual and musical improvisation. As an outgrowth of Hughes's work as an archivist, songwriter, and song collector, I hear in his poem an interchange between textual and musical improvisation. With *Ask Your Mama*, Hughes creates *an orchestra of Black experiences* in defiance of standard measures of genre and geography.

By printing contrapuntal musical cues along the edges of each page, Hughes signifies the interchange between music and text within the broader framework of African diasporic and transnational music and experience. Beginning with the sounds of the Dominican Republic, "the rhythmically rough scraping of a guira" (3), the music of Section 1 builds on and transitions between German lieder, "traditional 12-bar blues" (4), "deep-toned distant African drums" (5), the confederate anthem "Dixie" (8), and "When the Saints Go Marching In" (9), a popular Black gospel song adapted by New Orleans jazz musicians whose words and melodies approach the apocalypse with ecstatic celebration.

By titling this section "cultural exchange," Lowney writes that Hughes points to "the confusion that arises from the term *culture*, which evokes systems that define difference hierarchically" (570), and from the term "exchange," which evokes the capitalist system whose imperative is to differentiate and alienate communities from each other. *Ask Your Mama* refuses this imperative first and foremost in song, inviting "a softly lyrical calypso" (14) to brush against "lively up-tempo Dixieland jazz (15), "merging" Jewish martyr Hannah Senesh's "Eli

Eli" "into a wailing Afro-Arabic theme and steady drum beat changing into blues" (20-21), writing a continuum of "traditional blues in gospel tempo a la Ray Charles" separated by "TACIT" silence from "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (26), meeting "Maracas…in cha-cha tempo, then bongo drums" with latin percussion, guitar, and piano in "a sort of off-beat mambo" (49-50), "weaving…a musical echo of Paris" into the "pattern" of "post-bop" (63), and moving "bop blues into very modern jazz" (77). As it appears in the poem, these musics are reiterative without being evenly patterned, strung together primarily by a high flute call and the unresolved refrain of the "Hesitation Blues": "tell me how long, do I have to wait, can I get you now, or must I hesitate?" They represent a cacophonous musical memory; an offering of an archive of performance whose unfixity cements its freedom in the face of the condescension of dominant archival practices and of the Western musical tradition.

As much a presentation of Black musical performance history as it is a performance in itself, Hughes's musical cues without (and within) the body of the text both require and exceed Edward Said's "contrapuntal" reading. Drawn to "music's…capacity for plurality of voice" (Bartine 60), Said uses counterpoint to attend to the dialectical processes of colonialism and resistance in canonical Western literature. According to Klaus-Jürgen Sachs and Carl Dahlhaus, "the theory of counterpoint…is a question not only of melodic part-writing but also of the chords formed by the parts." Counterpoint is the technique, or means, through which music can achieve total polyphony, both vertically and harmonically and horizontally and melodically. Said exports this collectivizing musical ideality to canonical Western literature in "simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (51). By approaching text by neither privileging nor erasing "dominating discourse," Said works to situate literature in a multiplicity

of coinciding, collaborating, and contending narratives. Emphasizing musicality (and timing, rhythm, and temporality)[114] much more explicitly than Said did, Hughes's poem asks that the reader *listen to* as well as read contrapuntally a text that refers to pan-African resistance struggles and musics while it does battle with its own blues at home. Hughes's poem is a joint critique of imperialism and racism and a celebration of Black internationalist life, thought, and music; its forms must be read *in concert* in order to realize the connective whole.

"A sort of off-beat mambo" accompanied by "rattling bones," for example, orchestrates the fleeting, Sisyphean appearance of the best-known leader of the Haitian resistance:

> WHERE THE SHADOWS OF THE NEGROES
> ARE THE GHOSTS OF FORMER GLORY
> TOUSSAINT WITH A THREAD
> THREAD STILL PULLS HIS
> PROW OF STONE STONE.
> I BOIL A FISH AND SALT IT
> (AND MY PLANTAINS)
> WITH HIS GLORY (50).

Buckling under the weight of responsibility, Toussaint's "thread / Thread" is an anadiplosis that eventuates at the "stone stone" that it "pulls." An irresolute struggle, the "thread" falls into its object; slavery, Black oppression, the front of a freedom ship that's cast and unwieldy in "stone stone," printed on the same line and punctuated at their finish. Through the syncopated rhythm of repetition, Hughes emphasizes sameness (the doubles) and movability (the motion of the song). Hughes deifies the Haitian revolutionary in mimetic relation to the everyman, "the shadows of the negroes" who are "the ghosts of former glory" are made present, even embodied, when Hughes uses that same "glory" to salt his fish in Toussaint's name. While gospel and maracas

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[114] In "The Contrapuntal Humanisms of Edward Said," David Bartine has argued that when Said posited "a counterpoint that is not temporal but spatial"—emphasizing the relationship between colonial and colonized places over the fraught idea of linear progress—Said "deemphasiz[ed] the importance of temporality," which diminishes the importance of movement and of the inner-workings of sound (66).

play simultaneously, words juxtaposed and doubled (thread thread, stone stone) seem in part to loosen W.E.B. Du Bois's "double consciousness"—his interpretation of the experience of Black people in America of being divided into multiple, irreconcilable identities at once—to enfold the history of Afro-Caribbean freedom struggles and diaspora. *Ask Your Mama* concludes, however, by analogizing the problem of duality to the two sides of a quarter:

> THE HEADS ON THESE TWO QUARTERS
> ARE *THIS* OR *THAT*
> OR *LESS* OR *MOST*—
> SINCE BUT TWO EXIST
> BEYOND THE HOLY GHOST.
> OF THESE THREE,
> IS ONE
> ME? (83).

To be split, here, is to be stuck within the hierarchies endemic to structures of capital; the same structures that would have murdered Toussaint Louverture and kept Haitians in Haiti and Black Americans enslaved. The binary logic of "This or that/ or less or most" is the paradigm that Hughes tries to eradicate, and is presented as a trap. Driving the text from the oppositional "*less* or *most*" to the open-ended "beyond the holy ghost," the em-dash becomes a symbol of non-dialectical continuation. A movement in the direction of multiplicity, "—" is contrapuntal; much closer to Hughes's expansive project than is the hierarchizing paradigm of duality.

Beginning his poem in a confused moment of simultaneous movement and stasis "by the river and the railroad," Hughes deconstructs duality without offering a resolution and reallocates power from reader-listener to subject.

> WITH FLUID FAR-OFF GOING
> BOUNDARIES BIND UNBINDING
> A WHIRL OF WHISTLES BLOWING
> NO TRAINS OR STEAMBOATS GOING—
> YET LEONTYNE'S UNPACKING.

Following the "trains" and "steamboats," each one a symbol of the Great Migration, of escape from slavery (which, the mention of Toussaint reminds us, occurred also in Haiti), of border-

crossing, and of blues and industrial capitalism, the em-dash takes on the symbolic motion of the freedom train. While "boundaries bind unbinding"—inorganic divisions are created and dissolved—"in the quarter of the Negroes," "Leontyne's unpacking." Here, a suggestion of temporal and spatial pause (the trains and steamboats aren't "going") operates on the same plane as the suggestion of movement: the "going—" extends outward and never resolves. In this moment and in this space, only Leontyne can "unpack" what's happening; the reader-listener is an ethnographic bystander, and the subject owns herself. In this case, that subject refers to Leontyne Price, the Black soprano opera diva whose fame was ascendent in Europe and on television in the nineteen-fifties and sixties. It's in the song of Black female artist that the story of *Ask Your Mama* lies.

The dynamic pause at the opening of *Ask Your Mama* is met by riffs on and interruptions of rhythmic doubling in song and in text that effectively expands that dynamic interlude, extending it through insistent, reiterative and shifting repetitions. In a barrage of counting—"17 sorrows/ And the number/ 602./ High balls, low balls:/ the 8-ball/ Is You./ 7-11!/ Come 7!" (62)—Hughes destabilizes any sense of structuring rhythm while still highlighting structural inequity in the text of the poem. "Your number's coming out!" (35), he calls in "Blues in Stereo," inviting the reader to gamble with the shapeshifting time and space of the text. And against these numbers games walks the sociologist, roaming between pages and flouted by the inhabitants of the space-shifting "quarter of the negroes," who "answer questions answer/ and answers with a question" (20) rather than apply his categories to themselves.

While the sociologist has many faces, in the opening of "IS IT TRUE?" he also takes two names.

> FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE QUARTER
> SHOUTS ARE WHISPERS CARRYING
> TO THE FARTHEREST CORNERS SOMETIMES

> OF THE NOW KNOWN WORLD
> UNDECIPHERED AND UNLETTERED
> UNCODIFIED UNPARSED
> IN TONGUES UNANALYZED UNECHOED
> UNTAKEN DOWN ON TAPE—
> NOT EVEN FOLKWAYS CAPTURED
> BY MOE ASCH OR ALAN LOMAX
> NOT YET ON SAFARI (55).

Against the colonialist explorer-mentality of Lomax and the head of Smithsonian Folkways' record label Moses Asch (with whom Hughes released at least seven LPs between 1952-1964), this moment glories in the connective "shouts" that move as unheard "whispers" between two abstractions: "the shadows of the quarter" and "the fartherest corners sometimes of the now known world." After being deciphered, lettered, codified, parsed, analyzed, echoed, and taken down on tape, the folkloric objects of this section would be a dead trophy on each folklorist's mantle. Instead, they are fugitive; not un-placed because they are placeless, but instead because they are undetectable without a fluid approach to the connective threads of allegiance between leaders, musicians, and cultures across the African diaspora and throughout *Ask Your Mama. Ask Your Mama* puts years of musical research, collecting, and writing in continuum, building on the ontologies and shifting geographies of Blackness and writing a "collecting stage" whose performance exceeds its pages.

VIII. Conclusion

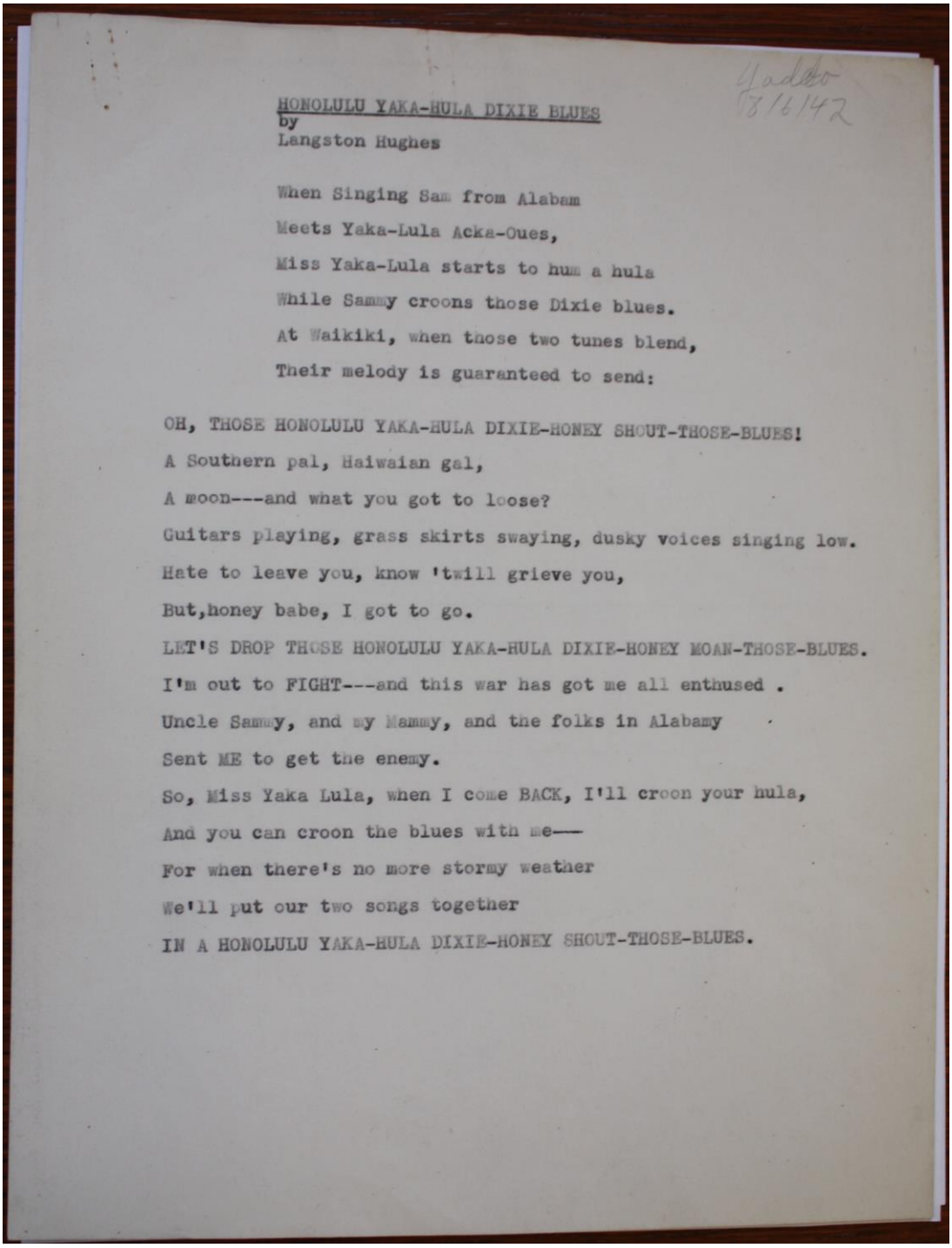
An experimental play on the continuity between poetry and song form that brings together Hughes's fluid historio-musical archive, *Ask Your Mama* meets *Run, Ghost, Run* as an advanced and cumulative iteration of an earlier version of performative, archival musical compilation. No one piece of writing, however, can encompass the overabundance of musical work that Hughes undertook throughout his lifetime. Hughes's vast body of musical writing

alludes to the variegated scenes of folklore, songwriting, and archival collection and curation across borders. Always performative and often intended for dramatic performance, music was Hughes's preferred mode through which to articulate his ideas of dramatic, diasporic, experimental, and vernacular Black life.

Appendix to Chapter 3

Except when otherwise noted, all photographs are courtesy of the Langston Hughes Papers, James Weldon Johnson Collection, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT.

IMAGE 1:
The final draft of Langston Hughes's song "Honolulu Yaka-Hula Dixie Blues" (6 August 1942).



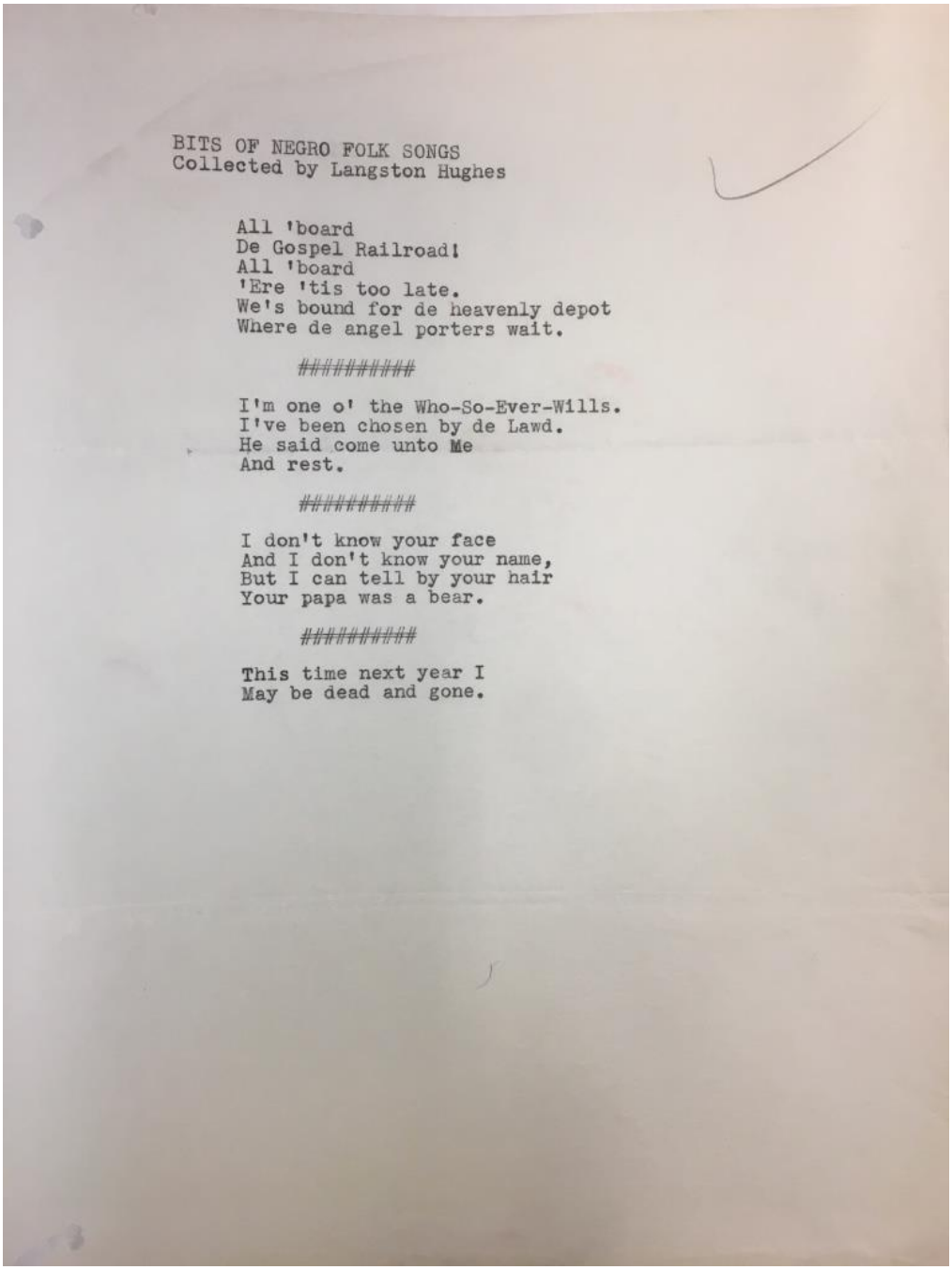
HONOLULU YAKA-HULA DIXIE BLUES
by
Langston Hughes

Hadelo
8/6/42

When Singing Sam from Alabam
Meets Yaka-Lula Acka-Oues,
Miss Yaka-Lula starts to hum a hula
While Sammy croons those Dixie blues.
At Waikiki, when those two tunes blend,
Their melody is guaranteed to send:

OH, THOSE HONOLULU YAKA-HULA DIXIE-HONEY SHOUT-THOSE-BLUES!
A Southern pal, Haiwaian gal,
A moon---and what you got to loose?
Guitars playing, grass skirts swaying, dusky voices singing low.
Hate to leave you, know 'twill grieve you,
But,honey babe, I got to go.
LET'S DROP THOSE HONOLULU YAKA-HULA DIXIE-HONEY MOAN-THOSE-BLUES.
I'm out to FIGHT---and this war has got me all enthused .
Uncle Sammy, and my Mammy, and the folks in Alabamy
Sent ME to get the enemy.
So, Miss Yaka Lula, when I come BACK, I'll croon your hula,
And you can croon the blues with me——
For when there's no more stormy weather
We'll put our two songs together
IN A HONOLULU YAKA-HULA DIXIE-HONEY SHOUT-THOSE-BLUES.

IMAGE 2:
Fragments of folkloric song transcriptions collected by Langston Hughes (n.d.).
Courtesy of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



BITS OF NEGRO FOLK SONGS
Collected by Langston Hughes

All 'board
De Gospel Railroad!
All 'board
'Ere 'tis too late.
We's bound for de heavenly depot
Where de angel porters wait.

##########

I'm one o' the Who-So-Ever-Wills.
I've been chosen by de Lawd.
He said come unto Me
And rest.

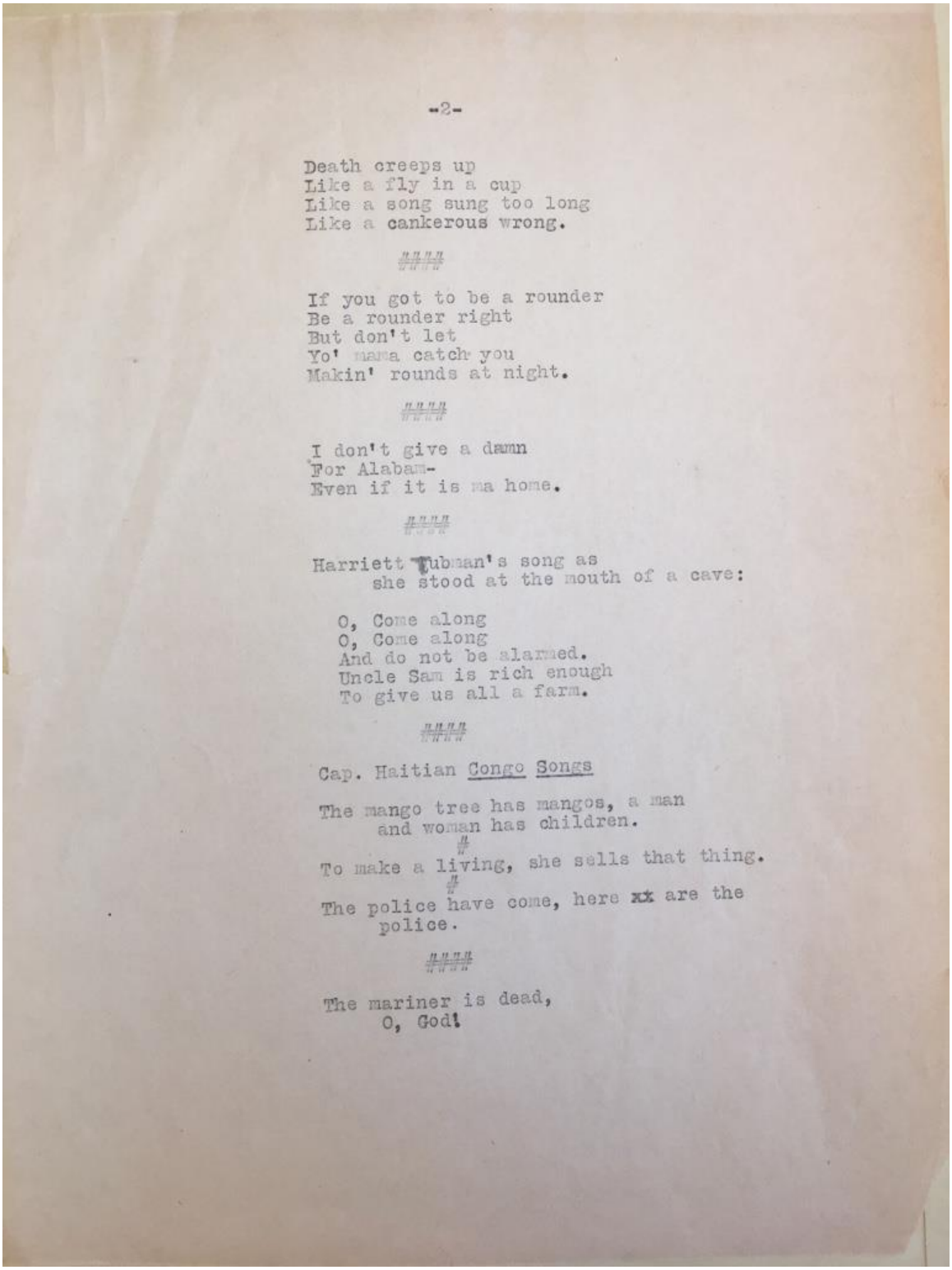
##########

I don't know your face
And I don't know your name,
But I can tell by your hair
Your papa was a bear.

##########

This time next year I
May be dead and gone.

IMAGE 3:
A page of what appears to be folkloric song transcriptions from Langston Hughes's "Untitled notes and fragments" (n.d.).



-2-

Death creeps up
Like a fly in a cup
Like a song sung too long
Like a cankerous wrong.

####

If you got to be a rounder
Be a rounder right
But don't let
Yo' mama catch you
Makin' rounds at night.

####

I don't give a damn
For Alabam-
Even if it is ma home.

####

Harriett Tubman's song as
she stood at the mouth of a cave:

O, Come along
O, Come along
And do not be alarmed.
Uncle Sam is rich enough
To give us all a farm.

####

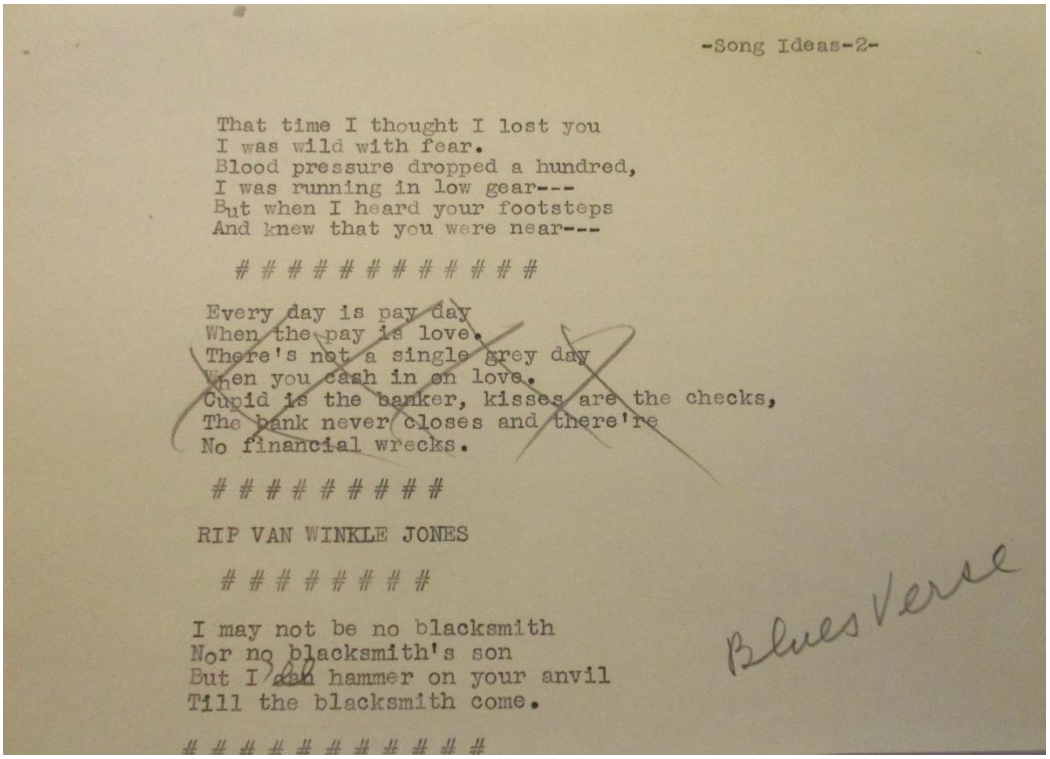
Cap. Haitian Congo Songs

The mango tree has mangos, a man
and woman has children.
#
To make a living, she sells that thing.
#
The police have come, here xx are the
police.

####

The mariner is dead,
O, God!

IMAGE 4:
A page from Langston Hughes's "Unidentified Drafts and Ideas For Songs" and three of four examples of Hughes's "Song Ideas" (n.d.).



-Song Ideas-2-

That time I thought I lost you
I was wild with fear.
Blood pressure dropped a hundred,
I was running in low gear---
But when I heard your footsteps
And knew that you were near---

# # # # # # # # # # # #

Every day is pay day
When the pay is love.
There's not a single grey day
When you cash in on love.
Cupid is the banker, kisses are the checks,
The bank never closes and there're
No financial wrecks.

# # # # # # # # #

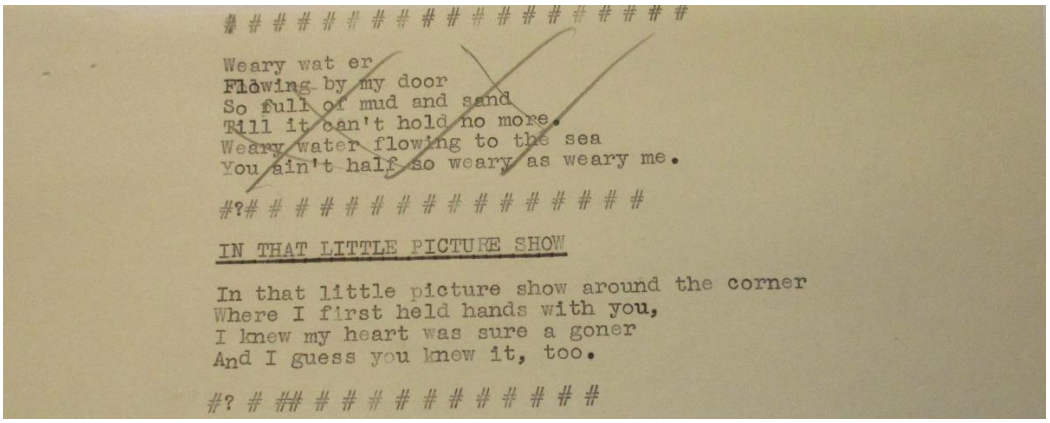
RIP VAN WINKLE JONES

# # # # # # # # #

I may not be no blacksmith
Nor no blacksmith's son
But I can hammer on your anvil
Till the blacksmith come.

Blues Verse

# # # # # # # # # # # #



# #

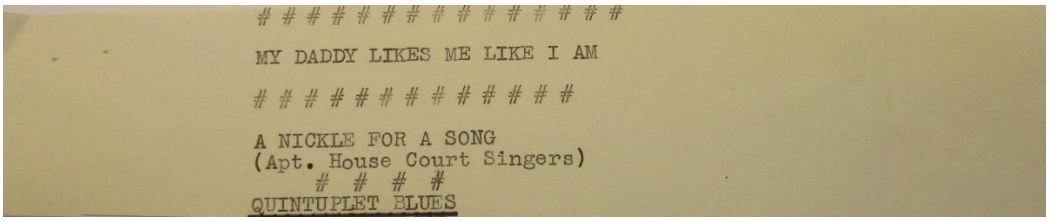
Weary wat er
Flowing by my door
So full of mud and sand
Till it can't hold no more.
Weary water flowing to the sea
You ain't half so weary as weary me.

#?# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #

IN THAT LITTLE PICTURE SHOW

In that little picture show around the corner
Where I first held hands with you,
I knew my heart was sure a goner
And I guess you knew it, too.

#? # ## # # # # # # # # # # #



# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #

MY DADDY LIKES ME LIKE I AM

# # # # # # # # # # # # # # #

A NICKLE FOR A SONG
(Apt. House Court Singers)
# # # #
QUINTUPLET BLUES

IMAGE 5:
List of "Some of Langston Hughes[sic] records," signed by Hughes (1953).

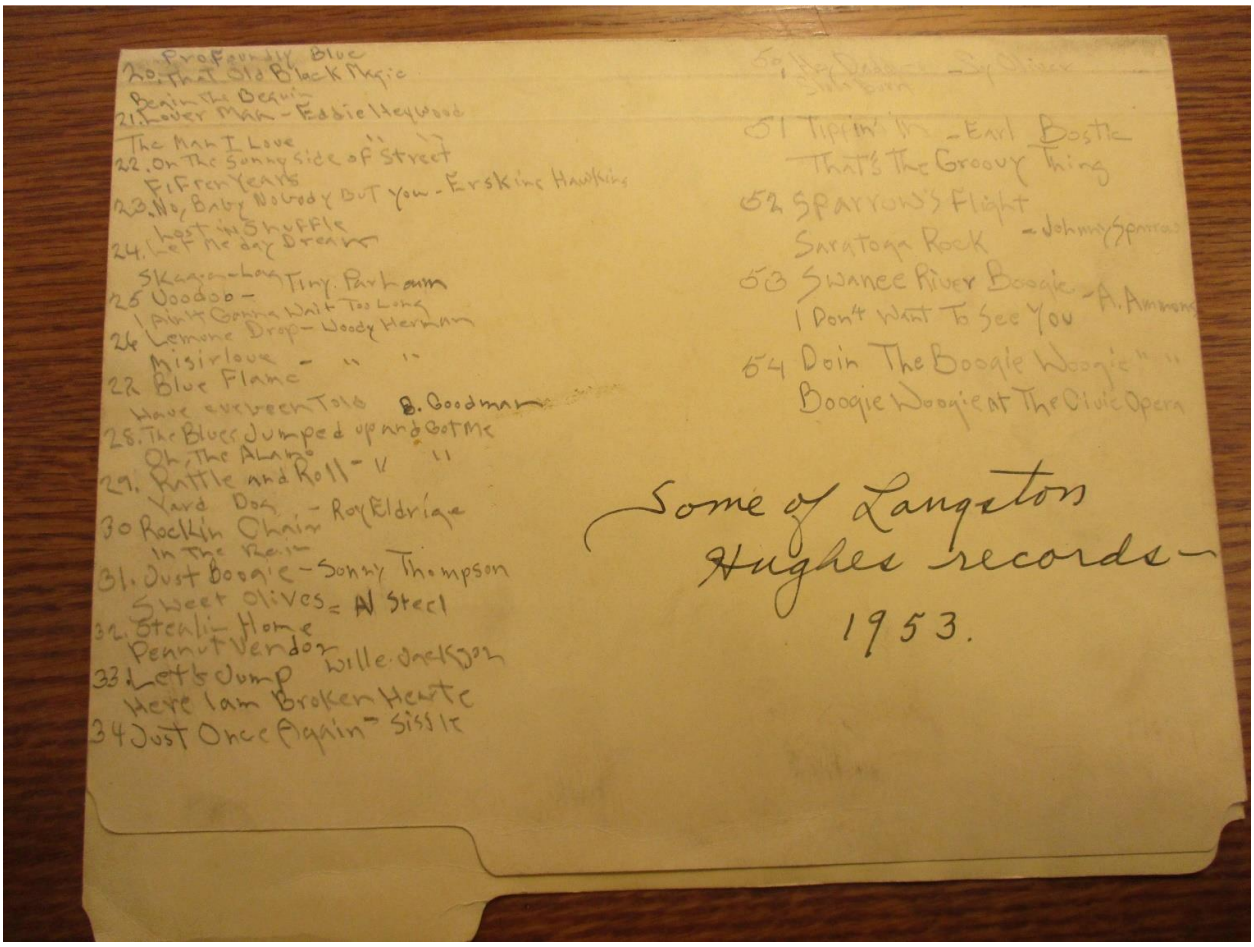
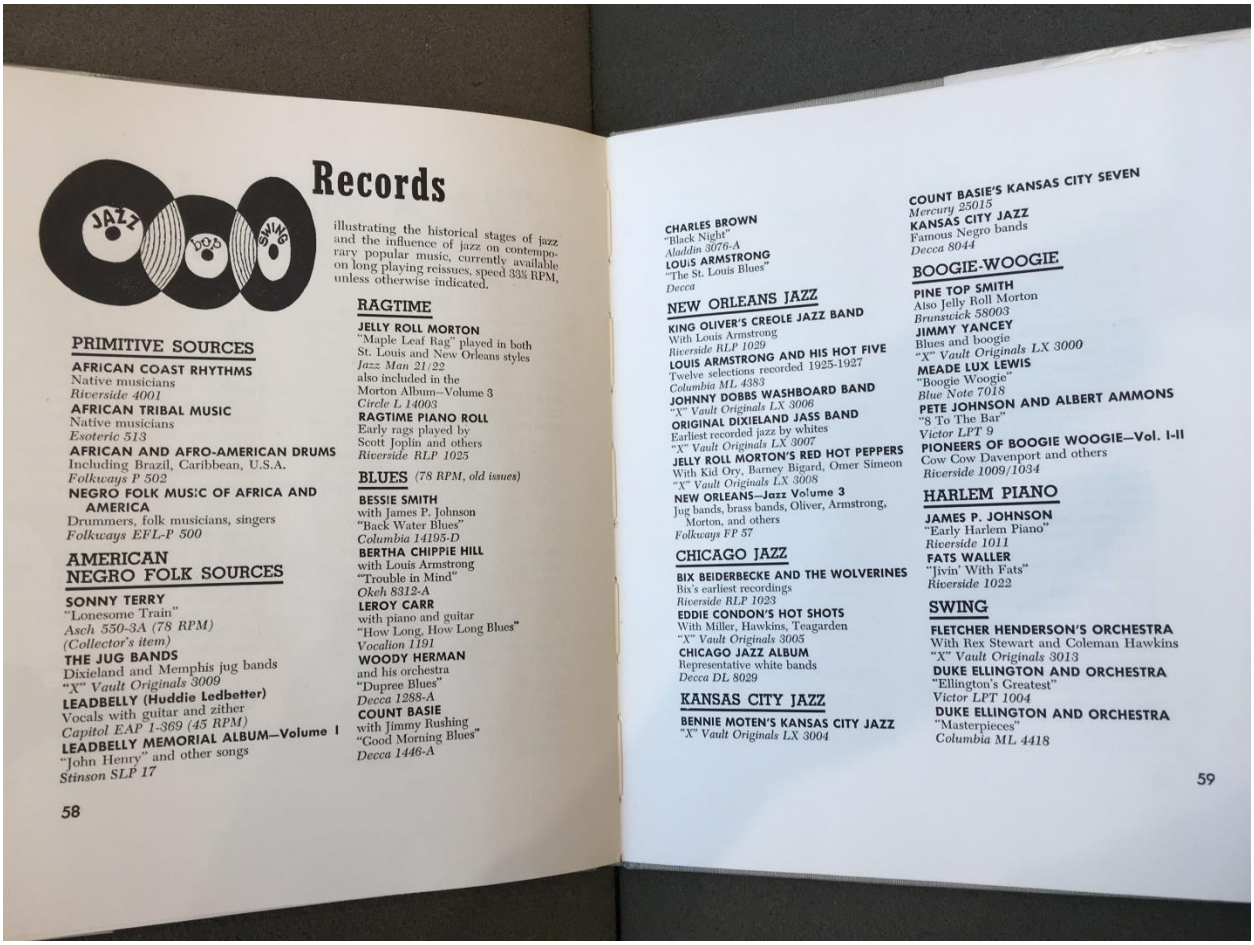


IMAGE 6:
Excerpt of the list of records recommended by Langston Hughes in *The First Book of Jazz* (1955).



Records

illustrating the historical stages of jazz and the influence of jazz on contemporary popular music, currently available on long playing reissues, speed 33⅓ RPM, unless otherwise indicated.

PRIMITIVE SOURCES

AFRICAN COAST RHYTHMS
Native musicians
Riverside 4001

AFRICAN TRIBAL MUSIC
Native musicians
Esoteric 513

AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN DRUMS
Including Brazil, Caribbean, U.S.A.
Folkways P 502

NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF AFRICA AND AMERICA
Drummers, folk musicians, singers
Folkways EFL-P 500

AMERICAN NEGRO FOLK SOURCES

SONNY TERRY
"Lonesome Train"
Asch 550-3A (78 RPM)
(Collector's item)

THE JUG BANDS
Dixieland and Memphis jug bands
"X" Vault Originals 3009

LEADBELLY (Huddie Ledbetter)
Vocals with guitar and zither
Capitol EAP 1-369 (45 RPM)

LEADBELLY MEMORIAL ALBUM—Volume I
"John Henry" and other songs
Stinson SLP 17

RAGTIME

JELLY ROLL MORTON
"Maple Leaf Rag" played in both St. Louis and New Orleans styles
Jazz Man 21/22
also included in the Morton Album—Volume 3
Circle L 14003

RAGTIME PIANO ROLL
Early rags played by Scott Joplin and others
Riverside RLP 1025

BLUES *(78 RPM, old issues)*

BESSIE SMITH
with James P. Johnson
"Back Water Blues"
Columbia 14195-D

BERTHA CHIPPIE HILL
with Louis Armstrong
"Trouble in Mind"
Okeh 8312-A

LEROY CARR
with piano and guitar
"How Long, How Long Blues"
Vocalion 1191

WOODY HERMAN
and his orchestra
"Dupree Blues"
Decca 1288-A

COUNT BASIE
with Jimmy Rushing
"Good Morning Blues"
Decca 1446-A

CHARLES BROWN
"Black Night"
Aladdin 3076-A

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
"The St. Louis Blues"
Decca

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

KING OLIVER'S CREOLE JAZZ BAND
With Louis Armstrong
Riverside RLP 1029

LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS HOT FIVE
Twelve selections recorded 1925-1927
Columbia ML 4383

JOHNNY DOBBS WASHBOARD BAND
"X" Vault Originals LX 3006

ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JASS BAND
Earliest recorded jazz by whites
"X" Vault Originals LX 3007

JELLY ROLL MORTON'S RED HOT PEPPERS
With Kid Ory, Barney Bigard, Omer Simeon
"X" Vault Originals LX 3008

NEW ORLEANS—Jazz Volume 3
Jug bands, brass bands, Oliver, Armstrong, Morton, and others
Folkways FP 57

CHICAGO JAZZ

BIX BEIDERBECKE AND THE WOLVERINES
Bix's earliest recordings
Riverside RLP 1023

EDDIE CONDON'S HOT SHOTS
With Miller, Hawkins, Teagarden
"X" Vault Originals 3005

CHICAGO JAZZ ALBUM
Representative white bands
Decca DL 8029

KANSAS CITY JAZZ

BENNIE MOTEN'S KANSAS CITY JAZZ
"X" Vault Originals LX 3004

COUNT BASIE'S KANSAS CITY SEVEN
Mercury 25015

KANSAS CITY JAZZ
Famous Negro bands
Decca 8044

BOOGIE-WOOGIE

PINE TOP SMITH
Also Jelly Roll Morton
Brunswick 58003

JIMMY YANCEY
Blues and boogie
"X" Vault Originals LX 3000

MEADE LUX LEWIS
"Boogie Woogie"
Blue Note 7018

PETE JOHNSON AND ALBERT AMMONS
"8 To The Bar"
Victor LPT 9

PIONEERS OF BOOGIE WOOGIE—Vol. I-II
Cow Cow Davenport and others
Riverside 1009/1034

HARLEM PIANO

JAMES P. JOHNSON
"Early Harlem Piano"
Riverside 1011

FATS WALLER
"Jivin' With Fats"
Riverside 1022

SWING

FLETCHER HENDERSON'S ORCHESTRA
With Rex Stewart and Coleman Hawkins
"X" Vault Originals 3013

DUKE ELLINGTON AND ORCHESTRA
"Ellington's Greatest"
Victor LPT 1004

DUKE ELLINGTON AND ORCHESTRA
"Masterpieces"
Columbia ML 4418

IMAGE 7:
A track list for an untitled tape with songs by Langston Hughes, written and illustrated by Langston Hughes (n.d.).

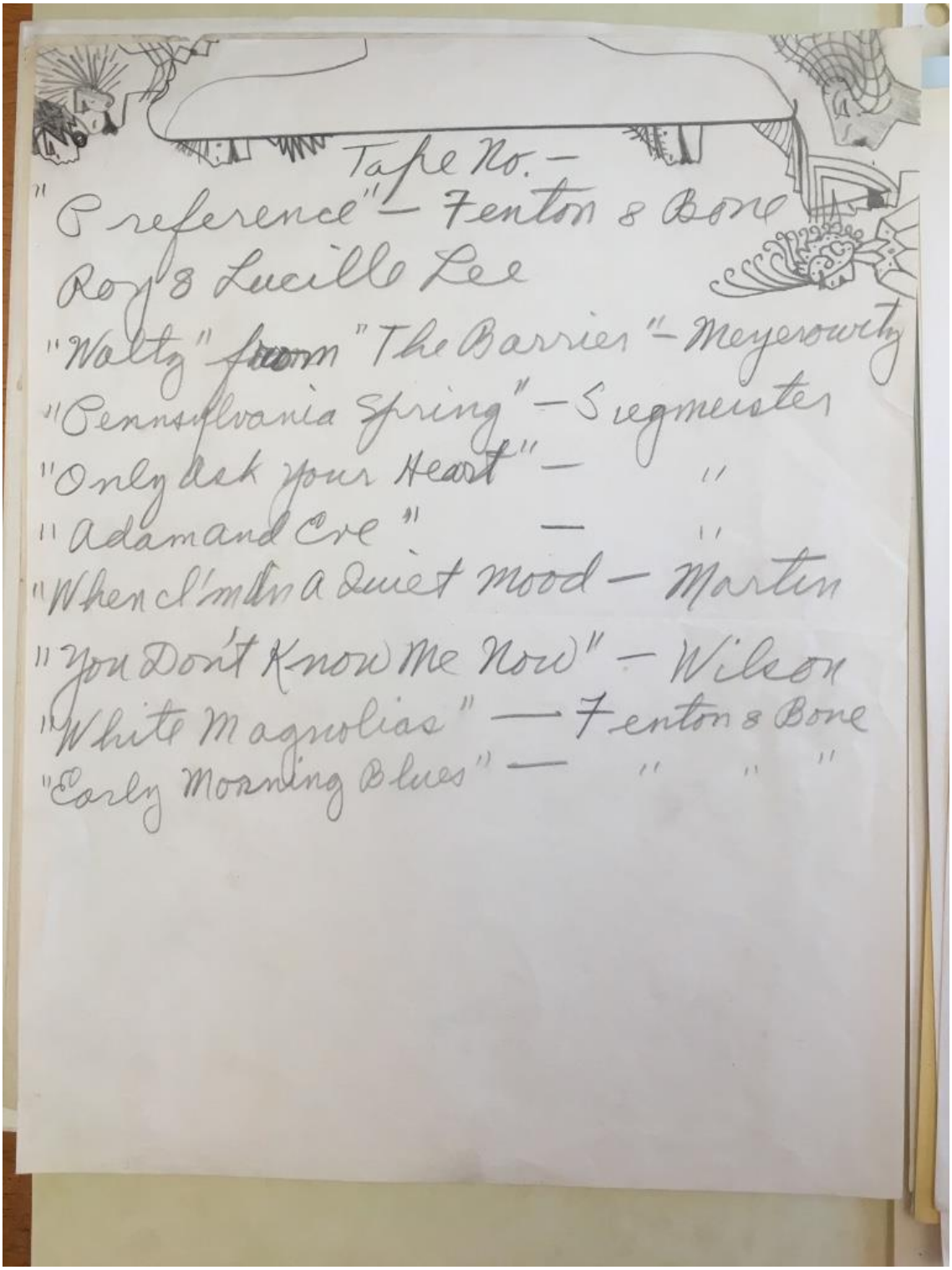
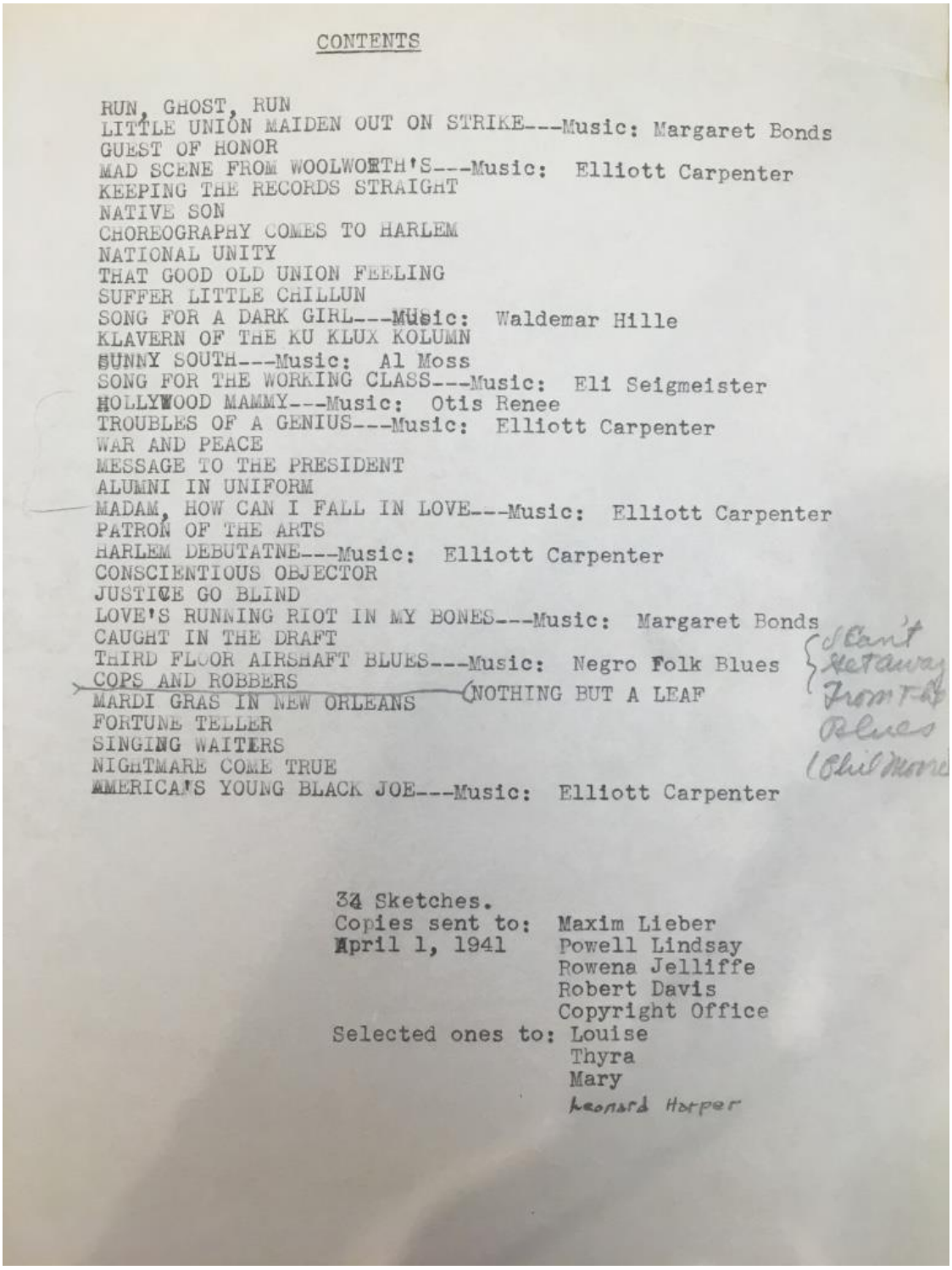


IMAGE 8:
Proposed Table of Contents for Langston Hughes's *Run, Ghost, Run*: First and longest version, widely distributed (1941).



CONTENTS

RUN, GHOST, RUN
LITTLE UNION MAIDEN OUT ON STRIKE---Music: Margaret Bonds
GUEST OF HONOR
MAD SCENE FROM WOOLWORTH'S---Music: Elliott Carpenter
KEEPING THE RECORDS STRAIGHT
NATIVE SON
CHOREOGRAPHY COMES TO HARLEM
NATIONAL UNITY
THAT GOOD OLD UNION FEELING
SUFFER LITTLE CHILLUN
SONG FOR A DARK GIRL---Music: Waldemar Hille
KLAVERN OF THE KU KLUX KOLUMN
SUNNY SOUTH---Music: Al Moss
SONG FOR THE WORKING CLASS---Music: Eli Seigmeister
HOLLYWOOD MAMMY---Music: Otis Renee
TROUBLES OF A GENIUS---Music: Elliott Carpenter
WAR AND PEACE
MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT
ALUMNI IN UNIFORM
MADAM, HOW CAN I FALL IN LOVE---Music: Elliott Carpenter
PATRON OF THE ARTS
HARLEM DEBUTATNE---Music: Elliott Carpenter
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR
JUSTICE GO BLIND
LOVE'S RUNNING RIOT IN MY BONES---Music: Margaret Bonds
CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT
THIRD FLOOR AIRSHAFT BLUES---Music: Negro Folk Blues
COPS AND ROBBERS
MARDI GRAS IN NEW ORLEANS
FORTUNE TELLER
SINGING WAITERS
NIGHTMARE COME TRUE
AMERICA'S YOUNG BLACK JOE---Music: Elliott Carpenter

I Can't Get Away From The Blues (Chil Moore)

NOTHING BUT A LEAF

34 Sketches.
Copies sent to: Maxim Lieber
April 1, 1941 Powell Lindsay
Rowena Jelliffe
Robert Davis
Copyright Office
Selected ones to: Louise
Thyra
Mary
Leonard Harper

Coda
Natalie Curtis Burlin's Ceremonial Dance-Dramas

While Francis La Flesche—like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes—is not often, if ever, remembered as a musical playwright, at least one person besides Helen Kane and Charles Wakefield Cadman contacted him in his lifetime to suggest a dramatic and ethnographic collaboration. In this coda, I conclude "Playing the Folk" with this request—written to Francis La Flesche by the classical pianist, composer, and folklorist Natalie Curtis Burlin—in order to illustrate the network of interrelationships between folklorists and creative interpreters of folklore who used Black and Native materials, and Black and Native folklorists and creative interpreters of folklore. In Curtis's proposal as well as across her writing, she mobilizes a social Darwinist version of Hurston's, Hughes's, and La Flesche's musical-dramatic ethnographic practices, re-presenting Native folklore in a mode similar to Helen Kane and Alice C.Fletcher, order to consolidate her own white, female identity. Reading her letter and proposal draws together the narratives of and contexts for "Playing the Folk."

Natalie Curtis was born on April 26, 1876, just one year before the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute began its "Indian Experiment." Towards the end of her short life, Curtis would deeply involve herself in the collection and composition of Black "folk-lore" and music at Hampton, where she had collected and published about Native songs and cultures in previous years. Between her childhood in New York City, her various connections to Hampton throughout the nineteen-teens, and her death in 1921 after a speaking engagement in Paris (Rahkonen 511), Curtis worked in the realms of song collection and composition, focusing on Black and Native America and identifying as a "musical folk-lorist" (Rahkonen 514).

Natalie Curtis's life's work culminated in a collaboration that she envisioned, but never actualized, between herself and Francis La Flesche. Having gained professional clout as a

folklorist of Native music from her widely-celebrated *Indians' Book* (1907) roughly ten years earlier, Curtis was between publications of one African American and one African songbook[115] when she wrote La Flesche asking for his input on and involvement in a traveling "dance-drama." Featuring "eight [Tiwa] Indians from San Ildefonso" (1) introduced and historicized by Curtis,[116] each performance would include "a fragment of their ceremonial Eagle Dance Pageant" and, depending on the willingness of the performers, "a fragment of the Buffalo Dance Drama" (2). To understand the significance of Curtis's proposal, I focus first on two other pieces of her writing: *The Indians' Book* and an article she'd published three years earlier in *The Southern Workman*, the Hampton Institute's magazine, titled "An Indian Song on a Desert Path." The through-line across Curtis's expansive career as a "musical folk-lorist" is her conceptualization of the possibility of ontological collapse between herself and her Native subjects from within what she saw as the ephemeral, affective dimension of Native song. Situating this aspiration at the center of Curtis's ideas of Native performance—of Native people performing as well as of her own performance of Native-ness—enables me to read her "dance-drama" proposal as her negotiation of her own gendered whiteness by way of the racial performance of her folkloric subjects. In this way, the "dance-dramas" represent a variation on the vernacular musical-dramatic performances, undertaken by Hurston, Hughes, La Flesche, and Kane, that structure "Playing the Folk." Finally, by animating Curtis's biography detailing her work throughout, I explicate the interconnections binding ethnography to stage performance

[115] Respectively, *Negro Folk-Songs* (1918) and *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*: *Recorded from the Singing and the Sayings of C. Kamba Simango and Madikane Čele* (1920).
[116] This is one place where Hurston's and Curtis's ethnographic dramas diverge. While Curtis proposed to give extensive introductory context, if Hurston spoke at all before or after her play it was not included in a single one of the three existing programs (*The Great Day* (1932), *From Sun to Sun* (1932), *All de Live Long Day* (1934)).

through "playing the folk," and white female folklorists (dramatists, and performers) to the Black and Native folk with whom they collaborated in order to authenticate their cultural authority as white women.

An inheritor of her family's wealth[117] as well as of their abolitionist, suffragist politics,[118] Natalie Curtis was educated at New York's National Conservatory by Franz Liszt's student Arthur Friedheim (Rahkonen 511). Training to become a concert pianist with an interest in German classical music, Curtis went on to study harmony with composer Ferruccio Busoni—another of Liszt's pupils—and then with Alfred-Auguste Giraudet. Busoni focused on what he saw as the interwoven intellectual, artistic, and emotional aspects of music (Patterson 49), while Giraudet, an operatic bass working at the Paris Conservatory, taught voice lessons; together they provided a technical and emotional education that Curtis would import to her folkloric work. In 1898, having completed her lessons, Curtis returned to New York and published her first composition, which included a libretto based on a poem translated from Persian by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Her interest in the Transcendentalist poet may have stemmed from her uncle's involvement in the movement (Patterson, 18); its piety towards nature and openness to non-Western influences (Goodman) also influenced Curtis's later work.

That work began sometime around 1900, when Curtis first visited the American southwest. Between 1903-1906, she returned frequently to the region, traveling to various reservations, schools, and communities and publishing extensively about Native art, music, and

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[117] Natalie Curtis's wealth comes from her grandfather, who was the president of the Continental Bank of New York (Patterson 17).

[118] For details about the history of abolitionism in Curtis's family, see Michelle Wick Patterson, pages 20-22; for details about her uncle George Curtis's involvement in the Transcendentalist movement, see page 89.

culture (Patterson 83-84). Curtis undertook her research during that period in order to acquire music and stories for what would later become *The Indians' Book*, an ambitious collection of music and folklore[119] from as many tribes as Curtis could access. A project of this scale prompted Curtis to solicit funding from outside of her family, principally from two donors who would become her lifelong collaborators. One thousand dollars came from the wealthy philanthropist George Foster Peabody (Patterson 105), a former banker and a trustee of, among others, Hampton Institute, for whose magazine Curtis began publishing in 1904 (Clements 278). The rest of the money was donated by a wealthy benefactress from New York City (Levering-Lewis 152 and Patterson 104-105) whose primitivist views of Black and Native cultures would have a life-long impact on Natalie Curtis's collecting. Her name was Charlotte Osgood Mason.

Curtis was one of "godmother" Mason's first "children," taken in before most of Mason's primarily Black beneficiaries. (Alain Locke, the "dean" and "midwife" of the Harlem Renaissance and another of Mason's beneficiaries, brought Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston into Mason's fold in the late nineteen-twenties). Like Curtis's ties to Transcendental spirituality, Mason's ties to parapsychology—the study of paranormal phenomena—and to hypnotherapy through her husband Rufus's vocation seem to have influenced Mason's famous primitivism. Adopting the social biological position of the Hampton Institute that Black and Native people were less "civilized" because they were less biologically evolved than whites, Curtis would similarly adapt the associative relationship Mason saw between "primitivism" and

---

[119] I use the language of folklore here because that is the language that Curtis prints in *The Indians' Book.* However, I want to recognize that orientalizing approaches to Native history at the turn of the century often encouraged readers to approach that history as "folklore" rather than as lived experience and as fact. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the relationship between Native folklore and Native history in Curtis's work, but I want to be explicit that it is my intention to communicate that *The Indians' Book* is a hybrid text that Curtis describes as "folklore."

spirituality. Having already spent her young adulthood doing folkloric research amongst Native peoples in the American southwest (Stewart 548) during the allotment era, Mason also travelled to the southwest with Curtis to live for a few months among the Plains Natives. In this way, Mason inaugurated her own spiritual quest through the primitivist lens of *The Indians' Book.*

Even though, in addition to Curtis, Mason funded and travelled with Katharine and Cornelia Chapin (Taylor 86-87) and Blanche C. Matthias, Mason is not remembered for her patronage of white women. During the Harlem Renaissance, she contributed more than one hundred thousand dollars (closer, today, to fifteen million dollars) to Black writers and artists. Her primitivist expectations fueled demands that frayed at least one of those relationships: Langston Hughes eventually severed his ties with Mason because, as he recounts in his autobiography:

> She wanted me to be primitive and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive. But, unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro—who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa—but I was not Africa (Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 317).

True to form, Zora Neale Hurston was more circumspect about Mason. At one point in her autobiography, she maps her relationship to Mason through the lens of each of their relationships to their folkloric subjects: Hurston to Black "folk," Mason to Native people. "[Mason was] just as pagan as I," she wrote. "She had lived for years among the Plains Indians and had collected a beautiful book of Indian lore" (*Dust Tracks on a Road* 176).[120] If, as Melinda Booth has argued,

---

[120] To me, this moment in *Dust Tracks on a Road* also refers to Hurston's understudied interest in Native culture; specifically the Black Seminoles. Hurston's interest stems from her engagement with questions of blackness and performance. While anthropological knowledge of her period relegated the Seminole Tribe to Mexico, the Rio Grande, and present-day Oklahoma (Littlefield), Hurston's upbringing and fieldwork in Eatonville would have alerted her to the alliance of the Seminole people who lived—and continue to live—in south Florida. Physical

"Mason selected the artists she funded based on their potential to artistically express the primitivism she believed to be inextricably linked to the African race" (50), then Hurston embraced—or at least instrumentalized—and comported one version of that primitivism, while Hughes ultimately rejected it.[121] On the other hand, Mason created Hughes and Hurston as primitive subjects themselves. Because she maintained ownership over Hurston's and Hughes's intellectual property for the duration of her patronage, Mason felt empowered to lay claim to the knowledge that they produced, figuring herself as its rightful author and collector. While she accompanied Curtis into "the field" as her companion, she treated Hughes and Hurston as anthropological informants. Mason's biography, her primitivism, and claims to ownership like these provide explicit links between Black and Native folklore—its collectors, its artistic adaptors, and its methodologies—as well as between Harlem and Indian country. Where both Mason and Curtis fashioned themselves as collectors of Black and Native songs and lore, Mason collected the collectors; Curtis, as I'll discuss, attempted to erase her hand in the composition of her collections completely. Mason represents one extreme of this racial patronage (total ownership), Curtis the other (total symbolic self-abnegation), with Helen P. Kane (who stages the possibility of self-abnegation in her plays) seated somewhere in the middle.

In her time collecting music at Hampton, Curtis seems to have adapted a primitivist logic that specifically aligned Black and Native personhood through the lens of musical performance.

---

evidence of her interest has been recorded in her costume: Robert Hemenway describes a "wide Seminole Indian skirt, contrived of a thousand patches" that Hurston once wore to a party. She intended to record the Seminole Indians living on the coast of Miami one year into her doctoral fieldwork, in 1928 (Hemenway). Illness cut her trip short, but the rest of her early fieldwork still would have found her in tantalizing proximity to the surviving Florida Tribe members.

[121] Hughes's and Mason's split was, however, more drawn out and complicated than a simple one-sided rejection. For a longer version of their story, see Arnold Rampersad's *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume 1, 1902-1941*, "Flight and Fall (1930 to 1931)," pages 182-210.

The connection is most explicit in her 1904 field notebooks, which she used to collect Native music at the Hampton, Tuskegee, and Calhoun schools and in which she also included several sketches and spirituals from Black singers (Patterson 214). To Curtis, both Black and Native musics were innate, respectively, to Black and Native people. According to the logic of racial biology, Black and Native musical artistry was not honed through skill and practice, but was instead *natural*; due to the close proximity of each "race" to the natural world. Where Helen Kane showcased that argument musically and thematically in her "Indian plays," Curtis communicated it by insisting on the inherent musical capacity of both Black and Native people. Her idea that folk music came "naturally" to Black and Native "races" aligned with the racial biologist stance that various races are at various stages of development, with whites furthest away from the natural world and Black and Native people closest to it. In this way, Curtis counterposed "developed," classically arranged musics to what she found to be unfiltered and unrefined Black and Native song. She assumed, for example, that both enslaved people and Africans in Africa sang "at all times" (*Negro Folk-Songs* 5), and that "Hopis always sing" ("The Shepherd Poet" 148). She also assumed that Native people *would* sing constantly, were they not forced into civilization in the Indian schools (Patterson 178-179). Black people, according to her Forward to *Negro Folk-Songs*, were "utterly untaught musically," and "harmonized the old melodies as they sang, simply because it was natural for them to do so" (2). It was, further, "that spontaneous musical utterance which is the Negro's priceless contribution to the art of America" (3). Value inhered, in Black music, specifically to the capacity for spontaneity. In *The Indians' Book*, Curtis similarly privileged spontaneity and "nature" by both definitions: "Harmony is lacking; but the life and art of the Indian are so linked with nature that it is to be questioned

whether the sounds of the nature-world do not supply to these singers of the open a certain unconscious sense of harmonic background" (xxvi).

By celebrating Native "folk" music in opposition to European concert music, Curtis reacted to the past several decades of vigorous opposition by Indian schools and the Office of Indian Affairs to Native music and dances (Troutman 5, 8). As John Troutman has argued, federal Indian policy shaped and was shaped by musical performance, where music was differently deployed as a way of mediating Native citizenship. Curtis considered her work to be an explicit intervention against Indian boarding schools' active destruction of Native culture, successfully implementing *The Indians' Book* in the major Indian schools (Patterson 184-185) as a pedagogical counterpoint to their focus on European classical musics and Christian plays. She was less concerned, however, by the violences and indignities of surveillance and paternalism in the schools, and of the violences wreaked on Native communities through their mitigated access to rights like self-governance and to resources like land and food. Her preservation efforts extended to cultural production, not sovereignty.[122]

Similarly, Curtis seems to have associated her work on African and African American folklore with the uplift projects of the Normal and Agricultural Black schools like the Hampton Institute, where she collected material for *Negro Folk-Songs* (1918) and *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent* (1920). Published in four books as a part of the "Hampton Series," Curtis had planned *Negro Folk-Songs*, according to an article in *The Southern Worker*, as "a 'Negro Book' on the same plan as her…'Indian Book'" (Patterson 218). Throughout *Negro Folk-Songs*, she presented Hampton's uplift project as a framework through which to advocate for preservation,

[122] In *Playing Indian* (1999), Philip Deloria levies the same charge against the "People Hobbyists" who attended powwows and insisted on participating in Indian culture in the 1960s and 1970s, while refusing to coalition politically on behalf of the American Indian Movement.

not justice. At Hampton, Curtis wrote in the first paragraph of the Forward, the "development of backward races" comes through "training," by which "worthy traits are studied and developed; the folk-lore of Negroes and Indians is preserved and encouraged" (3). Its fifty pages make no mention of structural oppression. *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*—her collection of African folklore and the last book that she was able to publish before her death—was a markedly more political songbook than *Negro Folk-Songs*. In an introduction spanning twelve more pages than that of *Negro Folk-Songs*, Curtis contextualized African music in anti-colonial struggles and in Black peoples' reactions to having been "segregated, discriminated against, mobbed and murdered" (xix). As a white American, it may have been easier to indict European rather than domestic imperialism, particularly in the wake of Pan-Africanist, New Negro, and other anti-colonialist movements (of which W.E.B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes were both proponents) at the end of WWI. Explicitly disavowing contemporary and historical racism, Curtis took care to tell a positive, relativist history of the Zulu and Ndau tribes. Ultimately, however, while she avoided the language of "inferiority," Curtis sustained the belief that Black and Native people were inherently less mentally and socially developed than whites. Just after quoting Franz Boas describing "the pronouncement of Negro inferiority" as "an unproved assertion," Curtis qualified: "it may be years before the black race as a whole attains the intellectual development of the white" (xviii). Throughout her writings, Curtis similarly argues for a culturally sensitive approach to assimilation, but never questions the social biologist ideas on which her argument that Native people need her instruction and guidance is built.

Jessie Fauset—author, teacher, literary editor of *The Crisis*, and another essential figure in the Harlem Renaissance—wrote approvingly of the collection: "Here then are evidences that a very real, backward reaching, finely developed civilization, one that is native and endemic, has

been existing over a large part of Africa" (Arthur Johnson 146). In addition to Fauset's claim that Curtis presented Black stories and songs legibly and with dignity to the white social world, *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent* bears the mark of W.E.B. Du Bois, who Curtis quotes throughout the introduction as an authority on African history. Du Bois, who sat on the Board of Directors for the Music School Settlement for Colored People in New York City alongside Curtis, actually sent her a handful of editorial suggestions for *Negro Folk-Songs*. Advising against over-generalization in Curtis's introduction, Du Bois emphasized that Curtis should not be "stressing too much the importance of the two young men [her informants] from Africa" who she chose to embody her idea of Blackness. He also encouraged her to more judiciously and assiduously trace the historical relationship between Arab and African peoples [IMG 1]. While she seems to have heeded another of Du Bois's suggestions—to properly cite James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan*—the introduction for her second book responds much more directly to these de-essentializing revisions than does the first. Curtis's connection to Harlem, then, is not rooted exclusively in Charlotte Mason. The production of Black "folk-lore" and folk-song in the nineteen-teens and twenties across and (as I describe in chapters 1 and 3) beyond the United States expands and re-networks our ideas of the Harlem Renaissance and its authors.

Curtis deployed her belief that Black and Native peoples have a natural capacity for music with two contradictory consequences. If the virtue of Black and Native music was that its performers lack self-reflectiveness, then Curtis's virtue lay in the opposite: in her ability to self-abdicate when she listened to, recorded, and even sang it, in defiance of the capacity and proclivity for analysis inherent to her idea of whiteness. In this way, Curtis's belief in a "natural" racial capacity for music served to polarize Black and Native performance from white performance and listenership. By contrast, Curtis instrumentalized her idea that "natural"

musicianship inures to raced, physical bodies and that a white, female listener could process that music (in her capacity as a listener, singer, and transcriber) without effecting it or its performer. Reminiscent of Helen P. Kane's plays and Alice C. Fletcher's writings, Curtis's narratives preserve racial difference while simultaneously permitting her occupation of Black and Native bodies through the medium of Black and Native music. Through a performance of her own empathy and invisibility as a collector, translator, and editor, Curtis manages to performatively interpolate her subjects in song because, as she wrote in *Negro Folk-Songs*, "music is a common tongue which speaks directly to the heart of all mankind" (*Negro Folk-Songs* 4). This romantic minstrelsy—claiming an authentic, living, "folk" source to which she has unmitigated access—is most evident in two of Curtis's texts: a short autobiographical piece on Hopi song for *The Southern Workman*, and her famous *Indians' Book.*

Published in 1907 and illustrated by the immensely popular Winnebago artist and Indigenous intellectual Angel de Cora (who seven years earlier had illustrated Francis La Flesche's *The Middle Five*), *The Indians' Book* is comprised of songs and stories that Curtis collected and transcribed across the American southwest and, in 1904, at Hampton. In its time, the book gained national and international praise (Bredenburg)—including from Hurston in her autobiography—and was consulted widely as source material for Indianist adaptation (Pisani 263). It even garnered some notice from within the Harlem Renaissance: Alain Locke reportedly kept the book on his mantle, next to the urn that held his mother's ashes (Levering-Lewis 152). Throughout *The Indians' Book*, Curtis insists on abdicating authorship, not authority (in distinction from Helen Kane, who seemed to cherish both). At its beginning, she is particularly explicit.

> The Indians are the authors of this volume. The songs and stories are theirs; the drawings, cover-design, and title-pages were made by them.

> The work of the recorder has been but the collecting, editing, and arranging of the Indians' contributions.

Native people have long asserted their presence and their stories in hostile venues, and by printing their stories and songs, Curtis, probably inadvertently, alludes to a long history of network sovereignty between Native printers, publishing houses, authors, and linguists (Vigil 2018). Interestingly, even in this brief note, she is careful to attribute to her informants both the content and the construction of the text. By doing so, she presents her text—which was structured by the power that her whiteness and her wealth afforded her—as a product of horizontal power relations. On the one hand Curtis's *Indians' Book* is quite transparently an attempt to reattribute to her subjects the agency with which they could construct, produce, and design their own stories. On the other, the book produces Curtis as an objective and essential conductor—"collecting, editing, and arranging" Native "contributions"—between Native and white listening communities. By performing and reiterating her own self-erasure in *The Indians' Book*, Curtis's text "plays Indian," performing Indianness and occluding the power structures borne from her whiteness in the process. In this way, *The Indians' Book* presents a stark version of the argument that Kane and Fletcher make about white female identity in their folkloric works.

Before, during, and after publishing *The Indians' Book*, Natalie Curtis wrote prolifically for *The Southern Workman*. One article in particular dramatizes the argument that Curtis foregrounded in *The Indians' Book*: that her translations of Native songs and stories are both sympathetic and transparent. In "An Indian Song on a Desert Path" (1904), Curtis presented her capacity for sympathetic feeling as a negation of sociality that literally transubstantiates her body into the voice of her Native guide. Amidst a sandstorm, Curtis describes:

> My Hopi lifted his voice in song…And as the refrain arose again and again, I too felt my spirit captured, swayed, and borne out in song. I joined my voice to that of my guide. Not a soul to hear, not one to comment or criticize—only the desert stretching broad and far….What freedom to sing one's very soul out into such a wide vast night! We lifted our faces to the sky and sang. At the top of our voices my Hopi sang and I (345).

In the rhetoric of transcendental unity, Curtis presents this moment as a sublime meeting of *voices* beyond language, made possible by the fact that Curtis doesn't speak Hopi. First disembodying her guide into a voice—and I mean "a voice" in the sense of his utterance *and* of his self-expression, or expression of selfhood—Curtis subsumes him. Described in the language of ownership rather than of individuality, "my Hopi" signifies Curtis's agency within this intimate scene of contact. When she abstracts herself and "sings her soul out into such a wide vast night," her guide vanishes, incorporated into the natural setting to which Native people were so often reduced. In the moment when Curtis describes that there was "not a soul to hear" *her* soul's song, she defines *hearing* as a critical act, voiding her guide of that critical agency in order to assert the necessity of her ethnographic practice. If she won't listen, Curtis intimates, then nobody will. As someone who believes in biological race, by absenting her physical presence while simultaneously asserting the necessity of her sonic, ephemeral presence as witness and translator, Curtis describes her own de-racialization in the medium of sound. Here, in marked contrast to Zora Neale Hurston's interactive ethnographic performances on her "collecting stage," Burlin cements her guide's status as a social nonbeing in order to transcend her own social status as a woman under patriarchy.

Curtis's were imperfect representations cloaked in the guise of transparency, with a whiff of minstrel "authenticity" in her attempt at self-erasure, but her Native preservation projects seem to have caught the attention Francis La Flesche. As two big names in Native anthropology—Curtis as a folklorist and Indianist composer, La Flesche as an ethnologist—each

would have been aware of the other. In addition to citing his texts multiple times in *The Indians' Book*,[123] Curtis shared an acknowledgement with La Flesche (along with Alice Fletcher, Francis Densmore, and Frederick Burton) in Charles Wakefield Cadman's opera *Shanewis*,[124] "for themes in their entirety, partial themes or fragmentary themes which were suggestive of color and form and afforded many a rhythmic and melodic foundation for certain episodes." In her work as an Indianist composer, Curtis's compositions share a lineage with Cadman's; similarly, in his interest in song collecting (accompanying La Flesche into "the field" for *Daoma*), Cadman's work is inflected by that of Natalie Curtis. Curtis even had a direct connection to the much lesser-known Helen Kane: both were members of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico (ASNM), a group that Kane joined around the beginning of 1919 (*El Palacio* 45-46).

In April of the year Kane joined the ASNM—just two years before La Flesche published the first of four *Omaha Tribe* books and two years before Curtis's death—Natalie Curtis wrote Francis La Flesche a letter.[125] Beginning with a reference to a time they met in person, Curtis

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[123] Francis La Flesche appears three times in the footnotes of *The Indians' Book.* In the first, Curtis hails him as her intellectual father by thanking him for being the person who "first conceived the idea of writing down the songs of his people" (xxii). In the second, Curtis recommends his article "Who Was the Medicine-Man" as a source for her expository section on the topic (32). In the third, Curtis quotes him extensively to describe the significance of "the tribal circle" to the Omaha (39).

[124] In his acknowledgments to the printed play, Cadman distinguishes "ethnologists" (Fletcher, Densmore, La Flesche) from "Indian folksong investigators" (Curtis, Burton): "The composer of this opera wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of those ethnologists and Indian folksong investigators who have so kindly allowed their gleanings of primitive vocal utterance to be used and idealized in this score" (Cadman, "Forward," *Shanewis*).

[125] The letter in question is the only surviving piece of correspondence between Natalie Curtis and Francis La Flesche, and is housed in the Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche Papers at the American Anthropological Archive in Washington, DC. To my knowledge, only Michelle Wick Patterson's biography (the longest and most extensively-researched publication about Natalie Curtis), mentions—but does not detail—the occurrence of this correspondence.

Aside from Patterson's biography, writing on Curtis is scant. Barbara A. Babcock and Nancy J. Parezo discuss Curtis in their illustrated catalogue, *Daughters of the Desert: Women*

requested La Flesche's and Fletcher's "suggestions, criticisms, and help" (2) on a proposal as well as their membership on a small advanced committee (1). The proposal was that they collaborate on staging a piece of Native drama.

> I have never relinquished the hope of carrying out the plan formulated in Santa Fe last year, viz: that of bringing a group of Indians on an artistic mission to the white man, to show Washington and the public at large what the Indian poetic and musical rituals really are (1).

As she did in *The Indians' Book*, later in her letter Curtis refers to the "group of Indians" as her "friends" (1). According to the letter, "in Santa Fe last year" the city held a ceremony to dedicate its New Museum. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* actually dates that ceremony on November 24-26, 1917, describing the Museum as an "art gallery" with "priceless archaeological and historical collections" (181). An art gallery of excavated and collected historical objects is a gallery that frames Native art as already-historical or, as she explained it in her proposal draft, "an Art complete" that "sprang from the soil of this great continent." Boasting a language of chthonic gravitas, Curtis's description fluidly bolsters the myth of Native extinction even as she argues for its existence and preservation in the present.

Interesting, then, that a dramatic performance (not once called a "reenactment" in Curtis's texts) would originate—and, as I'll describe, would be reproduced—in the space of the

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Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest, 1880-1980 (1988) and, in addition to the texts from my bibliography of this chapter (Carl Rahkonen's "Special Bibliography" (1998) and William M. Clements's "Natalie Curtis and Black Expressive Culture in Africa and America" (1995)), I know of two other articles published within the last decade speak to Curtis's life and work: Lori Shipley's "Musical Education of American Indians at Hampton Institute (1878-1923), *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, Volume 34, No. 1, October 2012; and Jill Terry Rudy's "American Folklore Scholarship, Tales of the North American Indians, and Relational Communities," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 126, No. 499, Winter 2013.

museum. It was here that Curtis and La Flesche first hatched "the plan" that she expanded and detailed in her letter. Each show would begin with:

> An introduction by me as to Indian thought in general and Indian dramatic ritual in particular; I would then explain the meaning and the symbolism of the dance which the Indians would perform, and give a translation of song-poems and an outline of the melody of the songs which accompany the dance. Perhaps I would also offer a few of the women's songs, as at Santa Fe. The Indians would then perform a fragment of their ceremonial Eagle Dance Pageant; and we hope that as a second half of the program they may be willing to give a fragment of the Buffalo Dance Drama (2).

Curtis frames the traveling performance, here, as a kind of performative science, reminiscent of the ethnographic entertainments discussed briefly in chapter 2. "Indian dramatic ritual" is a hybrid genre in which ritual, drama, and Indianness are presented as being inherently interrelated. Curtis enhances the scientism of this performance through her historical-anthropological framework, giving an introduction that would frame the dances as if they were part of a lecture. Somehow, that scientism—the supposed veracity of the performance, or "what the Indian rituals…really are"—is also enhanced by the *construction* of the set. Artwork would be produced by Curtis's husband Paul Burlin, a modernist painter influenced by African tribal art and art from Native pueblos across the American southwest, who Curtis proposed "will paint a fitting stage-setting for the Indians, to create the necessary illusion" (*Proposal* 2). In Curtis's framework, Native-themed (and Native-performed) art enhances reality, while "illusion" and performance bring the viewer closer to "truth." That the Eagle Dance *is* a "pageant" and the Buffalo Dance *is* a "Drama" emphasizes their constructed-ness, making them accessible—view-able, decipherable—to a white viewership who might anticipate accruing both knowledge and entertainment from the performances.

The proposal seems to be that Native ceremony could invite the same approach as would Native drama, or Native dance: that ritual dance *is* drama, that drama is ethnographic, and,

importantly, that ceremony required an audience. In this sense, equating dance to drama to ceremony is inherently extractive; by insinuating a definition of Native ceremony that includes an audience, Natalie Curtis sanctions her own participatory disappearing act. (By framing the dances with her lecture, Curtis uses her presence to validate them as being worthy of attention; by simultaneously working to hide her hand in their staging and curation, she actually asserts her authority, insinuating that her proximity to and knowledge of the dancers has afforded this level of transparency). Still, creating a relationship between these forms was also a compelling project to figures like Hurston, Hughes, and La Flesche. Hurston, for example, presented her choreography of the West Indian "fire dance" as the final act of *The Great Day* whenever Charlotte Mason would permit it. In a draft of an unpublished article that he'd intended to send to *The Crisis*, Langston Hughes aligned Black drama with Black ritual—"like the ritual of the lodge and the ritual of the church (which we already have) we must create for the Negro people the ritual of the theatre"—in order to communicate his desire for fluidity between Black drama and Black life. The fact of existence of La Flesche's dramas despite his "unexpectedness" as a playwright, and of the ritualistic drumming procession of fairies in his untitled play draft, also speaks to his interest in formal experimentation between ceremony and drama. The musical "dance-drama" is a fraught political space that held potential for Black and Native authors, just as it did for Curtis.

Curtis intended to differentiate the "Eagle Dance Pageant" and the "Buffalo Dance Drama" from a longer history of ethnographic showmanship—like Alice Fletcher's "Indian Civilization" exhibition at the 1884 New Orleans World's Fair, Buffalo Bill's Wild West

traveling show in the 1890s,[126] the Plantation Show in 1895, and the minstrel shows and "Indian play" of the nineteen-teens and twenties—through an ethnographic, affective seriousness produced by its limited availability. Like Hurston's, Helen P. Kane's, and, to varying degrees, Hughes's approaches to their respective dramas,[127] Curtis seems to have wanted to differentiate her idea from popular entertainments in order to attribute to her project the same seriousness that she attributed to its source material. As she wrote to La Flesche, Curtis hoped that together they would "invest the performance with that spirit of reverence which would lift it entirely out of the domain of any theatrical exploitation" (4). Also like Hurston, Hughes, and Kane, the project of limiting availability and access was also driven by its potential sources of funding. Noting that the same George Foster Peabody who had contributed to *The Indians' Book* had shown interest in partially funding the performance, Curtis imagined that the rest of the money would come from "prominent men in different cities" (1) where each performance could be staged in "the

[126] Buffalo Bill's Wild West sets one of the most striking precedents for Curtis's "dance-dramas." As Richard Slotkin argues, Buffalo Bill's wildly popular traveling performances intentionally, constantly, and consistently confused the theatrical with the historical and political, making literal and visible the racialist myth of progress on which nineteenth century anthropology relied.

[127] Each author and dramatist who I cite here differentiated their dramatic-ethnographic material from popular entertainments of their period in different ways, and for a variety of reasons. For example, as I mention on page 231 of this chapter, Langston Hughes was committed to Black community theater in opposition to "white Broadway successes." As I discuss in chapter 3, he also seemed interested throughout his life in making music for the popular arena. In 1930, Hurston wrote to Charlotte Mason differentiating her "Negro concert of the most intensely black type from dances that had been "influenced by Harlem or Broadway;" though she also describes her love for Black vaudeville in "Characteristics of Negro Drama" and inhabits a vaudeville role in her recorded rehearsal of *The Great Day* (see chapter 1 for details). As I describe in chapter 2 (particularly pages 127-129), Helen Kane distinguishes *The Capture of Ozah* from her parlor plays because "the work is unique, and may have no market value, as it may appeal to a limited class." Finally, while I have not come across any written reflection by Francis La Flesche about the type of audience he desired for his dramas, his breadth of dramatic endeavors is evidence, to me, of an interest in accessing different types of audiences for different types of performances. I elaborate this idea in chapter 2, particularly in section V.

Museums and Art Galleries of the different cities." Each institution, she opined, would "extend their sympathy and cooperation, if not their financial aid" to the project (2). Produced by a classical composer and folklorist, her modernist painter husband, a Native ethnologist, and a host of philanthropic donors, the project would distinguish itself from the popular Indian entertainments of the period through its limited access and relationship to the art museums.

Part of Curtis's intent to differentiate her "dance-dramas" from popular entertainments comes from the fact that the proposal takes the Hopi tourism industry as its most direct precedent.[128] Beginning in 1884—just around the time of allotment, the beginnings of Native ethnography, the discipline of folklore, and Thomas Edison's phonograph—the Santa Fe Railroad added a stop in Flagstaff to a recently-completed line that ran from Kansas City to Los Angeles. The Railroad began advertising the route using Indian motifs three years later, and a year after that the company commissioned the ethnographer Walter Hough to write a pamphlet describing the "Moqui"[*sic*-Hopi] Snake Dance.[129] Between 1887-1896, at least twenty-eight popular accounts of the dance ran in books and magazines across Europe and the United States. Sustaining its popularity through the year 1912, when the Santa Fe Railroad filmed the ceremony for promotional use (and aired it in the "lecture lounges" of nearby hotels as a form of

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[128] This paragraph draws on research undertaken by Nick Murray as part of a larger (unpublished) project. His primary sources for this research include Harry Clebourne James's *Pages from Hopi History* (1974) and Richard O. Clemmer's *Roads In The Sky* (1995), both cited in the bibliography of this chapter.

[129] Hough's company-commissioned ethnographic tourist booklet is reminiscent of the times that Francis La Flesche was consulted by the Library of Congress to divulge the original Native words for certain bodies of land (see chapter 2, pages 86-87), and by private operations with requests for Native words to name, for example, a waterside property (1907). Even this commercial operation is intimately connected to the ways that anthropology was imagined and instrumentalized during this period.

educational tourism), the Hopi Snake Dance was a place where popular entertainment met public education and contemporary anthropology through tourism.

Natalie Curtis first visited the Hopi in 1903, where she recorded the first cylinders of Hopi "music"[130] and transcribed songs and stories for *The Indians' Book*. Curtis had gained access to various Native tribes without official interference through Theodore Roosevelt (Patterson 172), whom she escorted to various Hopi activities surrounding the Snake Dance at that same Hopi reservation in 1913. Curtis considered these visits to be a form of study, according to Michelle Wick Patterson, in order "to understand the actual needs of the reservations and to prepare government employees to educate Hopi youth" (195-196). Curtis's approach to the Snake Dance shows the ways that the space could be constellated by its non-Native visitors as a site of ethnographic research, governmental policy, and popular entertainment. Significantly, Curtis's reasons for bringing the ex-president to the Snake Dance mirror her explanation for proposing the touring performances of the Tiwa Eagle and Buffalo Dances. The proposal was fueled by a reformist project; her intention was not to grant political sovereignty but, instead, to promote revivalist artistic freedom through the lens of drama.

More than in her letter, Curtis uses her proposal draft to assemble ideas of Native drama, ceremony, music, and pageantry in the service of ethnographic preservation. Extolling the virtues of what she describes in her letter as "the value of the Art from our own continent," Curtis argues in three registers: "*pictorially, musically,* and *dramatically* this Art summons those who recognize it to utter a plea for its salvation" (emphasis mine). Native art, here, is visual, melodic,

[130] The recordings are ceremonial, but Curtis describes them throughout as "music," conversely calling the ceremonials "musical." This strikes me as being similar to the "dance-drama" collapse, but because I am unsure what Hopi peoples called their own songs and ceremonies in this period, I leave "music" in quotes.

and performative. Her idea of performativity is similarly specific: Native drama, to Curtis, is the fabric of Native art, and Native art is Native ceremony is Native life. She explains:

> …[A]mong our own American natives are *dance-dramas* of such solemn beauty and poetry of imagary[sic] that it might be safe to say that no race can offer *a rythmic*[sic] *pageantry* more impressive (emphasis mine).
>
> These American *dance-dramas* are unknown to America at large,-[sic] they have been seen only by a few tourists and by the handful of artists who, kept at home by the war, have 'discovered America' and now make yearly pilgrimages to New Mexico and Arizona (emphasis mine).[131]

Where music was central to La Flesche's (and to Hurston's,[132] Kane's, and Hughes's) dramatic works, it is "rhythm" and dance that figure most prominently in Curtis's valuation of Native drama. The connection to Black music here is explicit. Throughout *Negro Folk-Songs*, Curtis levies a claim that she crystallizes in *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent* and sources from a conception that dominated primitivist and modernist thought in the nineteen-teens and twenties: "a natural response to rhythm and a mastery of rhythmic form, these are inherent in the very nature of black folk" (xx-xxi).[133] To me, Curtis's description is of the associative relationship between Black and Native "folk" as producers of valuable "Art from our own continent." Black and Native "folk" cultures register their import as sonic innovators who make

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[131] Curtis's mention of "artists" and "tourists" visiting New Mexico points to a phenomenon that links that city to Harlem, explicitly, through the lens of folklore and dramatic performance. One such artist was the white bisexual literary socialite heiress Mabel Dodge Luhan, who moved from Harlem to start a thriving artistic colony in New Mexico in 1917. I suspect that a more sustained study of this artistic "pilgrimage" of white people to Native New Mexico would expand our understanding of both the Harlem Renaissance and the "artist colonies" and Native activism and art in New Mexico at the time.

[132] In her masterful *Choreographing the Folk* (2008), Anthea Kraut makes a similar argument about Hurston: that dance and choreography were as central to her creative interpellation of Black American folklore as were fiction and anthropology.

[133] In a letter to Franz Boas from April 21, 1929—sent from the field during her dissertation research—Zora Neale Hurston makes a similar claim: "May I say that all primitive music originated about the drum, and that singing was an attenuation of the drum-beat. The nearer to the primitive, the more prominent the part of the drum."

themselves available for discovery. One attempt of this dissertation has been to show the ways that "unexpected" Black and Native authors and anthropologists use the same register of folklore to produce these musical-dramatic texts themselves.

In a time when drama and ethnography were in intimate exchange from within the register of "folk" and vernacular music, reformists, activists, Indigenous intellectuals, artists, and anthropologists imbued drama and music with socio-political significance. As Black and Native peoples were increasingly associated with one another under the banners of primitivism and the "folk," Black and Native artists and anthropologists renegotiated their identities and their art on a public stage, by scripting and performing music and drama that confused the genre categories to which their work was usually relegated. Beginning with the creation of the disciplines of folklore and Native anthropology, the era of recorded sound, and the cultural outpouring of the Harlem Renaissance and running into the "Indian New Deal" and the WPA's reproduction of black "folk" lore through the Federal Writer's Project, the period spanning roughly 1880-1940 also saw the blurring of ethnography and popular entertainment, often through dramatic, musical performance. White female folklorists and folklore enthusiasts like Curtis, Fletcher, and Kane explored their interest in and ideas of Black and Native folklore in service of their own self-actualization, through multiple kinds of performance at once. Even though they were restricted by the funding offered by their primarily white, upper-class publishers, mentors, and patrons, authors and anthropologists like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Francis La Flesche committed themselves to exploring different dramatic-musical modes of communicating their own creative versions of regional and global Black and Native vernacular life.

Indigenous and "New Negro" intellectuals embarked on these genre experiments from within and in reaction to a cultural moment in which their oppression was orchestrated by logic

and language drawn from the same disciplines and genres with which they experimented. While the Boasian school of cultural anthropology in which Zora Neale Hurston was trained made the case for a relativist view of Black, Native, and Indigenous cultures, reformist anthropologists (and "Negro" and "Indian" boarding schools) as well as folklorists and popular media were entrenched in a socio-biological model of cultural advancement. This model was not only reflected in legal oppressions and social regulations; celebrations of Black and Native music also bore its mark. Rather than sustaining bans on Native music instated during allotment, Indian schools developed folklore preservation projects, teaching Curtis's *Indians' Book* and, in the case of Hampton, encouraging musical-dramatic performances in Native languages on stage[134]—at least partially influenced, I imagine, by the preservation efforts already underway in Black schools of the period.[135] Folklorists and tourists flocked to New Mexico. And meanwhile, in southern towns and northern cities, various forms of "primitive" Black music came into vogue. A product of fears that "pre-modern" cultures would be subsumed by white capitalist modernity, preservation efforts were the paradigms through which La Flesche, Hughes, and Hurston staked their claims on the resilience of Black and Native vernacular life—while white women like Alice C. Fletcher, Helen P. Kane, and Natalie Curtis accessed the same genre-experiments and the same paradigms to shore up their gendered whiteness through musical-dramatic interpellations of their Black and Native subjects.

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[134] See Shipley, page 11, for details.

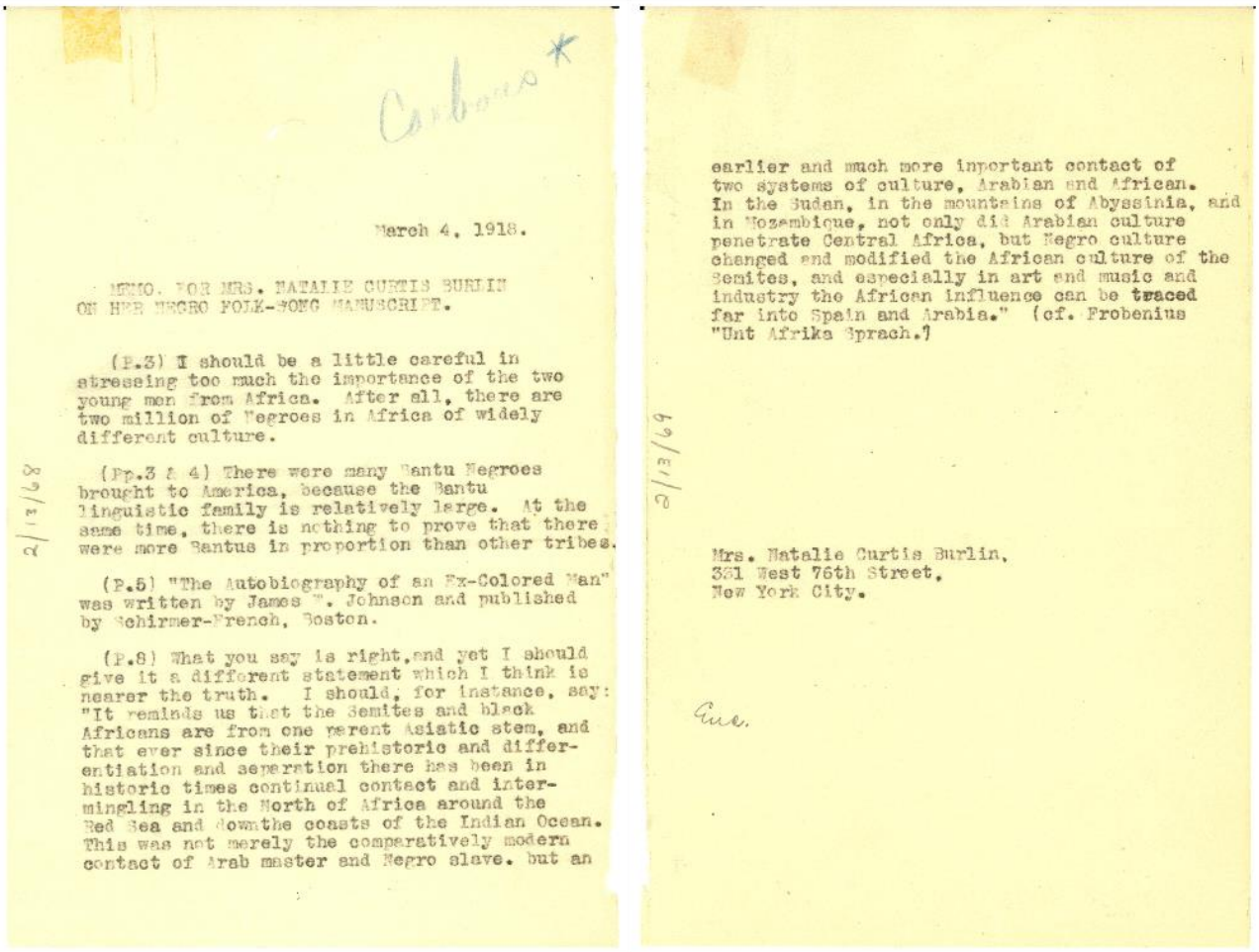
[135] I believe this to be the case, in particular, at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, which added to its Black school an Indian School from 1878-1923. It was also in 1878 that the first folklore collection was conducted amongst Black students by the authority of Samuel Armstrong, the Institute's founder. Alice Mable Bacon continued that work through the Hampton Folklore Society from 1893-1900. For further details, see Shirley Moody-Turner, "From Hawai'i to Hampton," in *Black Folklore and the Politics of Racial Representation*, pages 47-71.

In *The Red Man,* the Carlisle Indian School's "illustrated magazine by Indians," George P. Donehoo published a short history of the school's historical relationship to Native peoples. Titling his article "Carlisle and the Red Man of Other Days," Donehoo—a Carlisle student who went on to become a historian of "Indian" trails and villages in Pennsylvania[136]—printed his piece framing the "Red Man's" education at Carlisle as his entry into "the great drama which was being enacted on the American continent" (443), "the great drama of civilized life" (444), and "the drama of American civilization" (445). If civilization is a drama, and the realms of culture ("Indian play," pageantry, recorded sound), anthropology (ethnography, ethnology), and even the government were bound together through folkloric musical dramatizations of Black and Native peoples, then gaining representation on the dramatic stage literally meant accessing multiple forms of representation at once. It may be neither the site of sovereignty nor of freedom, but these vernacular dramatic musics and musical dramas are a site of struggle on which the terrain of modern ethnography, music, and performance was built.

[136] Donehoo wrote *A History of the Indian Villages and Place Names in Pennsylvania* (1928), *Harrisburg and Dauphin County: A Sketch of the History of the Past Twenty-Five Years, 1900-1925* (1925), *A Short Sketch of the Indian trails of Pennsylvania* (1920), and *The real Indian of the Past and the Real Indian of the Present* (1912), edited *Pennsylvania: A History* (1926), and wrote the introduction for Hale C. Sipe's *The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania* (1929).

Appendix to Coda

IMAGE 1:
Memo from W.E.B. Du Bois to Natalie Curtis Burlin, March 4, 1918. Courtesy of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives, Amherst, MA.



March 4, 1918.

MEMO. FOR MRS. NATALIE CURTIS BURLIN
ON HER NEGRO FOLK-SONG MANUSCRIPT.

(P.3) I should be a little careful in stressing too much the importance of the two young men from Africa. After all, there are two million of Negroes in Africa of widely different culture.

(Pp.3 & 4) There were many Bantu Negroes brought to America, because the Bantu linguistic family is relatively large. At the same time, there is nothing to prove that there were more Bantus in proportion than other tribes.

(P.5) "The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man" was written by James ". Johnson and published by Schirmer-French, Boston.

(P.8) What you say is right, and yet I should give it a different statement which I think is nearer the truth. I should, for instance, say: "It reminds us that the Semites and black Africans are from one parent Asiatic stem, and that ever since their prehistoric and differentiation and seperation there has been in historic times continual contact and intermingling in the North of Africa around the Red Sea and down the coasts of the Indian Ocean. This was not merely the comparatively modern contact of Arab master and Negro slave. but an earlier and much more important contact of two systems of culture, Arabian and African. In the Sudan, in the mountains of Abyssinia, and in Mozembique, not only did Arabian culture penetrate Central Africa, but Negro culture changed and modified the African culture of the Semites, and especially in art and music and industry the African influence can be traced far into Spain and Arabia." (cf. Frobenius "Unt Afrika Sprach.")

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