Jazz Neoclassicism and Racial Uplift, 1970 – 2007

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music

University of Virginia
August, 2018

ABSTRACT

Jazz's neoclassical turn in the late 1970s, and the subsequent arrival of the young musicians labeled the "Young Lions" in the 1980s and 1990s, was one of the most important developments in late 20th century jazz history. This dissertation contextualizes this moment in jazz history and jazz criticism within the broader context of African American social and political thought. I argue that, in their cultural politics, Wynton Marsalis, Albert Murray, and Stanley Crouch—the ideological architects of jazz neoclassicism—were deeply indebted to the ideology of racial uplift first articulated in the early 20th century by African American leaders like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Murray, Marsalis, and Crouch articulated a shared vision of jazz as emblematic of black respectability, black self-help, and black contributions to Western civilization. They saw the resurgence of straight-ahead jazz in the 1980s and 1990s as indicative of the coming cultural and moral uplift of black America after the confusion and degradation of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Each of my three chapters explores the ways in which one of my key figures drew on the influence of earlier leaders of racial uplift. While tracing these ideological influences, I also place each of my subjects in the contexts of debates and anxieties in 1980s and 1990s black America. In my first chapter, I argue that Albert Murray's formulation of a distinctively black "blues idiom" reflects the influence of Booker T. Washington's ideology of self-help. I show how Murray positioned his ideas against those of sociologists like Kenneth Clark and Daniel

Patrick Moynihan, presenting the "blues idiom" as the antithesis of ideas of black inner-city pathology that were influential in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. In my second chapter, I explore the influence of W.E.B. Du Bois's early 20th century program of uplift by an educated elite on Stanley Crouch's rhetoric in the late 1980s through the 1990s. Crouch, I argue, drew on Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" idea to position the Young Lions as agents of an uplifting African American culture who could lead black America out of its post-1960s state of decadence. My third chapter presents the argument that from the 1990s through the early 21st century, Wynton Marsalis used images of an idealized community of black jazzmen to counter derogatory popular stereotypes about black masculinity and black fatherhood. I draw parallels between Marsalis's notions of black manhood and those of the Prince Hall Freemasons, arguing that Marsalis presents the jazz community as a fraternity of proud black craftsmen as a way of constructing a positive black male image and symbolically conferring a traditional patriarchal identity on black men.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was truly a blessing and a privilege to complete my graduate studies in an environment as warm and supportive as the UVA Department of Music. During my years in Charlottesville, I found myself consistently inspired by my colleagues' commitment to social justice and to fostering an inclusive, welcoming environment. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the stellar committee that guided this dissertation project to completion. My committee chair, Scott DeVeaux, has been a great teacher, a great example, and a dear friend to me during my time at UVA. Our many long, rambling conversations about jazz have always challenged me to question my assumptions and expand my thinking. My other committee members, Karl Hagstrom Miller and Michael Puri, have also been foundational to my development as a scholar. Karl consistently encouraged me to reject easy explanations and grapple with ambiguity in my scholarship. Michael always reminded me to read closely, to express my thoughts precisely, and to examine my relationship to my subject. My outside reader, Lawrie Balfour, graced this project with her deep knowledge of African American political thought in general and the works of W.E.B. Du Bois in particular. Her insights were indispensible to my project of placing jazz neoclassicism within the broader context of African American intellectual history. I want to add a further note of thanks to all of my committee members for their commitment to the craft of writing. Their comments on the style of my prose inspired me to always strive for clarity of organization and expression.

From almost the moment that I arrived at UVA in the fall of 2013, my cohort mates Kyle Chattleton and Tracey Stewart have been some of my closest friends and most important sources of support. I can never thank them enough for all of the post-seminar meals, late-night commiseration sessions, and house parties that we shared during our years in Charlottesville. Although we will all graduate and go our separate ways, I know that the Leaf Cohort will always be together in spirit. Tracey and Kyle will be my drinking buddies and traveling companions at many conferences and reunions to come. I am also deeply grateful for the close friendships with Music department grad students I met over the years, including (but certainly not limited to) Aldona Dye, Tanner Greene, Torie Clark, Lydia Warren, Rachel Devorah, Craig Comen, Amy Coddington, Jarek Ervin, and Ryan Maguire. Their friendship truly made Charlottesville feel like home.

The extremely generous financial support of the Jefferson Scholars Foundation allowed me to pursue opportunities, including presenting at the 2014 Rhythm Changes conference in Amsterdam and taking an unpaid internship at the Smithsonian, that I would otherwise have had to turn down. Funding my education would have been more than enough on its own. But the JSF provided me with something far more valuable. I spent five years immersed in a friendly and stimulating community of scholars who were conducting fascinating research in diverse fields. The staff members at the Foundation were always among my greatest advocates, and the friendships that I made with the other Jefferson fellows made my graduate school experience truly unique. It was an honor to spend years

in the company of such great minds, and I am excited to see the things they will accomplish in the years to come.

I would never have made it this far without all of the other teachers and benefactors who helped me along the way. My elementary, middle, and high school teachers, like Paula Thompson, Ray Gormally, Richard Marshall, and Marjean McPherson, saw my passion for scholarship and music early on. They always pushed me to do my best and celebrated my achievements with my family and me. My undergraduate professors at the Florida State University College of Music, especially Leon Anderson and Bill Kennedy, held me to exacting standards and gave me the best musical education anyone could ask for. I owe special thanks to Michael Broyles, who supervised my first serious attempt at music scholarship and connected me with Scott DeVeaux and the UVA Department of Music. His guidance gave me the firm foundation I needed to embark on the PhD journey. I was also blessed during my graduate studies to have the support of mentors at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Niya Bates and Gayle Jessup White, along with the other wonderful staff at Monticello, gave me an incredible opportunity to work in public history and to view the inner workings of a major institution. My mentors at the Smithsonian, Timothy Anne Burnside, Kevin Strait, and Dwan Reece, were responsible for one of the most transformative experiences of my life. Because of them, I got to play a small part in the development of a

historic museum. Kevin and Dwan, especially, were and continue to be my most indispensible guides as I sought to get my footing in the museum world.

Lastly and most importantly, I want to thank my family—both my biological family and my extended family of choice. My two honorary brothers, Alvin Cobb and Andrew Stanley, have been my very best friends since we met as college freshmen. We all live in different states now, but the laughter and support they bring into my life were crucial to me on many difficult days. My partner, Aisha Eiger, has transformed my life with her intelligence, her curiosity, her level-headedness, and her sense of humor. She has been in my corner through some of my proudest moments and some of my most difficult, like comps, the dissertation, and the job search. I don't know where I'd be today without her constant love and support. My godmother, Pier Broadnax, opened her home in Northern Virginia to me and made it possible for me to work as a Smithsonian intern. She has always taken a deep interest in my education and has given me invaluable insights into life as a black scholar during our many after-work conversations. My grandparents, Bertha and Billy Dowdy and Hazel and Cleveland Lewis, have always loved me unconditionally and inspired me with their examples of hard work, dedication, and integrity. They have been some of my biggest cheerleaders, from the first day of kindergarten through the dissertation defense. Finally, I can never thank my parents, Sid and Shelia Lewis, and my sister, Sydney Askew, enough for making me the person that I am today. I would never have sought out a life in music were it not for their early encouragement of my interests and the sacrifices

they made so that I could pursue my dreams. I owe all of my success and more to them.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Sidney and Shelia Lewis. For my entire life, they have encouraged me to pursue my passions and have done whatever they could to help me along the way. I love you, Mom and Dad!

INTRODUCTION

The March 1983 issue of *Ebony* magazine features a breathless profile of Wynton Marsalis, who was at that time a rising star in jazz and classical music. Less than a year later, Marsalis would become the first artist ever to win both the classical and jazz Grammy awards in the same year for his albums *Trumpet Concertos: Haydn, Hummel, Mozart* and *Think of One*. It was the first time in a great while that a new jazz artist had received such enthusiastic coverage in *Ebony* or its sister publication, *Jet*. Through the 1970s, two of the most influential publications in black America[1] had offered scant mention of jazz, and what little there was mostly comprised career retrospectives of the aged and dying icons of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.[2]

Another common thread in the magazines' discussion of jazz in the 70s was the persistent fear that African-American audiences and musicians were abandoning the music, as exemplified by two late 1970s *Jet* articles: "Blakey Says Black Jazz Musicians Becoming Rarer; Uses 3 Whites In His Band" (November 24, 1977) and "Young Generation Picks Soul Music Over Jazz, Blues" (August 10, 1978). Even as *Ebony* and *Jet* music writers applauded jazz's legitimization as a "Black

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[1] Ronald Brown and Michael Dawson's 1993-94 National Black Politics Study found that 81% of respondents answered "yes" to the question "Have you read a black magazine like *Ebony*…or *Jet?"* This percentage was higher than the percentages for any of the other black information networks included in the study. See Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 72.

[2] See Kimberly Vann's *Black Music in Ebony: An Annotated Guide to the Articles on Music in Ebony Magazine, 1945-1985*. Typical *Ebony* articles on jazz from the 1970s include lengthy obituaries of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington and profiles of elderly musicians like Count Basie and Mary Lou Williams. Exceptions include profiles of drum set prodigy Terri Lyne Carrington and jazz crossover guitarist George Benson.

classical music"—both magazines prominently featured stories on President Carter's 1978 celebration of jazz as an American art form—they expressed concern over its seeming irrelevance to contemporary black life.

Given the increasingly anxious nature of their previous jazz coverage, it's not surprising that *Ebony* music editor Phyllis Garland uses religious metaphors to depict Marsalis as a young black cultural hero out to save acoustic jazz:

> [Marsalis's] temple is the concert hall, the night club, the recording studio, or any place where he might play this music for the multitudes, and his gospel is enunciated through the brilliantly conceived and impeccably executed musical statements of his trumpet. Already he has been anointed as the musical messenger who might well save jazz from extinction by resurrecting its endangered tradition of creative improvisation.[3]

Implicitly juxtaposing Marsalis's brilliance and creativity with the presumably non-creative work of 1970s jazz-R&B crossover artists, Garland casts the young phenomenon as the new black standard-bearer of the "endangered"[4] jazz tradition. Indeed, to say that Marsalis "resurrected" the tradition is to imply that it had already died by the late 1970s, a narrative that would appear again in the controversial final episode of Ken Burns' 2001 documentary *Jazz*.

Omitting the contentious pronouncements that Marsalis was already leveling at other jazz musicians,[5] Garland presents Marsalis as serious and

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[3] Phyl Garland, "Musical Genius Reaches Top at 21," *Ebony*, March 1983, 29.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See, for example, W. Kim Heron, "So Far, Even Marsalis Isn't Good Enough for Marsalis," *Detroit Free Press*, March 11, 1983. In this brief feature that appeared contemporaneously with the *Ebony* profile, Marsalis criticizes avant-garde jazz musicians for what he assumes is their ignorance of music theory: "Where things went wrong, [Marsalis] said, 'was cats trying to imitate Ornette Coleman and taking the wrong element of Ornette Coleman…he was a genius on a level but a lot of stuff about music he didn't understand and he was too stubborn to learn…that took away from his program and all the people that followed him.'"

studious. She emphasizes the "premature distinction" of his bearing, the rigor of his musical training—outlining the time Marsalis spent at the New Orleans Center for Creative Art, Tanglewood, and Juilliard—and his work ethic. We learn that Marsalis was an unusually driven child who did little other than practice: "I used to practice all night. That's all I did—practice trumpet. I would wake up in the morning and start practicing. I'd go to school and think about practicing in the day time. I would play band in the evening and come home and pull records and books out and practice."[6] "Today, in the first stages of what promises to be a historically significant career," Garland notes, "Wynton insists that hard work is the only way to master music."[7] Garland's heroic presentation of Marsalis in her *Ebony* profile suggests that she is presenting him as an ideal role model for young African Americans.

The profile ends with a long quotation from CBS Records executive George Butler that further supports this suggestion. Butler expresses his hope that Marsalis will serve as an "intellectual" role model for a generation of young African Americans fixated on star athletes; "It's one thing to be superb athletically, but it really doesn't take very much in terms of intellectual background to do that. Young people respond to Wynton because of his youth, the way he speaks, the way he looks, his manners. He's a ray of hope and this is just the beginning."[8] Butler's labeling of Marsalis as a "ray of hope" hinges on Marsalis's adherence to the

[6] Garland, "Musical Genius Reaches Top at 21,' 32-34.
[7] Ibid., 34.
[8] Ibid.

standards of black respectability—his manner of speaking, his manner of dress, and his behavior. Butler presents Wynton's success in the intellectual and scholarly field of classical music as the counter to black success through athletic achievement. Wynton becomes ideal model of driven, studious black youth for black young people in desperate need of role models.

Although this profile of Wynton Marsalis is fascinating as a snapshot of a remarkable prodigy on the cusp of fame, I begin my analysis of Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch with it because it highlights themes that I argue remained important in the cultural politics of these three intellectuals from the 1970s through the early 21st century. As the aforementioned quotations have shown, Garland presents the young Marsalis as an emerging icon of respectable black youth. She tellingly frames Marsalis's success as the result of an admirable work ethic and sense of discipline rather than miraculous or "natural" ability. With its focus on studiousness, the article could almost have easily been written about a precocious black doctor or scientist. Indeed, the language in this article, with Garland presenting Marsalis as the "messenger" of an "endangered" jazz tradition and Butler calling him a "ray of hope" for young black people, suggests that Marsalis is a sort of standard bearer not just for jazz, but for African Americans in general.

The central thesis of my dissertation is closely related to the themes of racial uplift encapsulated in this article. I argue that, in their cultural politics, Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch—the ideological architects of jazz neoclassicism—were deeply indebted to the ideology of racial uplift first articulated in the early 20th

century by African American leaders like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch engaged in a long effort to present jazz as a morally uplifting black art music that was aligned with what Kevin Gaines calls "ostensibly universal but deeply racialized ideological categories of Western progress and civilization."[9] The continued educational and ideological dominance of the multimillion-dollar Jazz at Lincoln Center program, of course, means that we can safely label this aspect of their project a success.[10] In the 1970s, after sociological studies like the Moynihan Report had popularized ideas about the need for federal intervention in "pathological" inner-city black communities, Albert Murray published several books articulating a philosophy of self-help that, while inspired by jazz, drew heavily on the ideas of Booker T. Washington. Stanley Crouch, in his scathing critiques of 1990s popular culture, depicted jazz's rising generation of "Young Lions" as a redemptive cultural elite reminiscent of Du Bois's Talented Tenth. Marsalis, in his publications and interviews in the 1990s and early 2000s, used his experiences with his black jazz mentors to construct an image of black masculinity and fatherhood that, to quote Gaines again, "sought to rehabilitate the race's image by embodying respectability."[11] All three, in short, articulated a shared vision of jazz as emblematic of black respectability, black self-

[9] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Stanley Crouch's writing in the 1990s in particular represents a sustained effort to align jazz with elitist notions of "Western civilization."

[10] For a longer discussion of Jazz at Lincoln Center's work in aligning jazz with Eurocentric ideas of morally uplifting high culture, see Kimberly Hannon Teal, "Posthumously Live: Canon Formation at Jazz at Lincoln Center through the Case of Mary Lou Williams," *American Music* 32, mo. 4 (Winter 2014), 401-406.

[11] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xiv.

help, and black contributions to Western civilization. Moreover, these three saw the resurgence of straight-ahead jazz in the 1980s and 1990s as indicative of the coming cultural and moral uplift of black America after the confusion and degradation of the late 1960s and 1970s.

We might see my three subjects' advocacy of old-fashioned ideals of black uplift as a deliberate rejection of competing black ideologies and images that were gaining currency at various points in the late 20th century. Murray, for example, presents his philosophy of jazz-inspired black self-help in contrast to both the "welfare-ism"[12] of activists like Kenneth Clark and the "moral outcry rhetoric" of "empty-handed black hot-air militants."[13] Crouch and Marsalis, both writing in the 1990s as hip hop was becoming a dominant cultural force in America, presented jazz as an uplifting alternative to the "social decay" encapsulated by the popularity of the new music. Before situating this study within the broader context of the jazz studies literature, however, a few key terms need definitions. What, first of all, is "jazz neoclassicism"? Who were the "Young Lions"? What do I mean by "ideology"? And, finally, what is "racial uplift"?

Defining "Jazz Neoclassicism"

The earliest use of the word "neoclassicism" in reference to jazz comes in jazz critic Gary Giddins's 1985 essay collection *Rhythm-a-ning: Jazz Tradition and Innovation in the '80s,* where Giddins uses the word to describe the resurgence of

[12] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 26.
[13] Ibid., 31

straight-ahead jazz in the 1980s. In the introduction to the collection, called "Jazz Turns Neoclassical," Giddins writes that jazz artists in the mid-80s were returning to accessible, swinging jazz after years of alienating audiences with avant-garde experimentation. Avant-garde jazz, Giddins writes, "is considered esoteric when it isn't impenetrable, and erstwhile jazz fans, now repulsed by the gladiatorial anarchy that used to attract them, ask accusatory questions: where's the beat, the melody, the beauty?"[14] While jazz's more accessible qualities, Giddins continues, were never "entirely absent," "the resurgence of jazz means in large measure the resurgence of swing, melody, and beauty, as well as other vintage jazz qualities such as virtuosity, wit, and structure."[15]

In labeling the jazz of the 1980s "neoclassical," Giddins aptly repurposes a term used earlier to describe Western art music—in particular, the interwar compositions of composers like Stravinsky, Copland, and Prokofiev. After the dramatic departure from tonality that characterized the Schoenberg school in the World War I years, neoclassicism represented a return to a degree of tonality and formalism. Neoclassical composers of the period, like Stravinsky, also made occasional musical references to the formal structures of earlier stylistic periods, like the Baroque concerto or the Classical symphony. In Giddins's essay, the swinging jazz of the 1980s bears a similar relationship to the avant-garde jazz of the 1960s. After a widespread abandonment of the harmonic and formal structures

[14] Gary Giddins, *Rhythm-a-ning: Jazz Tradition and Innovation in the '80s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9.
[15] Ibid., 9-10.

that had characterized pre-1960s jazz, the 1980s brought both a resurgence of traditional tonality and a re-embrace of traditional forms like the 12-bar blues and the 32-bar popular song.

For Giddins, the prominence of stylistically conservative jazz artists in the 1980s represented the inevitable reversal that followed fifteen years of avant-garde experimentation. "From 1960 to 1975," he writes, "adventurous jazz often meant indulgences on the order of 20-minute solos, or freely improvised polyphony, or endlessly repeated ostinatos layered over a single scale":

> Though the great figures of that period—John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, and a few others—could bring off the most demanding improvisational conceits, at least as far as the knowing, sympathetic, and determined listener was concerned, they spawned imitators who mistook freedom for license and justified excess with apocalyptic rhetoric. A backlash was inevitable. Not only were many listeners yearning for restraint but a younger generation of jazz musicians, many of them trained in conservatories, expressed horror that formalism appeared to be vanishing. Jazz had always been a dialectic between improviser and composer: when the improviser gets out of hand, the composer emerges with new guidelines, sometimes borrowed from the distant past.[16]

Thus, for Giddins, the neoclassical turn in the mid-1970s was more than just audience backlash against inaccessible experimental music. It also represented a movement of a new generation of conservatory-trained musicians who were disturbed by the avant-garde's disinterest in the techniques of university jazz curricula. And indeed, while Giddins's idea about jazz as a dialectic between improviser and composer is an oversimplification of complex stylistic

[16] Ibid., 10.

developments, he puts his finger on the important role that university jazz education played in producing the new generation of jazz musicians.[17]

Giddins's reference to the period between "1960 and 1975" in the passage discussed above indicates that, in his interpretation, the neoclassical turn in jazz actually started in the second half of the 1970s, several years before Marsalis's rise to stardom in the early 1980s. Given the huge number of jazz icons from the '20s, '30's, '40s, and '50s still active on the New York scene in the mid-1970s, Giddins's interpretation makes perfect sense.[18] And yet, because he first applied the term "neoclassicism" to jazz in the early-to-mid 1980s, he was unable to account for the seismic impact that Wynton Marsalis's arrival on the jazz scene was to have after his jazz and classical Grammies were awarded in 1984, and after he became artistic director for Lincoln Center's "Classical Jazz" program in 1987.

With the benefit of historical distance, then, I reorient Giddins's chronology slightly so that it concentrates specifically on Marsalis, his mentors Crouch and Murray, and to a lesser extent the young black jazz musicians who followed in his wake. When I refer to "jazz neoclassicism" in this study, I am talking about the roughly twenty-year period between 1981, when Marsalis released his self-titled debut album, and the first years of the 21st century, when most of the young

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[17] For a longer discussion of this historical trend, see Chapter 2.

[18] For example, a casual glance at jazz critic Whitney Balliett's coverage of the 1975 Newport Jazz Festival (then being held in New York City) shows that an amazingly diverse stylistic and historical array of artists were performing during these years. Some of the performers mentioned include Eubie Blake, Benny Carter, Chet Baker, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and Randy Brecker. The range of musical experience encompassed by these names spans from the ragtime era (Blake) through swing (Carter) and bebop (Davis, Baker, and Monk) to the 1970s heyday of fusion (Brecker). See Whitney Balliett, *Collected Works: A Journal of Jazz, 1954-2001* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002), 444-452.

neoclassicists were dropped from their major label contracts.[19] I see this period starting in the early 1980s because, after he rose to fame in 1981, Marsalis used his prominent platform to mentor and advocate for the young straight-ahead jazz musicians who arrived on the scene in the next several years. As Ted Gioia notes in his *History of Jazz*, "no musician of his generation has done more than Marsalis to encourage and motivate up-and-coming jazz players."[20] Furthermore, the commercial success of Marsalis's Columbia recordings motivated other major labels to sign young black jazz musicians like Joshua Redman, Wallace Roney, and the Harper Brothers.[21] Thus, if New York City jazz was already turning neoclassical in the mid-1970s, the national and international effects of the stylistic shift didn't arrive until jazz neoclassicism became a media phenomenon in the early 1980s. In a very real sense, the Marsalis media phenomenon shaped the course of jazz neoclassicism in the 1980s and 1990s.

I posit that the era of neoclassicism "ended" in the first years of the 21st century not only because many of the young neoclassicists were dropped from their labels at the time. The more important point is that many of the young musicians who got their start as Marsalis acolytes began exploring a much more diverse range of musical influences on their recordings after the end of the 1990s. For example, trumpeter Nicholas Payton went from hard bop and traditional-jazz influenced recordings like 2000's *Nick@Night* and 2001's *Dear Louis* to jazz-funk

[19] For example, Joshua Redman's recording contract with Warner ended in 2002 after the release of his album *Elastic*; Nicholas Payton left Verve Records in 2001; Marsalis himself was dropped from Sony (formerly Columbia) after the 2002 release of his extended work *All Rise*.
[20] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 389.
[21] Ibid., 390.

fusion albums like 2003's *Sonic Trance*.[22] Joshua Redman's 2002 album *Elastic* and his 2005 album *Momentum* differ notably from his 2001 *Passage of Time* because of his movement on the later albums from an acoustic quartet to a funk-influenced ensemble.[23] Even if some of the '90s neoclassicists, like pianist Marcus Roberts,[24] remained staunchly traditionalist, the sense of stylistic conservatism that characterized 1980s and 1990s neoclassicism was replaced by a stylistic pluralism in the succeeding decades.[25]

My final reason for organizing my conception of jazz neoclassicism around Wynton Marsalis and his mentors—and the reason most important to this study—is the decisive ideological influence that Marsalis, Albert Murray, and Stanley Crouch had over the discourse of jazz neoclassicism and the jazz "tradition" during these years and afterwards. The roots of this ideological dominance are actually in the 1970s, at roughly the same point where Giddins marks the start of jazz's neoclassical turn. Beginning with Murray's publication of *The Omni-Americans* and *Stomping the Blues*, and continuing through the end of the twentieth century, Murray, Crouch, and Marsalis's set of aesthetic positions on jazz would grow to become one of the most influential in the music's history. Building on the jazz critic Martin Williams's conception of a jazz tradition and a canon of great jazz

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[22] Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings*, 9th edition (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 1136-1137.
[23] Ibid., 1199.
[24] Roberts released *Cole After Midnight*, his last recording for Sony/Columbia, in 2001.
[25] This is not to say that neoclassicist ideology ceased to be a major influence on future generations of jazz musicians. The traditionalism of the 1980s and 1990s migrated (or perhaps returned) to universities and conservatories both through Ken Burns' 2001 series *Jazz*, which came into heavy use in jazz history survey courses, and faculty appointments for neoclassicists like Marcus Roberts (at Florida State University) and Marsalis himself (at Juilliard).

works, Marsalis, Murray and Crouch would advocate the idea of a canon of black jazz masters and a jazz tradition that represented the ultimate expression of what Albert Murray called the "blues idiom." Because of Marsalis's artistic directorship of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the world's largest, wealthiest, and most influential jazz institution,[26] the Marsalis-Murray-Crouch conception of jazz neoclassicism is the one that has come to define what jazz as a high-culture art form means to the general public.[27] Not for nothing does Jazz at Lincoln Center Executive Director Rob Gibson, in his introduction to the 2000 edition of *Stomping the Blues,* write that JALC has "been able to embody the many ideas that define this treatise."[28] Thus, while the term jazz neoclassicism encompasses an ideologically diverse group of musicians who were recording straight-ahead jazz from roughly 1981 to 2002, it was Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch who wielded the most decisive influence over the boundaries of the jazz "tradition" during these years.

On the Term "Young Lions"

During the two-decade heyday of jazz neoclassicism, critics and other commentators often referred to the new cohort of young, mostly African American jazz musicians as the "Young Lions." The term grouped the young neoclassicists together on the basis of their general adherence to a shared set of stylistic tenets. "Effectively," notes Stuart Nicholson in his 2000 book *Jazz: The Modern Resurgence*

[26] Kimberly Hannon Teal, "Posthumously Live: Canon Formation at Jazz at Lincoln Center through the Case of Mary Lou Williams." *American Music* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 401.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Rob Gibson, introduction to *Stomping the Blues,* by Albert Murray (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000) vi.

"these young neo-classicists looked to role models who had defined bop and hard-bop from around 1948 to the mid-'60s."[29] Saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley was the first person to use the term in reference to jazz. In his liner notes for the 1960 LP *The Young Lions*, Adderley drew a comparison between the young musicians featured on the album and the protagonists of Irwin Shaw's 1948 novel *The Young Lions*. Like the protagonists of Shaw's novel, Adderley argued, the musicians on the album—including Wayne Shorter, Bobby Timmons, Frank Strozier, and Lee Morgan—had to chart a middle course between conformity and the avant-garde.[30]

Twenty years later, Nesuhi Ertegun and Bruce Lundvall reintroduced the term at the 1982 Kool Jazz Festival, when they featured a concert of jazz's new "young lions"—a group including Wynton Marsalis, Kevin Eubanks, Anthony Davis, and James Newton. While the terms as originally conceived referred to young musicians who had a sense of jazz's history as well as an individualistic spirit, it would become a buzzword by the end of the decade. "By the late 1980s," Travis Jackson notes, "the term 'young lions' lost its association with individuality and nonconformity and became an almost generic journalistic and marketing term for younger, and often black, musicians."[31] Some of the presumptive "young lions" themselves would eventually express discomfort with the label. When Charlie Rose asked Marcus Roberts about the definition of the term in a 1992 interview, Roberts

[29] Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz: The Modern Resurgence* (London: Simon & Shuster, 1990), 252.
[30] Travis Jackson, *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 195.
[31] Ibid.

shifted uncomfortably before eventually replying, "I've heard [of] it. I don't ascribe to too many terms because they really don't…unless they're linked with concrete, cogent information they tend not to mean much. It's more of a marketing term, I think. I think the good thing about it is that it has given a lot of the younger musicians an opportunity to come out here and swing."[32]

A look at newspaper coverage of neoclassicism from the 1980s and 1990s gives a sense of the excitement and criticism that the Young Lions phenomenon stirred up among music critics. In May 1990, for example, the *New York Times* published a long and enthusiastic feature on the new generation of jazz musicians written by jazz critic Tom Piazza. Piazza contrasts the stylistic conservatism of the young musicians with what he sees as the stylistic excesses of 1970s jazz-rock fusion: "Jazz has always been concerned with technical precision, melody, instrumental tone, blues feeling, and swing; the music younger musicians had been playing ignored these elements in favor of volume and simple dance rhythms."[33] Piazza roots the "jazz in name only" of the fusion era in the stylistic transformations that transformed jazz in the 1960s. Echoing similar critiques by Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch, Piazza argues that a misguided search for originality—one that "misread the meaning of the word"—led to the breakdown of a common jazz language that had existed since the 1930s. In place of the "common repertory and canon of techniques" that had previously allowed jazz musicians to

[32] Marcus Roberts, Wynton Marsalis, and Stanley Crouch, interview by Charlie Rose, *Charlie Rose*, 1992. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpo56tzHsNg
[33] Tom Piazza, "Young, Gifted and Cool," *New York Times*, May 20, 1990.

collaborate easily, the 1960s brought a profusion of mutually unintelligible styles based on avant-garde experimentation and rock borrowings:

> Different players' styles became as strange to one another as incompatible software. And, with the advent of electronics, the sounds of instruments were distorted, and the element that musicians call touch, or attack (the equivalent, in speech, would be the way the lips and tongue shape words), was circumvented.[34]

Piazza's distaste for the sound of fusion-era jazz is clear in his description of the "pinched, shrill sound" of jazz-fusion saxophonists; he likens younger players' abandonment of this sound in favor of emulating older saxophonists to "stripping away layers of paint to get down to the rich wood underneath." "PURE SOUND IS IN, AMPLIFIERS OUT," the article's subtitle proclaims, in case Piazza's distaste for fusion is not clear from the main body of the text.

Young players like trumpeters Roy Hargrove and Marlon Jordan and saxophonist Antonio Hart earn the author's praise for their reverent emulation of musicians like Ben Webster, Clifford Brown, and Charlie Parker. Piazza links the "sense of excitement" generated by musicians like Hargrove, Jordan, and Hart to their rediscovery of "the jazz tradition," the canon of artists articulated by Martin Williams at the Smithsonian Institution and popularized by Wynton Marsalis. Their new engagement with the jazz canon, Piazza writes, also led them to investigate the blues and popular songs that were the bedrock of jazz repertoire from the 1910s through the 1950s. For Piazza, this rediscovery of the old repertoire

[34] Ibid.

has once again given jazz musicians a shared territory on which they can "have a dialogue."

Nat Hentoff would echo Piazza's excitement in a 1991 article for the *Wall Street Journal*: "During the past couple of years, however, there has been an astonishing change in direction among the newest wave of young improvisers. Players in their early 20s, some in their teens, are sounding as if they have roots that went way back in jazz."[35] For Hentoff, the new wave of teenaged beboppers signaled a refreshing generational turn away from what he saw as the artistic failures of free jazz and fusion. Indeed, without the intervention of youthful traditionalists like Wycliffe Gordon and Roy Hargrove, Hentoff implies, jazz would have died at the hands of free jazz "hustlers" and purveyors of "'fusion,' a lumpy mixture of jazz and rock."[36]

Other writers were more measured in their praise, viewing the young neoclassicists' youth as a liability or marketing gimmick. *Los Angeles Times* writer Richard Guilliatt, for example, voiced concerns that the Young Lions' youth and intensive training might distance them from the bohemian creativity of earlier jazz. In his 1992 article "The Young Lions' Roar: Wynton Marsalis and the 'Neoclassical' Lincoln Center Orchestra are Helping Fuel the Noisiest Debate since Miles went Electric," Guilliatt wonders whether the "resolutely sober and schooled approach" of "academy-trained prodigies" like Roy Hargrove, Michael Whitfield, and Marcus Roberts might be fundamentally at odds with the iconoclasm of jazz

[35] Nat Hentoff, "Young Saviors of Old Jazz," *Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 1991.
[36] Ibid.

icons like Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk.[37] Mark Miller, writing a review of a Hargrove performance for the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, wrote that "youth is abundant in jazz these days, and hype with it."[38] For neoclassicism's detractors, then, the youth and inexperience of teenaged and twenty-something jazz musicians went hand-in-hand with sensationalist advertising and a formulaic reliance on virtuosic bebop playing.

Despite the controversial nature of the term "Young Lions," I use it in this study to refer to the black musicians in their teens and twenties who arrived on the American jazz scene in the 1980s and 1990s. The label helpfully indicates the stylistic qualities of their music during these years, while also marking them off as "young" and therefore different from the jazz veterans who had started their careers in the middle decades of the 20th century and began to receive renewed attention in the mid-seventies.

Black Ideologies

In connecting Murray, Crouch, and Marsalis's ideology of jazz neoclassicism to the ideology of racial uplift, I draw heavily on the work of political theorist Michael Dawson. My framework of "ideology" comes from Dawson's 2001 study *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies.* Dawson defines "ideology," broadly speaking, as "a world view readily found in the

[37] Richard Guilliatt, "The Young Lions' Roar: Wynton Marsalis and the 'Neoclassical' Lincoln Center Orchestra are Helping Fuel the Noisiest Debate since Miles went Electric," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 1992.
[38] Mark Miller, "Something Out of the Ordinary: Youth is abundant in jazz these days, which is why the 22- year-old trumpeter Roy Hargrove is no surprise in himself. He is, however, very good," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, ON), January 17, 1992.

population, including sets of ideas and values that cohere, that are used publicly to justify political stances, and that shape and are shaped by society."[39] Ideology, in Dawson's study, helps to determine personal and political alliances and "contains a causal narrative of society and the state." Dawson argues that ideology "serves as a filter of what one 'sees' and responds to in the social world."[40] In *Black Visions,* Dawson seeks to define an array of core black political ideologies, including black feminism, black Marxism, black liberalism, black conservatism, and black nationalism, and to outline their central sets of beliefs.

Black political ideologies, Dawson explains, work to define the meanings of core concepts within political programs, even as they differ from competing ideologies in their proposed definitions. Dawson writes that "ideological activists often use ideologies as mechanisms that can 'fix' the meanings of key concepts such as *nation*, *self-determination*, and *freedom* across time and context." Despite activists' efforts to fix the meanings of key concepts, however, Dawson is careful to note that black political ideologies aren't actually immune to historical change. Indeed, the meanings of central concepts within a given political ideology are historically, and culturally specific and in constant flux. Dawson provides the example of black nationalism, which in the nineteenth century was closely aligned with Eurocentric notions of "civilization," while by the second half of the twentieth century the same political ideology was heavily influenced by the writings of

[39] Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4.
[40] Ibid., 5.

African anti-colonial activists. Despite these shifting historical meanings, Dawson argues that we can still speak of black political ideologies as coherent systems of thought because they contain core beliefs that remain constant over time. Nineteenth and twentieth century black nationalists, for example, are united by "the belief that race represents both the fundamental reality and the fundamental analytical category for understanding the plight of blacks in the Americas—that race remains the fundamental axis around which blacks need to be mobilized for liberation."[41]

This idea—that black political ideologies contain core beliefs that allow them to remain coherent across long expanses of time—is fundamental to my argument about the influence of racial uplift ideology on the ideological architects of jazz neoclassicism. Large sections of my argument are devoted to comparisons of the ideas of nineteenth and early twentieth century black leaders like Du Bois, Washington, and Alexander Crummell with late twentieth century ideologues like Crouch and Murray. These comparisons only make sense because core tenets of a given ideology remain consistent over time. Thus, while W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903 and Stanley Crouch in 1993 are separated by ninety years of drastic historical change, they are connected by their shared belief that black Americans should be led forward by an educated and cultured black elite. Similarly, Booker T. Washington and Albert Murray are connected by common beliefs about the importance of self-help and the ineffectiveness of outspoken political protest, and

[41] Ibid., 7.

the Prince Hall Freemasons and Wynton Marsalis are connected by shared commitments to Victorian notions of masculinity and fraternal bonds.

Following Dyson, it is clear that the significance of concepts like *elite*, *self-help,* and *masculinity* changes over time. I am careful in all of my analyses to place Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch's beliefs in the proper historical context. Crouch, for example, expressed support for an early DuBoisian model of elite leadership at the height of the moral panic over gangsta rap in the early 1990s. Marsalis presented black jazzmen as role models of responsible masculinity during a period of renewed anxiety about black fatherhood and black men in general. Murray advocated for a Booker T. Washington-style mentality of self-help and jazz-inspired resourcefulness in response to 1960s activists like Kenneth Clark, who were calling for federal intervention to aid impoverished black urban communities. All of this is to say that the historical context in which Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch articulated their ideas is central to this study. At the same time, by tracing the influence that older black ideologies had on each of these men, I place them within a much longer history and a much broader context of black American thought.

Racial Uplift

This study is far from the first to observe that nineteenth century ideologies of black uplift and self-reliance remained central to the positions of black commentators and leaders well into the twentieth century. Writing in 2001, Dawson stated that "most black liberals ground their claims in racial pride and

uplift," explaining that neo-uplift as espoused by Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, and Glenn Loury was "one of the most criticized aspects of black liberal philosophy."[42] Adolph Reed traces the roots of late twentieth-century "brokerage politics"—in which a privileged minority purports to speak for and interpret the needs of the black masses for the white population—to the "hegemonic" position of racial uplift ideology within twentieth-century black politics.[43] Dawson and Reed's observations lead naturally to another question of definition: what do they mean by "uplift"? What, in terms of Dawson's framing of ideology, are the core beliefs that connect proponents of racial uplift across the decades?

My conception of racial uplift draws on Kevin Gaines's classic 1996 study *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Gaines argues that racial uplift ideology emerged in the 1890s as educated African Americans' response to the imposition of legal segregation. Faced with exclusion from all areas of American life, African Americans adopted an ideology of self-help and respectability as a means of proving their fitness for inclusion in American society. In Gaines's words, the end goal of racial uplift was to "incorporat[e] 'the race' into ostensibly universal but deeply racialized ideological categories of Western progress and civilization."[44]

Furthermore, the emergence of class distinctions in the post-Emancipation black community was an integral part of the black elite strategy for discrediting

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[42] Ibid., 254.
[43] Adolph Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28.
[44] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv.

racial prejudice. Gaines notes that "black elites claimed class distinctions, indeed, the very existence of a 'better class' of blacks, as evidence of what they called race progress."[45] Members of the small population of educated or upwardly mobile African Americans during this period did their best to embody Victorian notions of respectability, out of a belief that "the improvement of African Americans' material and moral condition through self-help would diminish white racism."[46] In drawing firm boundary lines between themselves and the black masses, members of the black "better classes" cast themselves as "bourgeois agents of civilization"[47] who would serve as role models[48] for the rest of the black population as they struggled to make progress. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, who coined the phrase "the politics of respectability" to describe this strategy, makes a similar point in her classic 1993 study *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. "While adherence to respectability enabled black women to counter racist images and structures," she notes, "their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans":

> …the black Baptist women condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people. Their assimilationist leanings led to their insistence upon blacks' conformity to the dominant society's norms of manners and morals. Thus the discourse of respectability disclosed class and status differentiation.[49]

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 2.
[48] See, for example, Willard Gatewood's discussion of the "genteel performance" in *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 189-190; see also Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 8.
[49] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

The effort to prove themselves "civilized" required members of the black elite to adhere closely to the gender conventions of America's white majority society. "For educated blacks," Gaines explains, "the family, and patriarchal gender relations became crucial signifiers of respectability."[50] This meant that conformity to patriarchal norms occupied a central place within the broader ideology of uplift, and that patriarchal authority within the family unit was a key marker of "civilization." However, African Americans' uniquely vulnerable position in American society made this project of conforming to patriarchal norms into a deep and painful source of anxiety. First, black women attempting to conform to ideals of respectable Victorian femininity were "haunted" by sexual stereotypes of black women's promiscuity and the widespread Southern indifference to the rape of black women by white men.[51] Second, black men were haunted by both their inability to assume the traditional masculine role of protectors of their families and the inaccessibility of other markers of masculinity—property ownership and earning a living through skilled labor.[52]

Despite the classism inherent in the ideology, Gaines notes that racial uplift was not all bad. Indeed, uplift "represented the struggle for a positive black identity in a deeply racist society, turning the pejorative designation of race into a source of dignity and self-affirmation through an ideology of class differentiation,

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[50] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 5.
[51] Ibid., 12.
[52] Ibid., 5. See also Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 30.

self-help, and interdependence."[53] The real problem with uplift ideology was (and is) that members of the black "better class" relied on racist notions of black inferiority to distinguish themselves from the black masses. On some level, the class and culture distinctions claimed by proponents of uplift entailed an acceptance of anti-black stereotypes. "Even as elite blacks championed the respectability of uplift against embarrassing minstrel portrayals of ne'er-do-well blacks," Gaines notes, "they did not necessarily contradict the minstrel stereotypes confining them to field labor in the rural south." "Indeed," he continues, "black opinion makers occasionally embraced minstrel representations stressing culturally backward, or morally suspect blacks as evidence of their own class superiority."[54]

Although more radical black leaders would continue to challenge the hegemony of racial uplift ideology as the twentieth century continued,[55] Gaines notes that "uplift ideology and its claims of class differentiation…became post-civil rights orthodoxy."[56] The various sections of this dissertation reveal the ways in which the core concepts of uplift ideology—self-help, patriarchal norms, and class differentiation—were deeply relevant to Marsalis, Murray, and Crouch's project of constructing jazz as a morally uplifting African-American music. Marsalis and Crouch in particular, writing during the 1990s heyday of gangsta rap, relied on stereotypes of urban black criminality and degradation to distinguish themselves

[53] Ibid., 3.
[54] Ibid., 74.
[55] See, for example, Gaines's discussion of Hubert H. Harrison, Carter G. Woodson, and E. Franklin Frazier in Chapter 9 of *Uplifting the Race*.
[56] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 259.

and their music as a respectable art form. Indeed, in the *Ebony* feature with which I began this introduction, George Butler's rhetorical distinction between the "intellectual" Marsalis and his "naturally gifted" peers in sports relies on damaging stereotypes of "natural" black athleticism to distinguish Marsalis as a "ray of hope" and a role model for black youth. It can safely be said that, despite the origins of uplift ideology in the late nineteenth century, its central concepts remained attractive through the late twentieth century era of jazz neoclassicism.

Jazz as African-American High Culture in the 1960s and 1970s

As mentioned above, Murray, Marsalis, and Crouch relied on a conception of jazz as an African-American "high culture" in their process of constructing the music as a morally uplifting cultural product. This is in keeping with a longstanding strategy of uplift rhetoric that employed Western classical music as an important marker of status and taste for African Americans seeking to distinguish themselves from the black masses. In his book *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943*, Lawrence Schenbeck notes that, for members of the 19th century black middle class and elite, classical music performance was both an important signifier of individual social status and also a sign of the "evolution and uplifting of African Americans as a people.[57] Performing or listening to classical music, Schenbeck continues, "marked out the practitioner, whether performer or listener, as a member of an elite group, and by example it instructed the less

[57] Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 7

fortunate in proper values and conduct."[58] Ray Allen and George Cunningham agree, writing in their 2005 article "Cultural Uplift and Double-Consciousness: African-American Responses to the 1935 Opera *Porgy and Bess*" that "the turn-of-the-century emergence of conservatory-trained black instrumentalists, singers, and composers embodied the ideal of racial uplift."[59]

Black musicians' fluency in the venerable music of the European classical tradition allowed them to literally perform both their status as members of the black elite and as symbols of just how far African Americans had come since Emancipation. Indeed, as Schenbeck notes, contemporary black leaders including W.E.B. Du Bois were pointing to the class distinctions furnished by classical music performance and other genteel behaviors as evidence of black "progress."[60] For these reasons it is unsurprising that musical training was seen as important for the children of well-off black families in the early 20th century. Willard Gatewood describes the central place that music held in many middle and upper class black households of the period: "Few [black upper class] homes were without a piano, violin, or other musical instruments, and it was not uncommon for upper-class children to receive private instruction in music and ballroom dancing. On occasion children especially talented in music would perform at evening musicales

[58] Ibid., 8.
[59] Ray Allen and George P. Cunningham, "Cultural Uplift and Double-Consciousness: African-American Responses to the 1935 Opera *Porgy and Bess*." *The Musical Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), 346.
[60] Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music*, 7.

held in their parents' home."[61] Beginning shortly after the end of the Civil War, then, musical training for black youth was enmeshed in concerns about class distinctions within the black community and in the larger project of racial vindication.

But how did jazz come to approach classical music in its cultural "respectability"? In the first decades of the twentieth century, after all, many aspirational black families saw jazz as a rowdy and disreputable music that was anathema to the project of racial uplift. Scott DeVeaux notes that, although jazz's popularity offered black musicians rare opportunities for high wages and social mobility, their families "often expressed deep reservations about their children's chosen path, whether out of religious conviction or fear of the general unsavoriness of a show-business career."[62] David Levering Lewis agrees, writing that while "Ernest Ansermet might marvel over [Sidney] Bechet's clarinet in London" and "Maurice Ravel sit for hours at the Apex Club listening to Jimmy Noone's band," "upper-crust Afro-Americans [of the 1920s] still mostly recoiled in disgust from music as vulgarly explosive as the outlaw speakeasies and cathouses that spawned it."[63]

Even the cosmopolitan Alain Locke—a central proponent of black cultural uplift during the Harlem Renaissance era—acknowledged jazz's supposedly questionable morals as he offered praise for its artistic and social significance.

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[61] Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 248.
[62] Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 52.
[63] David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 173.

Jazz, Locke wrote in his 1936 *The Negro and His Music*, "became one great interracial collaboration in which the important matter is the artistic quality of the product and neither the quantity of the distribution nor the color of the artist." Furthermore, he continued, "the pioneer jazz artists, black and white, between 1922 and 1928 were true artists, more often than not, with the artist's usual fate of a few discerning admirers, an early death and belated fame."[64]

But if 1920s jazz represented a key artistic achievement and an important challenge to racial barriers, its later iterations embodied the "hectic, artificial, and sometimes morally vicious" spirit of America's Jazz Age. Locke blamed rampant commercialism for jazz's descent from "healthy and earthy expression" into a "decadently neurotic" state. Black musicians, he wrote, had "succumbed to the vogue of the artificial and decadent variety of song, music, dance with their folk-stuff started, and spawned a plague, profitable but profligate, that has done more moral harm than artistic good."[65] While the scholarly Locke differed from black bourgeois laypeople in his opinion of jazz, he was forced to concede that "even those who violently condemn jazz and its influence are partly right."[66] It is important to note that even this qualified acceptance was a major departure from Locke's opinion in the mid-1920s, when, according to his biographer Jeffrey

[64] Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington, DC: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), 82-83.
[65] Ibid., 87.
[66] Ibid., 88.

Stewart, he saw jazz as a "loud and wild music culture that lacked…the kind of rigor and reflection crucial to art of value."[67]

The development of jazz's reputation from one of moral disrepute to one of high-culture respectability was fueled by multiple interwoven factors, beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 1960s and 1970s. One important aspect of this process was jazz's increasing attractiveness as an occupation for musically skilled members of the black middle class. As multiple commentators, including DeVeaux, Lewis, Hsio Wen Shih, and Thomas Hennessey have explained, jazz performance was one of the very few avenues for social and economic advancement available for African Americans in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. New York jazz musicians in the 1920s were often among "the best-educated youth of the black community": "Having bumped into the bruising limitations of job discrimination, many turned for advancement, self-expression, and recognition to entertainment, the one profession in which whites did not find blacks too threatening."[68] Furthermore, the increasing commercialization and professionalization of jazz in 1920s New York required musicians to conform to models of respectable professionalism in their musical development and their personal conduct. Not only were dance band musicians expected to sight read

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[67] Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 463. For a longer discussion of Alain Locke's music criticism, see Chapter 3 of Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2001).

[68] Thomas J. Hennessey, *From Jazz to Swing: African-American Jazz Musicians and Their Music, 1890-1935* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 86. See also Hsio Wen Shih, "The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands," in Nat Hentoff and Al McCarthy, eds. *Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World's Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars* (New York: Rinehart, 1959), 173-174; Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, 48; DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 50-54.

well and play their instruments in tune, they also needed to be punctual, impeccably groomed, and sober if they wanted to hold their jobs in the increasingly competitive marketplace.[69]

Another key factor in jazz's elevation to high-culture status were extended concert jazz compositions by musicians including Duke Ellington and James P. Johnson. Johnson and Ellington's efforts were both continuations of and departures from earlier programs of black cultural uplift. Since the late 19th century, black classical composers like William Grant Still, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and R. Nathaniel Dett had sought to uplift black culture by blending African American folk music with European formal structures.[70] Ellington and Johnson were among the first to challenge the notion of black musical uplift through conformity to European formal structures. Like their peers and predecessors in classical composition, they sought to elevate black music by way of concert performance. However, they sought to bring black popular music into the concert hall on something more like its own terms. As John Howland notes:

> While the symphonic jazz efforts of the Harlem entertainment circle certainly reflect a shared belief in concert music as a marker of racial and cultural progress, and while the intent behind such efforts was to uplift a supposedly lower-class African American musical tradition to this higher cultural stage, these efforts to transform the music notably did not involve self-conscious displays of the mastery of classical form and technique, but

[69] Hennessey, *From Jazz to Swing*, 101.
[70] John Howland, "'The Blues Get Glorified': Harlem Entertainment, Negro Nuances, and Black Symphonic Jazz." *The Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2007), 320. See also, Allen and Cunningham, "Cultural Uplift and Double-Consciousness: African-American Responses to the 1935 Opera *Porgy and Bess*," 346.

> rather a purposeful expansion on both the compositional practices, stylistic idioms, and programmatic topics of Harlem entertainment.[71]

Extended works like Ellington's 1935 "Rhapsody of Negro Life," James P. Johnson's 1942 *Drums: Symphonic Poem*, and Ellington's historic 1943 *Black, Brown, and Beige*—which premiered at Carnegie Hall—blurred the boundary between jazz and the rarefied world of concert music. Their appearance foreshadowed jazz's elevation to "America's classical music" in succeeding decades.

Christopher Coady, in his book *John Lewis and the Challenge of 'Real' Black Music* offers an insightful explanation of the way that jazz continued to rise in esteem among the black middle class in the decades immediately following World War II. Coady argues that the status-conscious black middle and upper classes became more receptive to jazz as a result of two important societal changes that followed World War II. The first of these changes was the development of bebop, an overtly intellectual and modernist movement that was both very compatible with the vindicationist aspirations of New Negro ideologues and a powerful example of black cultural achievement.[72] The second contributing factor was jazz musicians' outspoken support for and participation in the Civil Rights Movement. As Coady illustrates, the black press of the 1950s was particularly impressed by jazz musicians like Benny Goodman and Lionel Hampton and viewed their integrated

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[71] Howland, "The Blues Get Glorified," 325-326. For an extended discussion of Ellington and Johnson's concert works, see John Howland, *"Ellington Uptown": Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson & the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.

[72] Christopher Coady, *John Lewis and the Challenge of "Real" Black Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 104-105.

ensembles and performances for integrated audiences as powerful symbolic rebukes to segregation.[73]

As Coady goes on to explain, the "warming" of the black middle and upper classes to jazz didn't represent a significant abandonment of the ideals of respectability politics. Instead, it represented a change in what jazz itself represented: "Evolution in musical style and jazz's demonstrated success in facilitating integration erased (or at least minimized) notions of jazz's backwardness or 'primitive' nature in these [black press] outlets, allowing the musical genre to be newly interpreted as a valuable and sophisticated cultural product."[74] In other words, affluent African Americans were just as concerned with appearing respectable, but jazz itself was well on the way to becoming respectable.

John Gennari provides more context, arguing that the "spike" in jazz's cultural capital that enabled jazz's neoclassicist era reflected academia's post-1960s shift towards multiculturalism:

> The jazz renaissance of the 1980s and 1990s was part of a larger reckoning with American history and culture in the wake of the social, political, and intellectual convulsions of the 1960s. In the academy, the traditional Anglo-European canon has been challenged, critiqued, and revised by a generation of scholars—many of them people of color—inspired by the civil rights and ethnic consciousness movements of the 1960s and 1970s…Jazz is a crucial and powerful player in this chastened and transformed American narrative, and it is no coincidence that the music's symbolic capital has spiked with the ascendancy of multiculturalism as both an ideology and an agenda.[75]

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[73] Ibid., 104-105.
[74] Ibid., 106.
[75] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 370.

One of the key figures in this shift was jazz critic Martin Williams—an important influence on Stanley Crouch—who presented jazz as an organically developing autonomous art form in his seminal 1970 book *The Jazz Tradition.* Williams crafted a narrative of jazz history as an orderly progression guided by the epochal innovations of a handful of geniuses. Through his work at the Smithsonian Institution—especially the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*--Williams's conception of the jazz tradition became the foundation of numerous college jazz studies courses.

By the mid-1970s, jazz's status as a prestigious African-American "highbrow" music was secure enough for one commentator in *Jet* to declare: "Jazz, as Art Blakey of the Jazz Messengers defines it, may be a distinctly American music not belonging to any racial group, but the form has been so shaped by Black innovators that it would not be totally wrong to call jazz, as many do, the classical music of the Black race." If contemporary black popular music like soul was "music for the body," the author continues, "jazz—Black jazz—is for the mind. It is a music to be intellectualized and internalized."[76]

Murray, Crouch, and Marsalis, then, were formulating their positions on jazz and cultural uplift at a time when jazz was well established as an art music in American cultural institutions and within a broad swath of the black middle class. As I discuss in detail in this dissertation (particularly in Chapter 2), jazz's status as

[76] "Top Ten in Jazz Define, Shape Black Music," *Jet,* 24 Nov. 1977

a form of high culture was the major prerequisite for its framing as a means of cultural uplift within the rhetoric of jazz neoclassicism.

Jazz Neoclassicism and 1980s Neoliberalism: A Brief Literature Review

Although the scholarly literature on jazz neoclassicism is relatively thin as of this writing, one of the most important ways of analyzing and critiquing the Young Lions era is to discuss 1980s jazz in the context of the Reagan administration and the global rise of neoliberalism. In his 1995 book *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence,* Stuart Nicholson argues that his prominence during the era, like that of the young musicians who followed in his wake, reflected the conservative ethos of the Reagan era:

> [Marsalis's success] created a bandwagon effect that lasted throughout the decade as young musicians, fluent in the hard-bop idiom, became actively promoted by major record labels. Adopting Marsalis's visual signature of sartorial elegance, they connected with a young audience equally impelled towards the conservative conformity of the 1980s.[77]

Unlike later commentators, who draw connections between the aggressive marketing and corporate sponsorship of neoclassicist jazz and the proliferation of neoliberal economics during the 1980s and 1990s, Nicholson sees the connections between the Young Lions and the Reagan era as primarily a stylistic one. The young musicians' tailored suits, like their purist approach to jazz, reflected the conservative retrenchment of a decade dominated by Reagan and Thatcher.

[77] Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), vi.

Nicholson explores the economic underpinnings of jazz's 1980s resurgence in his discussion of the media hype that surrounded the Young Lions' emergence, noting that the rush to find new jazz talent led many musicians to become prominent before they reached artistic maturity:

> While on the one hand these photogenic young stars focused welcome media attention on jazz and raised its public profile, on the other, their highly touted recording debuts often turned out to be invitations to jump about their learning curve as they searched for an individual style among their assimilated influences. The demands of the marketplace meant some young musicians had record contracts thrust upon them in advance of artistic maturity.[78]

Although Nicholson's discussion of jazz neoclassicism mostly avoids making more explicit connections between the changes in jazz and specific economic developments—beyond noting jazz's general conservatism and aggressive marketing during the era—later scholars like George Lewis and Dale Chapman would spend significantly more time connecting neoclassicism to broader developments in corporatization and neoliberalism.

In his landmark 2008 book *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, musicologist George Lewis presents jazz neoclassicism as a corporate-backed effort aimed at delegitimizing the grassroots musical activism of experimental collectives like the AACM. The section of his lengthy study of African American experimental improvisation that covers the 1980s devotes significant space to "the promulgation of powerful, corporate-backed canon formation initiatives in the jazz world," which he notes led to

[78] Ibid., vi-vii.

widespread critical dismissal of contemporary efforts by AACM musicians.[79] Lewis makes the connection between Wynton Marsalis's neoclassicism and the rise of neoliberalism explicit when he compares Jazz at Lincoln Center's effect on New York's jazz scene to that of a big box retailer on a small town economy: "Certainly, in the severely undercapitalized field of jazz, the advent of JALC, with the massive resources to which [Farah Jasmine] Griffin refers, had much the same effect as the introduction of a Wal-Mart Supercenter into a community of mom-and-pop businesses."[80] Lewis also notes that "A number of AACM musicians…detected the hand of corporate megamedia stirring the new traditionalism's soup kettle,"[81] linking the neoclassicists' conservatism to the proliferation of corporatized mass media during the Reagan era.

The scholarly writer on jazz neoclassicism who goes the farthest in connecting 1980s jazz to the political and economic changes of the Reagan era is Dale Chapman. Chapman's 2003 dissertation *Specters of Jazz: Style, Ideology, and Jazz as Postmodern Practice* points to both Wynton Marsalis's musical style and the use of neoclassical jazz in advertisements as evidence of the influence of free market ideology on 1980s jazz. "Like the rhetoric of the Reagan Eighties," Chapman notes,

> Marsalis's performance [of "Cherokee" on *Standard Time, Vol. 1*] looks back to the stolid integrity of an age before the turbulence of the 1960s, even as it brings itself to presentation through a liberated brio that borrows heavily

[79] George Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself,* 442.
[80] Ibid., 444.
[81] Ibid., 445.

> from that decade's sensibility. The carefully bounded metric freedoms embraced by Marsalis and his sidemen on this recording speak volumes about an age that was wedded both to the pious affirmation of responsibility and to the glorious disavowal of limitations.[82]

For Chapman, the combination of technical precision and calculated risk-taking (inspired by the famously unpredictable performances of Miles Davis's Second Quintet) represent a musical manifestation of the Reaganite embrace of individual initiative and unregulated markets that flourished during the 1980s. By demonstrating that jazz musicians must have the technical skills (and requisite discipline) to navigate unpredictable terrain (here free market economic terrain is replaced with unexpected metric shifts), the Marsalis quartet model the ideals of liberal individualism that were experiencing a resurgence in contemporary political rhetoric.

Chapman goes on to connect the prominence of neoclassicist jazz musicians in ad campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s to contemporary shifts in advertising strategy from marketing products to marketing lifestyles at upwardly mobile consumers:

> Here, celebrity is important, but what is perhaps more crucial here is the way in which the newly respectable bourgeois profile of the neoclassicist jazz musician now intersected with the profile of the upwardly mobile consumer. If the young jazz musicians of the 1980s had fought for the reestablishment of jazz's aura of anti-commercial integrity, they had also set

[82] Dale Chapman, *Specters of Jazz: Style, Ideology, and Jazz as Postmodern Practice* (dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2003), 118, https://search-proquest-com.proxy01.its.virginia.edu/docview/305351683/E28DECFFD064D42PQ/1?accountid=14678 See also Chapman's newly-released book *The Jazz Bubble: Neoclassical Jazz in Neoliberal Culture* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

> the terms through which representations of jazz could be used as markers of a specific and easily commodifiable lifestyle.[83]

Jazz's new institutionalized status as a "respectable" music performed by fashionable and upwardly mobile musicians, together with Wynton Marsalis's insistence on jazz's separation from vulgar trends in popular music, briefly made jazz—and jazz musicians—into symbols of a coveted high-class lifestyle being marketed to the upwardly mobile yuppies of the Reagan era.

The analyses of these three authors—Lewis and Chapman in particular—do the important work of contextualizing jazz neoclassicism within the broader expansion of global corporations what was occurring during the Reagan era. What they mostly fail to discuss, however, is ways in which the ideology of jazz neoclassicism was intimately connected to African American culture. It is not enough, I argue, to reference the "respectable bourgeois profile of the neoclassicist jazz musician" without discussing the significance of that profile within broader discourses of black respectability and bourgeois status. Because so many of the young neoclassicists were black—and it was specifically "respectable [black] bourgeois" images that were being commodified—any attempt to contextualize jazz neoclassicism within African American culture leads back to the ideology of racial uplift. This is the gap in the literature that my study attempts to fill.

My arguments in this dissertation build on the earlier, chapter-length studies of Wynton Marsalis, Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and jazz neoclassicism in Eric Porter's 2002 book *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American*

[83] Ibid., 120.

Musicians as Artists, Critics and Activists and John Gennari's 2006 book *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*. Both of these books do an excellent job of positioning jazz neoclassicist rhetoric within broader African American historical and intellectual developments. In discussing Marsalis's efforts to construct a jazz canon, Porter argues that "Marsalis, like generations of musicians before him, has plotted jazz along the axes of African American cultural achievement, American exceptionalism, and universal expression." Elsewhere, Porter touches on themes of racial uplift, noting that Marsalis "has come to symbolize a healthy black masculinity" for some commentators and that Marsalis argues that "the 'great men' of jazz provide the means of uplifting the black community and 'saving America.'"[84] Gennari provides a helpful overview of the ideas of each of my three subjects, placing Murray's "blues idiom" into the context of 1960s and 1970s black cultural nationalism[85] while also briefly taking note of Stanley Crouch's elitism—he actually refers to his "early-DuBoisian bourgeois vision."[86] Both of these books, with their allusions to the themes of racial uplift implicit in jazz neoclassicist ideology, open the way for an in-depth analysis of this subject.

None of this is to say that this study is intended to rebut Lewis and Chapman's fierce—and necessary—critiques of neoliberalism and the corporatization of jazz. I mean only to suggest that the neoclassical period in jazz was a complicated one, with as many clear connections to African American

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[84] Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 328-329.
[85] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool,* 347-353.
[86] Ibid., 356.

intellectual history as to the growth of neoliberal capitalism. This study is one of a few first steps toward a deeper understanding of a highly influential yet understudied period of jazz history.

Chapter Outline

Each of the three chapters in this study focuses on the cultural politics of one of the intellectual architects of jazz neoclassicism, exploring the ways in which their positions on jazz and African American issues reflect the ideologies of leaders and organizations associated with late 19th and early 20th-century racial uplift. While Murray, Crouch, and Marsalis share a commitment to the idea of jazz as a morally uplifting form of African-American high culture—a fact that no doubt represents the important influence Murray had on the two younger men—they differ in the ways that they use jazz to re-articulate themes of black uplift. Accordingly, each chapter, generally speaking, pairs one of these three with a historical exponent of racial uplift ideology. My first chapter explores ideological parallels between Murray and Booker T. Washington, my second compares Stanley Crouch and W.E.B. Du Bois, and my third does the same for Wynton Marsalis and the Prince Hall Freemasons.

It was relatively straightforward to choose which parallels to draw in each chapter. Both Murray and Crouch commented extensively on Washington and Du Bois, respectively, in their books and in interviews, with Crouch even writing part of a book-length commentary on Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. While Marsalis has never discussed the work of black Freemasons, the community of jazz veterans

in which he matured has extensive connections with Prince Hall Freemasonry. His 1990s project of using the close-knit community of black jazzmen to represent a positive black masculinity bears striking resemblances to earlier uplift work done by the Prince Hall Masons. Thus, drawing parallels between the two illuminates important themes and strategies in Marsalis's rhetoric of black masculinity and jazz.

In my first chapter, "The Hero and the Blues Idiom," I argue that Albert Murray's "blues idiom"—the cultural frame he articulates in his 1970s books including *The Omni-Americans* (1970), *The Hero and the Blues* (1973), and *Stomping the Blues* (1976)—reflects the influence of Booker T. Washington's ideology of self-help. I explain how Murray positioned his Washington-influenced ideas against those of sociologists like Kenneth Clark and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, presenting the "blues idiom" as the antithesis of ideas of black inner-city pathology that were influential in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. I also explore how, within Murray's ideology, jazz represents an ideal embodiment of the sort of black self-help and resilience that he advocated as a response to American racism.

My second chapter, "Aristocrats of Achievement," explores the influence of W.E.B. Du Bois's early 20th century program of uplift by an educated elite (the "Talented Tenth") on Stanley Crouch's rhetoric in the late 1980s through the 1990s. Crouch, I argue, drew on Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" idea to position the Young Lions as agents of an uplifting African American culture who could lead black America out of its post-1960s state of decadence. In this chapter, I juxtapose

Crouch's portrayal of a decayed late 20th-century African American mass culture with his idea of the redemptive potential of the neoclassical jazz renaissance. I devote special attention to Crouch's commentary on Du Bois in his 1995 book *The All-American Skin Game, or, the Decoy of Race* and his 2002 co-authored work *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk*.

My third chapter, "Young Lions and Old Oak Trees," presents the argument that from the 1990s through the early 21st century, Wynton Marsalis used images of an idealized community of black jazzmen to counter derogatory popular stereotypes about black masculinity and black fatherhood. I draw parallels between Marsalis's notions of black manhood and those of the Prince Hall Freemasons, arguing that Marsalis presents the jazz community as a fraternity of proud black craftsmen as a way of constructing a positive black male image and symbolically conferring a traditional patriarchal identity on black men. Like the Prince Hall Masons, Marsalis was engaged in this project at a time when the American public was swirling with anxieties about black masculinity.

I. The Hero and the Blues Idiom: Black Self-Reliance in Albert Murray and Booker T. Washington

In the two decades leading up to Albert Murray's publication of *The Omni-Americans*, *The Hero and the Blues*, and *Stomping the Blues*, sociologists like Abram Kardiner, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Kenneth Clark were conducting and publishing extensive research on black life in America's deindustrializing inner cities. Studies by the three sociologists, Kardiner's *The Mark of Oppression* (1951), Clark's *Dark Ghetto* (1965), and Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" (1965), would come to similar conclusions: black Americans had been psychologically damaged by their constant exposure to American racism, and black culture had been rendered, in Moynihan's phrase, a "tangle of pathology."[87]

Furthermore, the three men agreed that the experience of enslavement had left the black family destabilized and unable to conform to the patriarchal norms of mainstream (i.e., white) American society.[88] Black "matriarchy," in turn, led to higher instances of drug addiction and violence in impoverished black communities. Ellen Herman notes that, in the studies of sociologists like Kardiner and Clark, "'matriarchal' gender relations within the black family were analyzed

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[87] See Chapter IV of Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action," Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965). https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm (accessed 4/11/2018)

[88] Moynihan, for example, argued that "the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well" (see Moynihan, 1965, Chapter IV, 'The Tangle of Pathology' https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/moynchapter4.htm). Clark argued that because women were "the dominant [people] in the Negro family," "the Negro male could not support his normal desire for dominance" and eventually came to behave destructively (Clark 70). Kardiner claimed that "the common feature of paternal care in the [black] lower class is its frequent absence. For many reasons that will become apparent, the father is the lesser figure in the household" (Kardiner 66).

and discussed as significant defects in their own right, immediate sources of personality and social problems (from warped self-esteem to juvenile delinquency to school failure), and appropriate targets for policy designed to improve race relations by enhancing masculinity and bolstering patriarchal authority."[89] Kardiner, Moynihan, and Clark each presented their evidence of inner-city black pathology and misery to support their calls for government intervention via anti-poverty, anti-discrimination, or, in Moynihan's case, pro-family structure measures.[90] Following Daniel Matlin, I will refer to this discourse of black cultural pathology as "pathologism."[91]

Albert Murray made frequent disparaging references these pathologist or, as he dubbed them, "sociological" portrayals of black life. For Murray, the findings of Moynihan, Clark, and Kardiner failed to do justice to the complexity of black life and the beauty of black culture. He argued that "the overenthusiastic use of highly specialized concepts of clinical psychology to define social conditions that are obviously beyond the controlled observation of the laboratory" would inevitably lead to "oversimplification."[92] "Like the glib pseudo-terminological use of such clichés as the ghetto, minority group, middle class Negro, and so on," he continued, "such uses can never do justice to the facts of life."[93] Murray resolved,

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[89] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 187.
[90] See Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, xxiv-xxv; Kardiner and Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression*, 387; and Moynihan, "The Negro Family," Chapter V.
[91] See Daniel Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem? Kenneth B. Clark, Albert Murray and the Controversies of Black Urban Life," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 875-894.
[92] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 6.
[93] Ibid.

in *The Omni-Americans* and in his later works, to "do justice to what [black people] like about being *Americans*" and the fact that "far from simply struggling in despair, they live with gusto and a sense of elegance that has always been downright enviable."[94]

As Richard King observes in *Race, Culture and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970*, Murray's position likely reflected a fear that "the image of blacks as victims, far from eliciting white sympathy, would lead whites to treat them as, at best, objects of pity and, at worst, as objects of contempt."[95] We might likewise see his rejection of the sociologists' calls for government intervention in black life as both an expression of black pride and a suspicion of the trustworthiness of white government officials.

In this sense, Murray's critique of "American protest fiction of the current Marx/Freud-oriented variety" in his book *The Hero and the Blues* can also be read as applying equally well to the sociologists' petitions for government intervention. Protest fiction, he argued, concerned itself with "representing a world of collective victims whose survival and betterment depend not on self-determination but upon a change of heart in their antagonists, who thereupon will cease being villains and become patrons of social welfare!"[96] Here Murray calls into question the protest fiction writers'—and implicitly the sociologists'—strategy of appealing to white sympathy for a solution to white racism.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Richard King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 296-297.
[96] Albert Murray, *The Hero and the Blues* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 44.

Murray's various ideological positions might be summed up via his term "blues idiom." Murray uses the label "blues idiom" to encapsulate not only black improvised music in the blues and jazz traditions but also a comprehensive African American approach to life. Using black swing dancers and jazz musicians as metaphors for an overall "black" approach to life, Murray describes the blues idiom this way in *The Omni-Americans*: "Extemporizing in response to the exigencies of the situation in which he finds himself, [the "Negro musician or dancer"] is confronting, acknowledging, and contending with the infernal absurdities and ever-impending frustrations inherent in the nature of all existence by *playing with the possibilities that are also there*" [emphasis in original].[97] For Murray, the blues idiom is both a mode of artistic expression and "survival technique, esthetic equipment for living, and a central element in the dynamics of U.S. Negro life style."[98] We might summarize Murray's blues idiom in more direct terms as a characteristically African American approach to life that combines a frank acknowledgement of adversity with a creative and constructive approach to that same adversity.

I argue that, in his books *The Omni-Americans* (1970), *The Hero and the Blues* (1973), and *Stomping the Blues* (1976), Albert Murray countered these notions of inner-city black pathology with a "blues idiom" of self-reliance and improvisatory resourcefulness that recalled Booker T. Washington's strategy for racial uplift. Furthermore, within Murray's discourse of racial uplift, jazz occupies

[97] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans,* 58.
[98] Ibid.

a central place as an example—or a "representative anecdote," as Murray might put it—of the self-sufficiency and independence necessary to advance in his idealized vision of American society. This chapter will accordingly go into various tenets of Murray's blues idiom: his concept of "heroism," his views on the role of protest, and the ideological importance of jazz within his discourse. I explore the ways in which Murray's positions on these issues hearken back to the ideology of Washington, whose ideas Murray absorbed during his long stint at Tuskegee Institute. Furthermore, I situate Murray's self-help based politics within the broader context of debates about black inner-city dysfunction and federal intervention that had become particularly prominent in the 1960s.

First, I explore Murray's initial exposure to and later admiration of Booker T. Washington. Then, I provide a brief description of the discourse of black pathology against which Murray was reacting in the 1970s. In the next sections, I connect Murray's ideology to Booker T. Washington's rhetoric by comparing Murray and Washington's thought in three key areas: Murray's conception of "heroism," Murray's idea of the "representative anecdote," and Murray's de-emphasis of overt protest in understanding of the function of art. I then show how Wynton Marsalis works Murray's views into his Pulitzer Prize winning opera *Blood on the Fields,* making the connection between Murray's 1970s reaction against pathologist discourse and the jazz neoclassicism of the 1990s.

Murray's evocations of Washington's philosophy of self-help can be interpreted as a response to the description of black pathology and calls for

government intervention in black communities coming from Murray's contemporaries. Murray's politics in the 1970s foreshadow the "shortsighted" nostalgia that Kevin Gaines observed in late 20th century black commentators. "Middle-class African American media spokespersons" nostalgia for older black ideals of self-help and uplift, Gaines argues, "respond to and reinforce the majority society's hostility to federal enforcement of civil rights."[99] Similarly, Murray's calls for black people to maintain an attitude of "heroic" self-sufficiency should ultimately be seen a response to the sociologists' calls for sustained government intervention in black communities.

The Influence of Booker T. Washington on Albert Murray's Thought

Albert Murray's 1971 book *South to a Very Old Place* is an idiosyncratic combination of travelogue, memoir, and novel. In it, Murray chronicles his trips to Southern cities like Atlanta, Greensboro, and Mobile and the conversations he has with various friends in each location. The book also features a long and nostalgic description of Tuskegee, Alabama and the Tuskegee Institute. Murray knew the school well. Indeed, his time at Tuskegee was one of the most consequential of his long life. He had earned his BA there in 1939, he met his wife Mozelle there in 1941, and he spent much of the 1940s and 1950s as a teacher there.[100] It was during

[99] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xii.
[100] Henry Louis Gates, "King of Cats," in *Albert Murray and the Aesthetic Imagination of a Nation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 23.

his undergraduate years at Tuskegee that he met his fellow traveler Ralph Ellison, who would be his friend and confidant for decades.

In contrast to Ellison, who had ambivalent feelings about his time at Tuskegee and would ultimately drop out before finishing his senior year, Murray would reflect warmly on his time at the school for the rest of his life. The Tuskegee Institute, for Murray, represented the start of his growth as an intellectual and the development of his sensibility. Caroline Gebhard notes in her essay "Albert Murray and Tuskegee Institute: Art as the Measure of Place" that "Tuskegee is synonymous in [Murray's] imaginary with certain moments in time, landscapes, and people—especially his close companions and his beloved English teacher and friend, Morteza Drexel Sprague." In Murray's reminiscences, Gebhard continues, "Tuskegee…always remains one of those places designated as 'home.'"[101] Furthermore, while Ellison would famously skewer Tuskegee's leadership via the character of Dr. Bledsoe in his classic *Invisible Man*, the Tuskegee Institute that appears in Albert Murray's *The Spyglass Tree* is a supportive environment that serves as the site of his protagonist's education and maturation.[102]

Booker T. Washington looms large in Murray's memories of Tuskegee as a quasi-mythological ancestor figure. "On the other hand," Murray writes in *South to a Very Old Place*, "you were likely to forget that Booker T. Washington, who after all had been dead for only twenty years at that time, was of the same

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[101] Caroline Gebhard, "Albert Murray and Tuskegee Institute: Art as the Measure of Place," in *Albert Murray and the Aesthetic Imagination of a Nation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 115.
[102] See ibid., 116-117.

generation as many of these same grandparents (who, come to think of it, only needed to be between seventy-five and eighty-five)":

> Indeed, such was that oldness of Booker T. Washington in chapel on Founders Day that next spring what with the choir singing against the background of the stained-glass windows, what with the words being spoken as if being recited from parchment scrolls, what with his monument outside among the academic cedars, that he seemed to have belonged not to any specific generation at all but to the ages—as did Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass and Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.[103]

For the young Murray, Washington was less the flesh-and-blood former headmaster of Tuskegee Institute than the "shadowy figure of legend you know from the book *Up From Slavery*."[104]

It seems likely that, just as the environment of Tuskegee Institute left a deep impression on him, Murray's initial exposure to Booker T. Washington would also have a formative influence on him. Murray notes in *South to a Very Old Place* that all black Americans are "heirs" to Washington's accomplishments, and that his own generation would be responsible for correcting Washington's "mistakes." He sums up those mistakes with a pithy quote from his high school teacher, who compared the approaches of Washington and Du Bois: "*Booker T. Washington sacrificed too much to expediency. Dr. Du Bois in his up-north bitterness spends too much time complaining. The youth of today must find the golden mean.*"[105]

Murray was still speaking admiringly of Washington twenty-five years later, when, in an interview with Joe Wood, he argued that *Up From Slavery* belonged in

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[103] Albert Murray, *South to a Very Old Place* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 120.
[104] Ibid., 121.
[105] Ibid., 122.

the American literary canon.[106] This statement from Murray is significant for multiple reasons. The first of these is that, like Ellison,[107] Murray was famously reluctant to name black writers among his influences and was skeptical of his black contemporaries.[108] For Murray to openly praise a book by a black American, let alone for him to include it in the "American literary canon" alongside his heroes like Ezra Pound and Ernest Hemingway, was a striking exception. Second, this statement taken together with his reference to *Up From Slavery* in *South to a Very Old Place*, strongly suggests that Murray had indeed read Washington's famous autobiography, and reinforces the idea that Washington had made some sort of impression on him early in his intellectual development. Third, Murray's praise of *Up From Slavery* opens the possibility that, as with his well-documented investment in literary modernism, Washington's philosophy influenced the positions that Murray would take later in books like *The Omni-Americans* and *The Hero and the Blues*.

In the same interview with Joe Wood, Murray compares the racial uplift approaches of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington:

> One guy takes this route, the other guy takes the other route to do it. One guy says, "Well, you've got to start down here right with the soil. Then you've got to work your way up and you get your money. If you got enough

[106] Joe Wood, "The Soloist: Albert Murray's Blues People," in *Conversations with Albert Murray,* edited by Roberta S. Maguire (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 105.
[107] See Wilson J. Moses, *The Wings of Ethiopia*, pg. 274-275 for a discussion of Ellison's "unnecessary and unconvincing repudiation of his ties to all black literary traditions."
[108] See, for example, Murray's [insert year] interview with Jason Berry, where he claims that black writers have "mostly been preoccupied with the literal document as agit-prop journalism, so much so that for all the realistic details to make the reader feel *that this all really happened*, their stories seldom rise above the level of one-dimensional patently partisan social case histories."

> money, and you got enough power, and you've got enough skill, nobody's going to bother you.' The other guy says, "No, we've got to have our rights first. We want our dignity and so forth." The [first] guy says, 'Dignity don't mean shit if you're hungry. You don't have to go around asking him for anything if you've got something he wants.' That's the American way! These guys weren't out there protesting.[109]

By effectively giving Washington the last word—"Dignity don't mean shit if you're hungry"—Murray comes down firmly on the side of Washingtonian pragmatism and racial uplift through self-sufficiency. While Murray renders his ideological position explicitly in this interview, his belief in self-reliance as the answer to persistent racism is evident throughout his body of work. Indeed, almost all of Murray's articulations of his blues idiom show the influence of Washingtonian conservatism.

However, although the influence of figures including Thomas Mann, Andre Malraux, and John Kouwenhoven has been well documented in previous discussions of Murray's thought, Washington's influence on his work remains unexplored. In the following sections, I move to an overview of the narratives of black cultural pathology that were influential during the period when Murray was writing his 1970s works, including *South to a Very Old Place, Stomping the Blues,* and *The Hero and the Blues*. I discuss the way that Murray's engagement with Booker T. Washington's philosophy of racial uplift through self-reliance influenced his formulation of a "blues idiom," his positions on African American politics, and the social importance of jazz.

[109] Joe Wood, "The Soloist," 106.

Black "Pathology" in Kardiner, Clark, and Moynihan

For much of the 1950s and 1960s, the publications of sociologists including Kenneth Clark, Abram Kardiner, and especially Daniel Patrick Moynihan were hugely influential in discussions about the challenges facing black America. The works of these three men, including Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey's 1951 *The Mark of Oppression*, Clark's 1965 *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*, and Moynihan's 1965 "The Negro Family: A Case for National Action" typify a broader intellectual trend that was set the terms for many discussions of African American issues in the 1960s.

Daniel Matlin helpfully terms this discourse "pathologism."[110] Scholars within the discourse of pathologism focused their efforts on depicting the miserable conditions facing African Americans in America's decaying inner cities, describing the psychological trauma that racial discrimination wrought on African American individuals, and explaining the social "pathologies" that affected black families and communities. Moynihan, Clark, Kardiner, and other participants in the discourse of pathologism, writes Matlin, "believed that if the American public were made fully aware of the psychological 'damage' and social 'pathology' which racism engendered among African Americans, the federal and local government would be pressured into ameliorating social inequalities."[111]

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[110] Daniel Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem? Kenneth B. Clark, Albert Murray and the Controversies of Black Urban Life," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 878.
[111] Ibid.

Abram Kardiner was a prominent and influential psychologist who devoted considerable time to the study of the "damaged" black psyche. Kardiner approached his work with an interdisciplinary outlook that was somewhat unique for his time. After a brief stint at Cornell University medical school, Kardiner enrolled in anthropology courses at Columbia, where he took classes with legendary anthropologist Franz Boas. Although he declined to pursue a career in anthropology, his exploration of the field had an important influence on his work as a psychoanalyst.

Kardiner combined Freudian psychoanalytic techniques—he studied in Vienna with Freud himself—with an appreciation for the role of culture in influencing personality. His embrace of anthropology was incomplete. For example, Kardiner never accepted the principle of cultural relativism that had been central to Franz Boas's work since the late 19th century.[112] Still, his interdisciplinary approach to psychoanalysis set him apart from his more traditional colleagues and put him in an advantageous position to describe how black Americans had been psychologically harmed by the racism of American society.

The titular "mark" in Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey's 1951 study *The Mark of Oppression: A Psychosocial Study of the American Negro* is the authors' term for

[112] Joanne Meyerowitz, "'How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives': Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought." *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (March 2010): 1078.

"the psychological scars created by caste and its effects."[113] These scars, Kardiner argues, are the consequence of both the trauma inflicted by enslavement and the discrimination that black Americans faced after emancipation. "The adaptation of the slave," Kardiner explains, "was essentially by a process of passivity." This was because black people were denied status in a status-based society and couldn't "successfully direct [their] aspirations toward goals that [were] beyond the possibility of attainment." The "passivity" that distinguished the enslaved person's personality, then, was an attempt to achieve a degree of "inner peace" by "ceasing to struggle" for unattainable status.[114] In presenting this argument, Kardiner foreshadows the influential and controversial "Sambo" theory presented in Stanley Elkins's *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*.

In his 1959 book, Stanley Elkins argued that the childlike, passive "Sambo" stereotype actually represented a distinct personality type created by the conditions of American slavery. Elkins's argument rested on the distinction he drew between "open" and "closed" systems of slavery. "Open" systems, as exemplified by Latin American slavery, were built on a combination of "church, crown, and plantation agriculture" that kept the worst instincts of the planter classes in check. Within open systems, Elkins claimed, enslaved people had a broader scope of contact with free society, which provided more opportunities for "the development of men and women as moral beings." These contacts also

[113] Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression: A Psychosocial Study of the American Negro* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1951), xiii.
[114] Ibid., 47.

provided many more opportunities for enslaved men and women to be absorbed into the mainstream free society.[115]

North American slavery, in contrast, was a "closed" system. Without competing organizations like the church and the crown to keep the planters in check, the American legal system emphasized the enslaved person's status as property and deemphasized their status as "moral individual[s]." This, in turn, led to a dramatically decreased number of interactions with the free world in comparison to those of Latin American slaves. The closed system of American slavery meant that "for the generality of slaves in their nature as men and women, *sub specie aeternitatis*, contacts with free society could occur only on the most narrowly circumscribed of terms."[116]

Elkins claimed that the "Sambo" personality type was the result of American slaves' enforced isolation from the wider society. Rather than a pejorative stereotype propagated by Southerners to justify enslavement, Sambo represented black Americans' adaptation to the repressive nature of American slavery. Elkins concluded that "there were elements in the very structure of the [American] plantation system—its 'closed' character—that could sustain infantilism as a normal feature of behavior." Moreover, the "infantilism" of the enslaved was more than just an accommodation to the system of slavery. Their dependent, childlike behavior represented a "recognizable personality type."[117]

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[115] Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 81-82.
[116] Ibid., 82.
[117] Ibid., 86.

Kardiner argues that after Emancipation, the passivity instilled in black Americans by slavery mutated into a deep self-hatred as enslavement was replaced by racial discrimination. "This is the strange fate of a persecuted people who become acclimated to the passive and dominated role," Kardiner writes, "they tend to identify themselves with their persecutor." He argues that "the self-hatred of the Negro is the best testimony we can offer in evidence; he hates himself as the white man hates him (or as he thinks the white man hates him." In Kardiner's opinion, "this self-hatred can only cease when his social mobility increases."[118] All of this was to say that, in Kardiner and Ovesey's estimation, black Americans were deeply psychologically damaged. *The Mark of Oppression* ends with an emphatic call to action directed at its presumably white audience: "What is needed by the Negro is not education, but *re-integration*. It is the white man who requires the education. *There is only one way that the products of oppression can be dissolved, and that is to stop the oppression*."[119]

Like Kardiner, Kenneth Clark was already a well known and respected psychologist and public intellectual by the time he published his book *Dark Ghetto* in 1965. Clark was the first child of Miriam and Arthur Clark, two Jamaican immigrants to New York City. He was a bookish child and a promising student. Clark's frequent visits to the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library eventually brought him to the attention of famed Puerto Rican-American scholar

[118] Ibid., pg. 351-352.
[119] Ibid., 387.

and librarian Arthur Schomburg, who was a key early mentor of his.[120] After graduating from high school and earning a degree from Howard University, Clark began graduate school at Columbia, eventually becoming the first African American to earn a PhD in Psychology from the institution.[121] Clark's unique prominence as an African American psychologist eventually led to his serving as an expert witness during the *Brown vs. Board* trial, when he presented research suggesting that segregated schooling led black children to feel inferior to white children.[122] *Dark Ghetto* was the product of another of Clark's ambitious undertakings, in which he served as director of HARYOU, a two-year research project on Harlem youth.[123]

As its title would suggest, *Dark Ghetto* paints a bleak picture of black life in Harlem. It is, in Clark's words, "no report at all, but rather the anguished cry of its author."[124] America's ghettoes, Clark argued, produced "pathologies" among their black residents because they "confined [them] to depressed areas" and prevented their access to "normal channels of economic mobility and opportunity."[125] Indeed, Clark's study was in large part built upon the idea that ghettoization created "invisible walls" that effectively separated black Americans from the broader American society:

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120 Frances Cherry, "Kenneth B. Clark and Social Psychology's Other History," in *Racial Identity in Context: The Legacy of Kenneth B. Clark*, ed. by Gina Philogene (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2004), 20.
121 Ibid., 20-21.
122 Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem?" 878.
123 Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), xxvii.
124 Ibid., xxxiv.
125 Ibid.

> The dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by the white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have *no* power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and—above all—economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters.[126]

Within Clark's formulation, being separated from society and targeted with so much hatred and fear led African Americans to be ashamed of their identity. This shame, in turn, leads to "a pernicious self-and group-hatred, the Negro's complex and debilitating prejudice against himself."[127] The various pathologies endemic to the ghetto reproduce themselves over generations, Clark argued, because a "child born in the ghetto is more likely to come into a world of broken homes and illegitimacy; and this family and social instability is conducive to delinquency, drug addiction, and criminal violence."[128] Black children born in decaying inner-city neighborhoods thus had little chance of escaping the "pathology of the ghetto."

Of the three sociological studies discussed in this section, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" has had the most longevity as a topic of debate. In his study, which was published in March 1965 but not made public until August of that year, Moynihan offered what he believed to be a frank assessment of the post-Civil Rights Act prospects for black equality. Moynihan argued that the most significant factor holding black America back from

[126] Ibid., 11
[127] Ibid., 64.
[128] Ibid., 81.

real equity with white America was the state of the black family. "*While many young Negroes are moving ahead to unprecedented levels of achievement*," Moynihan warned, "*many more are falling further and further behind.*"[129] [emphasis in original]

Like Kardiner and Clark, Moynihan argues that the experiences of slavery and Jim Crow had seriously damaged the black masculine psyche and thus the stability of the patriarchal black family. He grounds his argument in previous scholarship by Stanley Elkins and E. Franklin Frazier. Quoting Elkins's arguments in *Slavery*, Moynihan forwarded the claim that slavery had created a childlike "Sambo" mentality among the enslaved.[130] Continuing forward in history, he argued that the disorienting experience of Emancipation and the emasculating imposition of Jim Crow laws had "worked against the emergence of a strong father figure." Furthermore, he explained, quoting Frazier, "at the time of emancipation Negro women were already 'accustomed to playing the dominant role in family and marriage relations' and…this role persisted in the decades of rural life that followed."[131]

Because of this legacy of trauma and emasculation, the black community of the 1960s had become a "matriarchal structure." The prevalence of households headed by single mothers, he contended, "seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole" because of its disjunction with the American majority. "Ours is

[129] Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965) "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" – Moynihan Report, hosted by Department of Labor, 1965
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs," Moynihan explained. "The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage."[132] This matriarchal family structure and its attendant disadvantages, he concluded, had created a "tangle of pathology" that was responsible for the sorry state of the black community. In light of this evidence, Moynihan concluded that "a national effort towards the problems of Negro Americans must be directed towards the question of family structure."[133]

Because of the contentious nature of Moynihan's statements on the black community and because of the report's visibility—President Lyndon Johnson used it as the basis for a major policy speech in 1965—"The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" touched off a firestorm of controversy that never entirely died down. The report's often-contradictory statements on the state of black communities, the root causes of black community issues, and the necessity of a national response elicited praise and criticism from commentators at various points on the American political spectrum. Daniel Geary notes in *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy* that some activists on the left including Martin Luther King Jr. initially saw the report as a call for meaningful, large-scale government aid to black communities. At the same time, right-wing

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

politicians saw it as a description of black "pathology" and a call for racial self-help.[134]

"Citing Negro Assets": Murray Responds to Pathologist Discourse

Even as they presented evidence that African Americans were "damaged" and "pathological" because of American racism, Clark, Kardiner, and Moynihan were careful to distance themselves from the potentially racist implications of their findings. Kardiner's book includes "Advice to the Reader" to make it clear that "the book does not describe Negro racial characteristics" and that he and Ovesey would "give no comfort or support to those who wish to use some part of this work out of its conceptual and sequential context in order to hurt the interests of the Negro people."[135] Fourteen years later, Clark wrote that *Dark Ghetto*'s "emphasis on the pathologies of American ghettoes" was "not to be equated with assumptions of 'inherent racial differences or with the more subtly discriminatory 'cultural deprivation' theories."[136] Moynihan, also writing in 1965, was careful to position the black middle class as an exception to his pessimistic findings. He also praised the resilience of the black community and their contributions to American

[134] Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 3-4.
[135] Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1951), v.
[136] Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, xxxvi.

democracy, writing that both things were "the highest testament to the healing powers of the democratic ideal and the creative vitality of the Negro people."[137]

These attempts to clarify their intentions were insufficient in the face of growing criticism from black activists. By the 1960s, black intellectuals as dramatically different as Harold Cruse, Amiri Baraka, Ralph Ellison, and Addison Gayle, Jr. were placing renewed emphasis on the strength of black American culture to counter the theory that African American life was fundamentally dysfunctional.[138]

Murray, like his close friend Ralph Ellison, joined in the critique of sociological depictions of black pathology. The content of his criticism both corresponded with those of his contemporaries while also underlining the influence of Washington's politics on his own opinions. One facet of Murray's response to Clark's emphasis on black pathology was to emphasize the positive and pleasurable aspects of black life.[139] Murray argued in the introduction to *The Omni-Americans* that, after so much publicity for the negative parts of black American life, someone needed to "do justice to what U.S. Negroes *like* about being black and to what they *like* about being *Americans*." "Otherwise," he

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[137] Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965) "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action"

[138] Richard H. King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 266-268. See also: Meyerowitz, "How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives," 1079-1080, Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 199, and Daniel Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem? Kenneth B. Clark, Albert Murray and the Controversies of Black Urban Life," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 880-882.

[139] For a detailed discussion on this aspect of Murray's conflict with Clark, see Daniel Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem? Kenneth B. Clark, Albert Murray and the Controversies of Black American Life."

continued, "justice can hardly be done to the incontestable fact that not only do they choose to live rather than commit suicide, but that, poverty and injustice notwithstanding, far from simply struggling in despair, they live with gusto and a sense of elegance that has always been downright enviable."[140] In other words, the positive and affirming aspects of African American life were as important—or more important—to understanding the African American experience as the sociological statistics of Clark, Kardiner, and others.

Furthermore, Murray contested the pathologist notion that black American culture had been fundamentally damaged by the experience of slavery and racism. In specific contradiction to Kardiner's *Mark of Oppression*, for example, Murray frequently voiced his rejection of the idea that racial discrimination had left any "mark" on African Americans at all. He makes an oblique reference to Kardiner in *The Omni-Americans*, referencing the "superficial nonsense about marks of oppression one encounters in print everywhere these days."[141] In a private letter to Ellison written soon after the book's initial release in 1951, he called *The Mark of Oppression* "just about the worst thing on the Negro since, well, since they were justifying white supremacy with the Bible."[142] By connecting Kardiner's findings with the justifications of religious racists, Murray both rejects Kardiner's

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[140] Albert Murray, *The Omni-American: Black Experience & American Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1990), 6.
[141] Murray, *The Omni-Americans*, 104.
[142] Personal correspondence, "Jan. or Feb." 1952, in Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray*, ed. Albert Murray and John F. Callahan (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 26.

disclaimer and connects his work to earlier efforts to justify white supremacy by "proving" black inferiority.

Murray would instead argue that, rather than being damaged by centuries of racism, black Americans' experience of oppression had led them to develop the uniquely flexible, resilient, and optimistic approach to life that he termed the "blues idiom." "As for behavior or life style," he wrote in *The Omni-Americans*, "no other people in the land have as yet evolved a characteristic idiom that reflects a more open, robust, and affirmative disposition toward diversity and change. Nor is any other idiom more smoothly geared to open-minded improvisation."[143] Thus, rather than seeing themselves as the "substandard, abnormal *non-white* people of American social science surveys," black Americans identified as "fundamental *extensions* of contemporary possibilities."[144]

Beyond his concern that sociological studies would bolster the case of white supremacists, Murray also believed that antiracist social programs proposed to remedy poverty and discrimination were patronizing gestures that would strip black Americans of the self-reliance and self-sufficiency that characterized his conception of black culture. In *The Omni-Americans*, he cast "American welfare-ism" as "ill-conceived and condescending benevolence" that treated black Americans as "*liabilities* that must be reduced, not in accordance with any profound and compelling commitment to equal opportunity for human fulfillment

[143] Murray, *Omni-Americans,* 53.
[144] Ibid.

but rather in the interest of domestic tranquility."[145] A few pages later, he writes that the findings of the Moynihan Report

> [say] in effect, that those who have been exploiting Negroes for years should now, upon being shown his statistics, become *benevolent* enough to set up a nationwide welfare program for them. *Not once does he cite any Negro assets that white people might find more attractive than black subservience.* Good intentions notwithstanding, Moynihan's arbitrary interpretations make a far stronger case for the Negro equivalent of Indian reservations than for Desegregation now.[146]

Moynihan, in fact, stopped short of advocating a nationwide welfare program. In "The Negro Family," he strikes a more ambivalent posture, advocating "national action" in response to black issues while also citing "welfare dependency" as a negative effect of black family dysfunction.[147]

Nevertheless, Murray goes on to argue that "citing Negro assets that white people might find attractive" would make a stronger case for desegregation than Moynihan's description of black despair and purported call for a welfare program. He reiterates this argument later. Although "there should never be any relaxation of the pressure for national fair play," the "best sales pitch for the cause of black people" might be "more emphasis on the discovery, development, and assimilation

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[145] Ibid., 26.
[146] Ibid., 28.
[147] Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965) "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" – Moynihan Report, hosted by Department of Labor, 1965. Moynihan writes that "the steady expansion of this {AFDC] welfare program, as of public assistance programs in general, can be taken as a measure of the steady disintegration of the Negro family structure over the past generation in the United States."

of things that the so-called black community may contribute to the welfare of other Americans."[148]

The idea of a "sales pitch" for black equality is one theme that connects Murray's ideology in the politics of Booker T. Washington. In *Up From Slavery*, Washington, recalling one of his many speaking tours, writes:

> In this address I said that the whole future of the Negro rested largely upon the question as to whether or not he should make himself, through his skill, intelligence, and character, of such undeniable value to the community in which he lived that the community could not dispense with his presence. I said that any individual who learned to do something better than anybody else—learned to do a common thing in an uncommon manner—had solved his problem, regardless of the colour of his skin, and that in proportion as the Negro learned to produce what other people wanted and must have, in the same proportion would he be respected.[149]

Here we find, as in Murray's comments written over seventy years later, the optimistic belief that African Americans could overcome white supremacy by demonstrating their ability to make a valuable contribution to society.

By "citing Negro assets" and "making himself…of undeniable value to the community," a black man could, in Murray's estimation, transcend the mistrust of his white neighbors. This demonstrates Washington and Murray's shared desire to give African Americans a sense of agency in responding to American racism. Rather than petitioning the untrustworthy state or federal government for redress, both men seem to say, black people could secure their rights by self-improvement and the intrinsic value of their contributions.

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[148] Ibid., 65.
[149] Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 141.

Albert Murray on "Heroism" as Self-Reliance

Murray's effort to answer the findings of the pathologists with ideas drawn from Washington's program of uplift opens the way for a broader analysis of Washington's influence on Murray's "blues idiom." One of Murray's foundational ideas is the concept of "heroism," which he outlines in his 1973 book *The Hero and the Blues*. "Heroism" in Murray's writings is best understood in conjunction with what he calls "antagonistic cooperation." Murray's seemingly oxymoronic name for this idea expresses his belief that adversity—or antagonism—is ultimately a form of cooperation in that it builds character. In other words, within Murray's system of thought, the negative circumstances that an individual faces are also opportunities for that individual to rise to the occasion. A hero is thus born through adversity and struggle. This process could perhaps best be summarized with the old cliché that "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Murray describes the process this way in *The Hero and the Blues:*

> Heroism, which like the sword is nothing if not steadfast, is measured in terms of the stress and strain it can endure and the magnitude and complexity of the obstacles it overcomes. Thus difficulties and vicissitudes which beset the potential hero on all sides not only threaten his existence and jeopardize his prospects; they also, by bringing out the best in him, serve his purpose. They make it possible for him to make something of himself. Such is the nature of every confrontation in the context of heroic action.[150]

[150] Albert Murray, *The Hero and the Blues* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 38.

Within Murray's framework, antagonistic cooperation creates heroes in that it "generat[es] the necessity for heroism in the first place," "[contests] [heroism's] development at every stage" and [furnishes] the occasion for its fulfillment."[151]

Murray's discussion of heroism in *The Hero and the Blues* is notable for Murray's near-constant reliance on imagery and metaphor drawn from fairytales, the Bible, and African-American folklore. In Murray's hands, American white supremacy is not a system of racial, economic, and social domination and exploitation, but rather an "American-born dragon"[152] which will ultimately be vanquished by the sword of a conquering hero. Elsewhere, he connects Moses to Abraham Lincoln, calling him a "great emancipator,"[153] and positions Joseph's rise from slavery to leadership in Egypt as "the sort of apocryphal cottonpatch-to-capital-city detail so typical of U.S. biography."[154]

Parallels like these place the African American experience of slavery and freedom in the United States within the broader context of myth and religion, in turn linking black struggles against oppression with the legendary exploits of storybook heroes. With a series of deft allusions, Murray connects his own work on African American culture with the work of men like Joseph Campbell and

[151] Ibid., 39.
[152] Murray, *The Hero and the Blues*, 49.
[153] Ibid. 61.
[154] Ibid.

Thomas Mann[155] and the much older African American tradition of biblical allusion seen to greatest effect in the spirituals.

And yet, after moving beyond the mythic themes of dragon-slaying and hero-making, the core of Murray's conception of heroism is the idea that the best response to adversity—whether the universal problems of life or the specific problems facing black people in the United States—is a kind of up-by-the-bootstraps self-reliance. "Heroism," Murray writes, "which is, among other things, another word for self-reliance, is not only the indispensable prerequisite for productive citizenship in an open society; it is also that without with no individual or community can remain free." The association of "self-reliance," "productive citizenship," and "freedom" most obviously calls forth the image of American neoconservatism, and indeed more than one commentator has drawn the connection between jazz neoclassicism and Reagan-Bush era political ideology.[156] As I argue here and elsewhere in this dissertation, however, this easy connection between the developments Murray inspired and neoconservatism misses the much deeper ties between the ideological underpinnings of jazz neoclassicism and the current of self-help ideology that runs through African-American intellectual history.

For example, one precedent for Murray's idea of antagonistic cooperation appears in this strikingly similar passage from Booker T. Washington's

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[155] Mann's epic novel *Joseph and His Brothers* was an important early-career inspiration for Murray. For further discussion, see Lauren Walsh, "Murray and Mann: Variations on a Theme," in *Albert Murray and the Aesthetic Imagination of a Nation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).
[156] See, for example, Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence*, vi-vii and Steven B. Elworth, "Jazz in Crisis, 1948-1958: Ideology and Representation," pg. 57-58 in *Jazz Among the Discourses*.

autobiography *Up From Slavery*. Comparing his childhood with that of a hypothetical white boy who would have no obstacles to rising in society, he admits that he spent much of his youth in envy. But his opinion would change as he grew to maturity. "In later years," Washington explains, "I confess that I do not envy the white boy as I once did":

> I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed. Looked at from this standpoint, I almost reach the conclusion that often the Negro boy's birth and connection with an unpopular race is an advantage, so far as real life is concerned. With few exceptions, the Negro youth must work harder and must perform his tasks even better than a white youth in order to secure recognition. But out of the hard and unusual struggle through which he is compelled to pass, he gets a strength, a confidence, that one misses whose pathway is comparatively smooth by reason of birth and race.[157]

In Washington's opinion, the unusually difficult circumstances facing ambitious black children at the turn of the twentieth century were actually an "advantage" in that they forced the children to rise to the occasion, giving them greater strength of character than their privileged peers. As in Murray, Washington is expressing the resolutely optimistic belief that the vicissitudes of American racism only strengthen the resolve of would-be black heroes like himself and his peers.

Indeed, the self-reliant attitude that Murray celebrates in *The Hero and the Blues* was also a frequent theme of Booker T. Washington's weekly speeches to Tuskegee students at their required Sunday chapel services. In one speech, titled "What You Ought to Do," Washington praised the resilient character of the

[157] Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (New York: Signet Classics, 2000), 27.

uneducated black residents of rural Alabama, arguing that all they needed was the help of educated Tuskegee graduates to succeed. Noting that the living conditions of the people in the rural districts remained a problem, Washington added the optimistic observation that "You very seldom meet with a coloured man who is not conscious of his ignorance, and who is not anxious to get up as soon as he finds himself down." "As a general thing," he continued,

> the people—those in the country especially—do not ask anybody to come and give them food, clothing, and houses; all they ask is for some person, some hones, upright man or woman who is interested in their welfare, to come among them and show them how to direct their efforts and their energy, show them how best to realize on the results of their work, so that they can supply their own moral, religious, and material needs and educate their children.[158]

In another speech, called "Object Lessons," Washington recounted meeting an old black man who proclaimed "I's done quit libin' in de ashes. I's got my second freedom." Washington explained to his students that the man, "by economy, hard work and proper guidance, after twenty years of struggle, had freed himself from debt, had paid for fifty acres of land, had built a comfortable house, and was a tax-payer." "This Negro," Washington concluded, "had been given a chance to get upon his feet. That is all that any Negro in America asks."[159] The characters who appear in these stories are all underprivileged country people—residents of what Murray might call "the outlying regions"—whose self-reliance and resiliency had either led or was about to lead to an improved quality of life. Indeed, the old man

[158] Booker T. Washington, *Character Building: Being Addresses Delivered on Sunday Evenings to the Students of Tuskegee Institute* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1902), 195-196
[159] Ibid., 233.

who won his "second freedom" seems to be an object lesson in Washington's and Murray's contention that one can overcome racial prejudice by force of will.

Murray's dual concepts of heroism and antagonistic cooperation, then, clearly show the influence of Washington's philosophy. Like Washington's accomodationism, Murray's ideology posits the idea that progress in race relations would come through the "heroic" struggles of black individuals. The triumph of these heroes would in turn deliver the whole black community from oppression. A writer operating with an understanding of antagonistic cooperation, Murray argues, would "regard anti-black racism…as an American-born dragon which should be destroyed, but he also regards it as something which, no matter how devastatingly sinister, can and will be destroyed because its very existence generates both the necessity and the possibility of heroic deliverance." "The firedrake is an evocation to the hero," he concludes, "even as the very existence of dangerous big game animals was in itself a call to Hemingway's huntsmen."[160]

It is important to remember, though, that Washington's original program for black advancement had little use for music and the other arts. Although Washington expressed appreciation and respect for music he found spiritually uplifting—as when he praised the "dignity" of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's arrangements of spirituals[161]--he based his program on the development of agricultural and industrial skill. The aesthetic issues that preoccupied Murray were peripheral to Washington's conception of racial uplift. And yet Murray

[160] Murray, *The Hero and the Blues*, 49.
[161] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 77.

wasn't the first black intellectual to bring Washington's ideas into the world of music and art. On the eve of the Harlem Renaissance, black sociologist Charles S. Johnson's advocacy for black artists was motivated by a Washington-esque pragmatism on American race relations. Johnson shared his friend W.E.B. Du Bois's commitment to full equality for African Americans. And yet, as David Levering Lewis explains, "like Washington, Johnson calmly accepted the prospect of long-term Afro-American repression by and exclusion from the dominant society." Assuming that "for the present…it was a waste of time to cry for full equality for ten million people," Johnson argued that black art worked as a weapon against stereotypes and could eventually help open the way for black civil rights:

> Nothing would measurably improve the lot of the masses of southern sharecroppers or northern laborers for decades, nor would even the middle classes achieve more than episodic and minor political or legal gains. In the bleakness of the present, it was left to the Afro-American elite to win what assimilation it could through copyrights, concerts, and exhibitions. Thus did the leading Afro-American sociologist prepare to modify Booker Washington to suit the tactics of the Talented Tenth.[162]

Charles S. Johnson's early-1920s calculations presented art as an ideal "sales pitch" for black equality, much as Murray would do fifty years later.

Murray's concept of antagonistic cooperation has serious flaws. The most important of these is that Murray's frequent references to heroes, swords, dragons, Brer Rabbit, and briar patches effectively simplify the huge and intractable problem of American racism into either a pat fable with a happy ending or a timeless mythic cycle, in both cases obscuring the historical specificity of

[162] Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, 48-49.

American white supremacy. Presenting racial discrimination as the inevitable adversity that faces a storybook hero has the inadvertent effect of romanticizing real world suffering as a sort of character-building or moral test.

As we will see in the next section, Murray used his ideas about antagonistic cooperation and heroism both as the foundation for his evaluations of literature and music and to suggest a real-world alternative to government antipoverty measures that he found destructive. This has the unfortunate effect of making Murray's approach seem woefully inadequate in the face of persistent structural racism that was already being discussed in the 1970s, as he was writing *The Omni-Americans* and *The Hero and the Blues*.

The Role of the "Representative Anecdote" in Murray's Thought

Within Murray's "blues idiom" system of thought, art—specifically, art as "representative anecdote"—plays a key supporting role to the call for heroism. Murray's concept of the "representative anecdote" refers to the work of art that inspires its audience to live heroically. In his commentary on music, Murray's image of the jazz musician as a heroic individual plunging bravely into the unexpected conforms to the "'Work and Win, Upward and Onward' narrative of American rugged individualism" that Michael Rudolph West identifies in *Up from Slavery*.[163][164] Beginning in the 1970s, and continuing over the next decades, Murray

[163] West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington*, 113.

offered these representative anecdotes as an alternative to the "welfare sociology" he saw dominating conversations about African American life.

Murray believed that successful works of art function as representative anecdotes that illustrate a people's "ancestral imperatives"—the practices that ensure their survival into the next generation.[165] Murray argues at the beginning of *The Hero and the Blues* that meaningful art is a medium of "instruction" that gives audiences useful information about how to live. He starts from the standpoint of literature before broadening his statement to include the other arts:

> Indeed, at bottom perhaps even the most radical innovations in rhetoric and in narrative technique are best appreciated when viewed as efforts to refine the writer's unique medium of 'instruction.' In other words, to make the telling more effective is to make the tale more to the point, more meaningful, and in consequence, if not coincidentally, more useful. Nor is the painter or the musician any less concerned than the writer with achieving a telling effect.[166]

For Murray, then, a work of art works both as individual expression and as archetypical example. A work of literature that epitomized its culture well enough to qualify as a representative anecdote was both a model of formal mastery and a model for how people within a particular culture should live. As Richard King notes in *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals*, this understanding of literature and the other arts put forward in Murray's writing (and that of Ellison) placed a great

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[164] Not coincidentally, Murray praised *Up From Slavery* in Horatio-Alger-derived terms in his aforementioned interview with Joe Wood: "Murray told me he would put *Up from Slavery* in the American literary canon because he considers it a representative anecdote. 'It's simply Horatio Alger in brown skin! It is the cliché of the times. In other words, I can make it—give me my chance and I will. That's not just the Negro, that's the United States." Wood, Joe. "The Soloist: Albert Murray's Blues People." In *Conversations with Albert Murray*, edited by Roberta S. Maguire (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 105.

[165] Joe Wood, "The Soloist," 96.

[166] Murray, *The Hero and the Blues*, 9-10.

deal of emphasis on providing models for emulation—or, as Murray would put it, a "basis of action."[167] At its most simplified extreme, Murray's conception of the function of art is deeply moralistic, with the artist instructing the audience on the difference between right and wrong and the correct way to live.[168]

Murray believed that the ancestral imperative for American artists and writers is to "become American,"[169] which for him meant the adoption of the African American blues idiom: a readiness to confront adversity with ingenuity and a sense of rugged individualism. The American ancestral imperatives thus encapsulate the "confrontation" and "improvisation," the "drive and initiative and go-get-em," that Murray saw as the key ingredients of both the blues idiom and the American national character more generally.

A representative American anecdote, then, must encourage its audience to ever-higher levels of independence, initiative, and creativity, America's ancestral imperatives. This is why, for Murray, both *Up From Slavery* and the various autobiographies of Frederick Douglass count as representative anecdotes,[170] while Richard Wright's *Native Son* does not. Washington and Douglass's autobiographies both narrate the stories of protagonists who heroically confront their miserable circumstances and eventually triumph—behavior that Murray

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[167] Richard King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals*, 295.
[168] Indeed, Murray argues later on in *The Hero and the Blues* that "moraliz[ing]" is one facet of the storyteller's (and by extension, the artist's) duty: "Human existence, he postulates, is thus and so; for example: time after time there was (and is) a man who, whose circumstances were (and are) such and such, and he did (and does_ this and that, and the outcome was and is likely to be as follows. All of which goes to show what human existence is really like. Therefore, human conduct should be like this and not like that. This is good. This is bad. Do this. Avoid that." (*The Hero and the Blues*, 93).
[169] Joe Wood, "The Soloist," 106.
[170] Ibid., 105-106.

summarized as "the cliché of the times. In other words, I can make it—give me my chance and I will."[171] Wright's novel, in contrast, is based around the "fallacious" and "misleading" generalization that "people who are forced to live in subhuman conditions develop subhuman traits; they react subhumanly and become bad people through no fault of their own."[172] The examples of Douglass and Washington are not meant to suggest that a blues-idiom hero has to succeed in order to be representative—Murray acknowledges that a hero can be "inadequate to his mission" and that success is never certain—but rather that the hero must respond creatively to adversity rather than succumbing to it.

Similarly, the art of jazz improvisation is a representative anecdote because it revolves around responding to musical challenges with improvisatory ingenuity in an aural reenactment of the American ancestral imperative. Murray sees the challenge and the opportunity for heroism at their most heightened at moments in performance called the breaks—instances when the entire ensemble stops playing and leaves a single instrumentalist to sustain the musical propulsion through the force of their own improvisations. "So in jazz," Murray explained in a 1990 interview with Russell Neff, "you say, 'You take the break.' Or I will go around in the street saying, 'Give me a break.' Means, give me an opportunity. The same word which means disjuncture, and in Viennese mythology, in psychoanalytic

[171] Ibid., 105.
[172] Murray, *The Hero and the Blues*, 93-94.

mythology, that was trauma-producing. In jazz, it's your time of opportunity. Your moment of truth."[173]

Murray cast "welfare sociology," as represented by the sociological studies of Moynihan, Kardiner, and Clark and the novels of black writers like James Baldwin and Richard Wright, as the inverse of the ancestral imperatives embodied in the jazz and *Up From Slavery*. "You see," he said in the same interview, "one of the problems of welfare sociology is, it's as if the underlying assumption—and it's unexamined, I'm sure—is that you should remove all difficulties so nobody will have to struggle against anything."[174] In other words, rather than giving impoverished or oppressed people the opportunity to "heroically" enact an "Up-From-Poverty" tale in the classic American style, adherents of welfare sociology would remove every opportunity for heroism and character-building from life. Murray concluded that while "it's all right to have compassion and all that," "somebody's got to have some experience of dealing with the problems in the boondocks" so that they would be "prepared for these difficulties when they arise."[175]

Murray's theorization of these anecdotes and their function recalls the ways in which Washington drew on short stories and his own autobiography to exhort his audiences to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. In his speeches, Washington made extensive use of short stories illustrate his points. Many of

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[173] Albert Murray, *Murray Talks Music: Albert Murray on Jazz and Blues*, edited by Paul Devlin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 108.
[174] Ibid., 108.
[175] Ibid., 109.

these stories, in particular the ones delivered before white listeners, made use of racist minstrel-show humor and have been interpreted either as a simple reinforcement of anti-Black stereotypes[176] or as subversive "masking" that used anti-Black humor to argue for black interests.[177] Washington, however, also recounted anecdotes intended to exhort his black listeners to greater self-reliance. Washington's biographer Louis Harlan recounts one story that the orator used frequently during the late 19th century:

> Perhaps Washington's best story illustrated the theme of self-help. Two frogs fell into the churn after the milkmaid had finished her work. Both of them struggled to keep afloat in the milk. One finally said: 'It's hopeless. I give up. Goodbye, world!' and sank out of sight. The other frog refused to say die. He kept on kicking. And next morning when the maid returned, she found a frog sitting on a pat of butter he had churned. The moral, of course, was "Keep kicking.[178]

Within Washington's rhetoric of racial uplift, anecdotes like this one played an important role in conveying to black listeners the sort of success that was possible with hard work and strong moral character.

Indeed, *Up From Slavery*, which begins with Washington as fatherless enslaved child and ends with Washington as university president and honorary Harvard M.A.,[179] can be seen as his definitive statement on the subject. Michael Rudolph West, in his 2006 study *The Education of Booker T. Washington:*

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[176] See, for example, Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 234-235.
[177] This is the interpretation put forward by Houston A. Baker Jr. in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. Baker argues that in his Atlanta Exposition speech, Washington "turns minstrel nonsense into what he believes is the only available good sense, or, sense intended for a common black good." (p 32).
[178] Harlan, *The Making of a Black Leader,* 235.
[179] Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Signet Classics, 2010), 209.

American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations, and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, in his 1982 study *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* both observe that the inspirational narrative of *Up From Slavery* is essentially an African-American recasting of the rags-to-riches Horatio Alger stories popular at the turn of the 20th century.[180] Furthermore, stories like *Up from Slavery* and the aforementioned frog in the butter churn anecdote carried the implication to black hearers that they, too, could improve their lot if they only developed a useful skill and applied themselves hard enough. As Harlan notes, *Up from Slavery* provided a "success model" to many black Americans, who "identified themselves with the protagonist and lived vicariously through his hardships, struggles, and success": "If Washington could successfully transcend not only poverty but prejudice, any other black man could believe that he too could rise above his lowly beginnings."[181]

Murray's concept of the "representative anecdote" is a strikingly conservative counterproposal to the federal anti-poverty and anti-discrimination measures being proposed by Kardiner, Clark, and Moynihan. As discussed in the introduction, Murray's argument for the didactic power of art as an inspirational example for life and his evocation of a spirit of self-reliance that he associates with jazz both evoke the idealized black self-sufficiency of the Jim Crow era in response to increasing calls for government intervention in black communities. Moreover,

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[180] Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 113-115; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 90.
[181] Harlan, *The Making of a Black Leader*, 252.

the representative anecdote as it appears in Murray's writing descends from the moralistic storytelling that characterized Booker T. Washington's rhetoric. Murray's belief that successful works of art must also be "instructive," "moralizing," and "useful" means that the representative artwork resembles on some level the old Booker T. Washington anecdote about the frog in the butter churn.

Murray on the Inefficacy of "Moral Outcry Rhetoric"

In *Stomping the Blues*, Murray presents jazz and blues as African American responses to universal existential struggles while also arguing that black musicians were essentially craftsmen and not political actors. Murray's de-emphasis of the political in his blues idiom reflected his aesthetic concerns and the political environment of the post-Civil Rights Movement period while also recalling the public stance of Booker T. Washington.

When he wrote his most notable works, *The Omni-Americans, The Hero and the Blues*, and *Stomping the Blues*, Murray was notably at odds with his younger contemporaries. Writers on black music like Amiri Baraka, in his 1963 book *Blues People*, argued for an overtly politically engaged conception of black music as an expression of black struggles. Although Murray conformed to his Black Arts Movement contemporaries in celebrating the distinctiveness and resiliency of African American folk culture, he differed markedly from them in his de-emphasis of black music's political dimensions and his more general disinterest in political activism.

In *The Omni-Americans*, for example, Murray strikes an ambivalent position on the use of black activism. He is at once supportive of political protest in a general sense and intensely skeptical of the political work of his contemporaries. For example, he voices enthusiastic support for black activists, broadly speaking, as representing the best of the American spirit of freedom in contrast to racist opponents to racial progress. "It is the political behavior of black activists," he argues, "not that of norm-calibrated Americans, that best represents the spirit of such constitutional norm-ideals as freedom, justice, equality, fair representation, and democratic processes." "Black Americans, not Americans devoted to whiteness, exemplify the open disposition toward change, diversity, unsettled situations, new structures and experience, that are prerequisite to the highest level of citizenship." For Murray, black civil rights protestors were "the true descendent[s] of the Founding Fathers" while "Americans devoted to whiteness" were "the rednecked progeny of the Red Coats."[182]

But Murray seems to have found the leading black activists of the late 1960s questionable at best. As discussed earlier, Murray cast the influential sociological work of Kenneth Clark as "welfare sociology" that reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of African American life and culture. Studies like *Dark Ghetto*, Murray writes in the introduction to *The Omni-Americans*, "violate one's common everyday breeze-tasting sense of life precisely because they do not meet the standards of validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness that the best

[182] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 36.

scientists have always insisted on. As a result they provide neither a truly practical sociology of the so-called black community nor a dependable psychology of black behavior."[183] *The Omni-Americans* is also peppered with jabs at "empty-handed black hot-air militants," who, in Murray's opinion, held overly theoretical opinions, were misguided in their suspicion of the black middle class, and were misinformed in their celebration of the African roots of black American culture.

Murray argued that these approaches black politics based on "moral outcry" and that they ought to be replaced by "the dirty business of wheeling and dealing with political machines." This was because "the civil rights movement [had] now entered a stage that requires them to shift their primary emphasis from protest to practical politics."[184] Here Murray seems to be arguing vaguely for a pragmatic politics based on deal making rather than an appeal to the moral sensibilities of white lawmakers. He elaborated on the implications of his critique of "moral outcry rhetoric" in his critique of Richard Wright's fiction. "Protest or finger-pointing fiction," Murray argued, "addresses itself to the humanity of the dragon in the very process of depicting him as a fire-snorting monster: 'Shame on you, Sir Dragon,' it says in effect, 'be a nice man and a good citizen.' (Or is it, 'Have mercy, Massa?')"[185] Murray, in effect, criticizes moralistic black activism on the grounds of political realism (it avoids the nitty-gritty facts of American political work) and

[183] Ibid., 5.
[184] Ibid., 61.
[185] Murray, *The Hero and the Blues,* 45.

black pride (appealing to the guilt of white oppressors is akin to enslaved people begging for mercy from "Massa").

If we look back on the political life of Washington, of course, we can see that he represented the archetype of the pragmatic wheeling-and-dealing attitude that Murray advocates in *The Omni-Americans*. Washington is famous (and in some circles infamous) for the way he pragmatically adapted his leadership to the worsening race relations of the early 20th century by counseling accomodationism. Mindful of the rampant violence against black Americans in the early 20th century deep south, Washington advocated for racial uplift via self-help and only challenged racist laws covertly.[186][187] At the same time as he assumed an accomodationist public posture, Washington used his position as nominal leader of the black community and his close relationship with President Theodore Roosevelt to secure federal appointments for black lawyers, postmasters, and census takers, among others. While this hardly made up for the catastrophic denial of black political participation that followed the end of Reconstruction and the wave of southern disenfranchisement of black voters, it served to maintain at least marginal black presence in federal appointments during the years of Washington's leadership.[188]

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[186] Kevern Verney, *The Art of the Possible: Booker T. Washington and Black Leadership in the United States, 1881-1925* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 34.
[187] For a detailed discussions of Washington's secret civil rights activities, see Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 244-251. Harlan describes Washington's covert tests of the Louisiana and Alabama grandfather clauses, the exclusion of black people from jury panels, and segregated sleeping car policies.
[188] For a more thorough discussion of Washington's work to secure black federal appointments under the Roosevelt administration, see Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 253-260.

In this way Washington's leadership exemplifies the sort of attitude Murray seems to call for in *The Omni-Americans*: maintaining an optimistic attitude and avoiding the excesses of "moral outcry rhetoric" while also seeking to manipulate the levers of power behind the scenes. Murray's observation that "while Negroes obviously enjoy making white people nervous, they much prefer to keep them guessing" effectively summarizes the juxtaposition between Washington's public platform and secret activism.

It is important to remember that Murray and Washington lived in dramatically different political eras for black Americans. Washington's de-emphasis of protest as a legitimate means of action for black Americans was largely due to the prevalence of anti-black violence in his immediate surroundings. An outspoken condemnation of white racism would likely have both cost him his life and severely compromised his life's work at Tuskegee Institute. Even Louis Harlan, who is very critical of Washington's leadership, acknowledges that "[Washington] was severely restricted by the historical context of his leadership":

> The overheated atmosphere of the South at the turn of the century resembled that of a crisis center on the eve of war. Lynching became a more than weekly occurrence; discrimination and humiliation of blacks were constant and pervasive and bred a whole literature and behavioral science of self-justification. Race riots terrorized blacks in many cities, and not only in the South. It would have required not courage but foolhardiness for Washington, standing with both feet in Alabama, to have challenged this raging white aggression openly and directly. Even unqualified verbal protest would have brought him little support from either southern blacks or white well-wishers.[189]

[189] Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan*, ed. Raymond W. Smock (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 1988), 171.

Murray, in contrast, was articulating his "blues idiom" themes of pragmatism and self-help in the complicated aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. The legislative successes of the 1950s and 1960s and the rollback of legal discrimination in jobs, education, and housing meant that, for a minority of well-off black people, hard work and self-reliance might plausibly lead to a comfortable life.[190] On the other hand, the glaring persistence of racial inequality in America's inner cities continued to render this rhetoric ineffective or even naive and instead fostered a new militancy among black activists.

Murray acknowledges and attempts to neutralize these tensions between black upward mobility and black militancy in *The Omni-Americans*. At one point, he argues that "competing with other Americans for status, employment, total social equality, and basic political power" is the most "revolutionary, radical, and devastating action any U.S. Negro can engage in." For this reason, he continues, "it is the so-called middle class Negro (or Negro with so-called middle class aspirations) who represents the most fearsome revolutionary threat to the white status quo."[191] This assertive middle-class integrationism would indeed have been "radical" and "devastating" in Washington's day—particularly because of the mention of "total social equality." But it comes across as precisely the opposite in the context of the early 1970s, when black separatist politics were rapidly

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[190] For a discussion of the emergence of this "new" black middle class in the wake of the legislative successes of the Civil Rights Movement, see Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class*; Karyn Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*; and Charles Banner-Haley, *The Fruits of Integration: Black Middle-Class Ideology and Culture, 1960-1990.*

[191] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans*, 90.

approaching the apex represented by the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Separatist and integrationist black delegates to the convention joined together in chanting "It's Nation Time"[192] and calling for an independent black political party, capping what Manning Marable later called the "zenith" of the Black Power movement. "What was particularly important about Gary," Marable argued in his 2006 study *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, "was the political tone of black nationalism which filled the convention hall, and affected the policies and even the rhetoric of all BEOs [Black Elected Officials] and diehard integrationists."[193] Murray's blues idiom was politically better suited to the 1940s and 1950s than to the 1960s and 70s political conversations in which he sought to participate.

Murray's belief that "moral outcry" was an ineffective political stance also had important implications for his views on the social and political significance of black music. In *Stomping the Blues*, his longest discussion of black music's significance, he cautions against any "overemphasis on the sociopolitical" in analyses of the jazz and blues. "But even when blues lyrics address themselves directly to negative economic, political, and judiciary circumstances," he argues, "far more often than not, the main emphasis is likely to be placed on the victim's

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[192] Stephen Tuck, "'We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off': The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (October 2008): 645.

[193] Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 120. For a detailed discussion of the 1972 convention and the rapid decline of the Black Power movement that followed soon after, see Leonard N. Moore, *The Defeat of Black Power: Civil Rights and the National Black Political Convention of 1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018).

love life." Casting overtly political blues songs as "pseudo-folk lyrics currently so dear to the hearts of avant-garde night-club patrons and self-styled revolutionary revelers," he maintains that traditional—and, by implication, authentic—blues are concerned with "damage to a love affair."[194][195] Murray contends that the blues do in fact have political implications, but that rather than empty protestation they embodied a "disposition to persevere (based on a tragic, or, better still, an epic sense of life)." In this way, Murray places the political significance of the blues within the self-reliant attitude that he characterizes in *Stomping the Blues* and elsewhere as an essential feature of "Omni-American" culture.

Having discounted other writers' attempts to find dissenting political messages in the blues, Murray goes on to discount the connections that black musicians themselves were making between their music and politics: "Ordinarily blues musicians do not show very much conscious involvement with the philosophical implications of what they play." "Even when some of those who aligned themselves with bop, cool, and the special extensions of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman" he continues, "used to claim that the new music represented a new and even revolutionary message, they never really addressed themselves to the content of the new message, or the old one either for that matter."[196] Murray's

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[194] Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, 66.
[195] Angela Davis has convincingly argued that an "emphasis on the sociopolitical" and a discussion of romantic relationships are far from mutually exclusive in the blues. Indeed, love affairs were themselves politically significant assertions of freedom in the historical context of the early blues, when black Americans had only recently gained sexual autonomy after centuries of sexual exploitation under slavery. See Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).
[196] Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, 227-230.

rather blithe dismissal here is deeply condescending to the black jazz musicians of the 1960s, many of whom (including Archie Shepp and Abbey Lincoln) were explicit about the connection between their aesthetic experimentation and the broader black political struggle.[197]

Influential scholarship in jazz studies has cast further doubt on Murray's separation of political activism from the hard work of artistic self-improvement. In her 2007 study *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa*, for example, Ingrid Monson insightfully explains that jazz musicians at the height of the Civil Rights Movement had to strike a delicate balance between activism and artistic discipline:

> Individual musicians made their way through the highly volatile landscape of the early 1960s amid deeply conflicting forces—those of the civil rights movement that demanded activism and those of the music, which demanded disciplined practicing and much hard work. Even the most artistically single-minded musicians were often not satisfied by standing on the sidelines. Participation in the movement or making music speak to the astonishing events taking place in the South were choices that some musicians felt added to the authenticity and gravitas of their music.[198]

We can see, then, that the pragmatic and conservative slant of Murray's blues idiom was out of step with a broad swath of black American political thought and musical practice during the 1960s and 1970s. Although Murray doesn't cite Washington in *The Omni-Americans* or *Stomping the Blues*, it seems likely in light

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[197] See John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 253-255.

[198] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160. Also see Monson's article "Abbey Lincoln's *Straight Ahead*: Jazz in the Era of the Civil Rights Movement" in *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest*, ed. Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 171-194.

of his other writings and his later comments that Washington's approach—emphasizing pragmatism and black pride while deemphasizing overt protest—was an important influence on his outlook. The pronounced influence of early 20th-century racial uplift rhetoric on his politics helps to explain the markedly old-fashioned tone of Murray's ideology relative to the increasingly revolutionary currents around him in the 1960s and 1970s. His outlook, as we have seen, put him into tension with a political and cultural moment in black America that was increasingly concerned with outspoken protest.

Wynton Marsalis's *Blood on the Fields* as Representative Anecdote

Having examined some of the self-help based tenets of Murray's blues idiom, I now examine the ways in which Wynton Marsalis's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1996 oratorio *Blood on the Fields* is a representative anecdote that hews carefully to the "ancestral imperative" that Murray identifies as the criterion for representative works of African American art: to "become American." The themes of *Blood on the Fields*, in particular the way Marsalis narrates an enslaved African man's gradual acceptance of his new American identity, faithfully conform to Murray's aforementioned ideals regarding black identity and antagonistic cooperation.

Although Marsalis described *Blood on the Fields* as "not really the history of blacks" but rather "an American story,"[199] the oratorio depicts the uniquely "black"

[199] April 9, 1997 appearance on *Good Morning America*. http://wyntonmarsalis.org/videos/view/wynton-talking-about-his-pulitzer-prize-winning-blood-on-the-fields

experiences of the middle passage and the ensuing adjustment to enslavement in an unfamiliar land. The action opens in the cargo hold of a slave ship. Jesse, an African prince, and Leona, a commoner, have been captured and are being transported in chains to America. We follow them as they are sold at auction and marched in a coffle to a plantation.

Fourteen years later, Jesse remains furious at being reduced from royalty to a state of servitude. He decides to run away but first goes to consult Juba, a wise fellow enslaved man. Juba counsels him that he will never achieve freedom until he learns to love his new land, sing with soul, and decide on what he will call himself after he is free. Jesse ignores Juba's advice and runs away, before being recaptured and brutally beaten. After this experience, Jesse reevaluates his motivation for seeking freedom. He learns to love Leona, who in turn has fallen in love with him. He abandons his attachment to the "old way" of his former royal identity, and he and Leona run away together.

Blood on the Fields bears important resemblances to *Black, Brown, and Beige*, Duke Ellington's 1943 "Tone Parallel to the History of the Negro in America." Like *Black, Brown, and Beige*, *Blood on the Fields* is an ambitious extended work that both conveys a broad story about the history of African Americans and contains strong autobiographical undertones. In his 1993 article "The Genesis of 'Black, Brown, and Beige," Mark Tucker notes that *Black, Brown, and Beige* "not only presented a panoramic view of the black experience but retold [Ellington's] own story":

> The audience at the Carnegie Hall premiere saw standing before them an American whose African ancestors had struggled under slavery. His grandparents had lived in the rural South…Later, [Ellington] participated in the historic journey north, traveling to New York and the dynamic black metropolis of Harlem.[200]

Alex Stewart, in his 2007 analysis of *Blood on the Fields*, presents the similar argument that "*BOTF* is a very personal story":

> Marsalis's discovery of jazz traditions and past heroes such as Armstrong and Ellington reshaped his music. Marsalis *is* the African prince, who, in spite of 'royal birth' into a musical family, must learn the blues in order to achieve mastery. Similarly, the elder Juba represents Marsalis's gurus, Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch. Juba, with his clowning and tomfoolery, suggests the struggle that Marsalis initially had appreciating the roles of early black entertainers he found 'tommish.'…Marsalis has cast himself perfectly for his multiple roles in *Blood on the Fields*. As trumpeter, composer-bandleader, and young artist, he plays the heroes Armstrong and Ellington as well as Jesse, the proud African prince.[201]

The two pieces cover similar themes, including evocations of the work songs of the enslaved (called "Work Song" in both works). Both pieces depict the development of a distinctly African-American form of Christianity, albeit in different ways. In *Black, Brown, and Beige*, "Come Sunday" renders Christian faith as a source of resilience and refuge for the enslaved. The pairing of "Oh What a Friend We Have In Jesus" and "God Don't Like Ugly" in *Blood on the Fields*, meanwhile, juxtaposes the false consciousness of master-approved Christianity with the subversive implications of the slaves' religion.

Perhaps the most poignant parallel between *Blood on the Fields* and Ellington's earlier work was related to the Pulitzer Prize. When Marsalis's

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[200] Mark Tucker, "The Genesis of 'Black, Brown, and Beige'" (*Black Music Research Journal* 13, no. 2 (Autumn 1993), 67-86), 84.
[201] Alex Stewart, *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 301.

Ellington-inspired work won the Pulitzer that had been denied Ellington over three decades before, it was a powerful symbolic victory for jazz as a "legitimate" music. Marsalis noted this parallel at the time. In an April 9, 1997 appearance on *Good Morning America*, while discussing his position as the first jazz composer to win the Pulitzer, Marsalis made a pointed reference to Ellington's experience: "Duke was up for a [Pulitzer] prize at one time, but the year that he was supposed to get it, they didn't give out one."[202] Although Ellington had been nominated to receive a special Pulitzer for his entire oeuvre and not a traditional Pulitzer for an individual composition, Marsalis's reference to Ellington still resonated with a sense of righted wrongs.

Marsalis's frequent evocations of Ellington, both in his interviews after winning the Pulitzer and the subject of his oratorio, make it relatively easy to see the earlier composer's influence on *Blood on the Fields*. To see the ways in which Marsalis incorporates the ideology of Albert Murray, his other major influence, we have to look at the themes of the libretto and the significance of certain musical gestures within the work.

As mentioned before, the most important story arc in *Blood on the Fields* is the process by which Jesse, the proud African prince, becomes American. After being buffeted by the horrors of enslavement and torture, Jesse eventually comes to reject the nihilistic anger that he expresses in the first sections of the oratorio in

[202] April 9, 1997 appearance on *Good Morning America*. http://wyntonmarsalis.org/videos/view/wynton-talking-about-his-pulitzer-prize-winning-blood-on-the-fields

favor of the constructive and resilient attitude toward adversity that characterizes Murray's African American blues idiom. He is helped along in this process through the advice of Juba but most importantly through the support of Leona.

In Section III ("You Don't Hear No Drums") and Section V ("Plantation Coffle March"), Jesse's primary emotion is impotent rage, as he clings to his royal pride and his hatred of America. "Hear me once more common girl/In rage piss I on the world," he shouts at Leona as they are chained near each other on the slave ship. As he and Leona trudge on the long march from the slave market to the plantation of their new owner, Jesse repeats a four-line stanza:

I will not slave for any man
With each slurred step I hate this land
I am a prince, no common man
And soon I will be free

This is in marked contrast with Leona's varied and descriptive text:

And slow we marched for all to see
Necks wringed with iron in agony
We drag on feet cut bare by ground
New born we bring this land fresh gloom
Rot baked in death ship's hot wet womb
Chained men, women and little ones
Reduced to dogs by whips and guns

The juxtaposition between Jesse and Leona's lines here provides an effective representation of Jesse's stubbornness and pride, while also foreshadowing his refusal to adapt to his new surroundings.

It is only in Section XII, after his initial escape attempt fails and he is given forty lashes, that Jesse realizes the error of his ways:

Oh what a fool I've been
Oh what a fool I've been
Not thinking
Not living in this land
Foolishly I live back in the old ways
Want to be back home to drive my own slaves
Now, I feel the pain
No man should own a man

The first step in Jesse's becoming "American" comes at the end of this section, when he abandons the rigid sense of social hierarchy that he brought with him from Africa. He comes to the depressing realization that not only is he no better than anyone else, his attitude has left him alone in the world:

I'm no slave
Not no prince
Just a man
Just a lonely man
No more!

We also see here that the rigidly hierarchical slaveholding African society embodied by Jesse up to this point echoes and evokes the description of Africa provided by Murray in *The Omni-Americans*:

> Negroes definitely were reluctant immigrants to the new world, but in view of the life they had experienced in the land of their origin, they could hardly have regarded it as a stronghold of individual freedom and limitless opportunity. Nor could they have been unmindful of the obvious fact that Africans 'back home' were as actively engaged in the slave trade as were the Europeans and Americans.[203]

Jesse can only start to become "American" by having the undemocratic ideals of Marsalis's and Murray's vision of pre-colonial Africa literally beaten out of him.

[203] Murray, *The Omni-Americans*, 17.

Indeed, the contrast between "unfree" or "undemocratic" Africa and "democratic" America is also evident in the eventual romance between Jesse and Leona, a prince and a commoner who would never have crossed paths in Africa but who suddenly become equals when enslaved in America.

As an aside, the aftermath of Jesse's beating works as a strange mirror image of the infamous scene in the 1977 *Roots* miniseries in which Kunta Kinte is whipped until he accepts his slave name. Both Kunta and Jesse, in effect, have Africa beaten out of them and America beaten into them. But while *Roots* portrays Kunta's loss of his African identity as a tragedy, Marsalis in *Blood on the Fields* portrays Jesse's same loss as a painful but necessary turning point that presages Jesse's reformation.

Indeed, the most significant moment of transformation in *Blood on the Fields* comes in Section XIII, "I Hold Out My Hand," when Jesse finally accepts Leona's love as she nurses his wounds from his first escape attempt. Leona, as she questions the value of focusing on black suffering, echoes both Murray and Washington:

But why waste all your living on dying?
Why let mocking evil spirits have their way?
Why wallow in sorrow
When love's joys can be found?

Jesse finally proclaims, "Yes, I think I understand what soul is," before launching into a duet with Leona as the two leads sing a blues. The appearance of the blues is crucial here, in a thematic sense. Jesse has finally learned to sing the blues, and

by extension has become African American. He has learned the resilience in the face of adversity that Murray and Marsalis see as the central facet of African American culture.

The next song that Jesse sings (and his final song in the oratorio) confirms this observation. "*But Jesse has learned how to play the blues,*" intones the narration. Jesse's lyrics, in contrast to his angry feelings throughout the earlier part of the libretto, express a new optimism in spite of his enslavement:

When you see me dancing down the street
Singing
Know that I sing a song with soul to be free
Which I soon will be

Where Jesse earlier reacted to his new adversity with anger and stubbornness, here he enacts what Murray would call "an affirmative and hence exemplary and heroic response to that which André Malraux describes as *la condition humaine*."[204] By choosing not to be emotionally overcome by his miserable circumstances, Jesse is "confronting acknowledging, and contending" with his new reality while also "*playing with the possibilities that are also there*."[205]

Marsalis's choices of orchestration also reflect Murray's conception of heroic self-reliance and the existential function of art. One of the most revealing musical features of *Blood on the Fields* is Marsalis's juxtaposition of tightly arranged instrumental passages with episodic moments of free improvisation. The timing of these moments of free improvisation within the oratorio's libretto reveals

[204] Murray, *The Omni-Americans,* 58.
[205] Ibid.

their significance within the overarching drama of the work. Indeed, these moments of free improvisation are short enough and rare enough that they might be better understood as brief moments of emphasis rather than periods of sustained improvisation without chord changes.

As Alex Stewart notes in his analysis of *Blood on the Fields* in his 2007 study *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz*, Marsalis uses free improvisation in the oratorio to suggest "depravity or horror."[206] For example, in Section II, set in the hold of a slave ship on the Middle Passage, the horn players temporary abandon chord changes and improvise unsettling chattering and cackling noises to accompany Leona's solo. The pairing of free improvisation with Leona's incoherent babbling suggest encroaching delirium, with the possibility that Leona may be driven insane by her trauma. Near the ending of Section XIII, "Follow the Drinking Gourd," Marsalis uses collective improvisation to signal Jesse's escalating panic in the moments before he is caught attempting to escape. Near the end of Section XV, "Forty Lashes," Wessell Anderson's somber alto saxophone melody (inspired by John Coltrane's "Alabama") gives way to several seconds of cacophonous improvisation from several members of the band. Here, the brief snatch of free improvisation suggests the immense physical and psychological pain of the lashing. The final moment of programmatic collective improvisation comes near the end of the oratorio, as Jesse and Leona make an unsuccessful attempt to escape together. As he did with a similar incident earlier

[206] Alex Stewart, *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 302.

in the oratorio, Marsalis uses free improvisation to suggest the moment before their recapture.

Marsalis's consistent use of free improvisation to represent trouble, pain, and confusion reflects a fundamental tenet behind Murray's calls for heroism and his understanding of art. Within Murray's thought, the purpose of art and of the heroic attitude in general is to combat what he calls "entropy." Both, ultimately, are about the willful imposition of human will and artistic form on the ever-encroaching forces of chaos. "Art is really about security," Murray explained in a 1994 interview with Marsalis. "The enemy is entropy, the enemy is formlessness. Art is about form. Art is about *elegant form*. If you're going to be just for tearing down something, that is as ridiculous as trying to embrace entropy, then you're gonna embrace chaos."[207] Within *Blood on the Fields*, Marsalis associates episodes of free improvisation—which is to say moments of chaos and entropy—with the terror of slavery and white supremacy: first, with the horrors of the slave ship, then with pursuit by slave catchers, and finally with a brutal lashing. Significantly, *Blood on the Fields* offers little consolation for these injustices other than the revelation that Jesse has learned to sing the blues and has decided not to fall in love with the weight of his pain. In his juxtaposition between chaos and the blues form, Marsalis writes Murray's philosophy of heroic black self-reliance into his music.

[207] Albert Murray, interview by Wynton Marsalis, *Murray Talks Music: Albert Murray on Jazz and Blues*, ed. Paul Devlin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 6.

Jesse's character arc, then, is Wynton Marsalis's dramatization of the "blues idiom" that Albert Murray deemed "a central element of the U.S. Negro life style." Jesse's individual story represents the cultural transformation that Murray and his protégé Marsalis see as the birth of a unique African-American culture. The moment when he decides to sing an optimistic, soulful song while still enslaved is the moment of heroic confrontation when the blues are born. Thus, Jesse becomes American, and *Blood on the Fields* proves itself, along with *Up from Slavery* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, a representative anecdote of the omni-American experience.

Booker T. Washington and Late 20th Century Black Politics

Booker T. Washington's platform of racial uplift through self-improvement and self-sufficiency, as we have seen, has one of its most interesting twentieth-century descendants in the political and aesthetic thought of Albert Murray. Murray, like Washington before him, takes an optimistic approach to America's pervasive racism, articulating a belief that black people uplift themselves by adopting a heroic attitude of self-sufficiency, resilience, and creativity.

Also like Washington, Murray casts the "moral outcry rhetoric" of his more vocally discontented contemporaries as a distraction from the work of self-improvement that is essential to black progress. Rejecting the "social science fiction" of activists like Kenneth Clark, Murray advocated for a return to the pragmatism of early twentieth century black conservatism. As part of this attitude,

Murray cast jazz and other "representative anecdotes" in the arts and literature as examples of triumph that might lead black individuals onward and upward. His various discussions on art, politics, and race demonstrate his belief that the struggle for civil rights could best be carried forward not by "welfare sociology" but by black individuals conforming to the heroic "blues idiom" embodied by jazz improvisers.

Furthermore, as the libretto of *Blood on the Fields* demonstrates, the optimistic ideology that Murray fashioned from Washington's ideas was an important influence on the work of Wynton Marsalis. Using the enslaved protagonist Jesse as an example, the story arc of the oratorio ultimately suggests that the appropriate response to racial oppression is resilience and creativity rather than anger.

Murray's incorporation of portions of Booker T. Washington's politics into his own 1970s ideology in some ways foreshadowed the enthusiastic re-discovery of Washington by 1980s black conservatives. As Michael Dawson notes, black conservatives who rose to prominence in universities and government positions during the Reagan-Bush years hailed Washington's emphasis on black participation in the market as key to black uplift.[208] This new generation of black conservatives also drew on Washington's emphasis on black self-reliance as

[208] Dawson, *Black Visions,* 286-287.

justification for their own hostility to federal anti-discrimination and anti-poverty programs.[209]

The key difference between Murray and the black conservatives of the 1980s lay in their differing responses to the idea of black cultural pathology. As Michael Dawson notes, the position of black neoconservatives like Thomas Sowell and Armstrong Williams entailed an acceptance of the idea of black cultural pathology forwarded by studies like the Moynihan Report: "Black conservatives call for blacks to abandon what they see as cultural pathologies." Furthermore, as Dawson notes, they expand the 1950s and 1960s notion of black pathology to include black Americans' supposedly "pathological reliance on the state."[210]

Murray's conception of black identity, in contrast, was based in part on a rejection of the notion of black pathology. Indeed, the notion of a pathological black culture would have been anathema to his idea of a "heroic" black blues idiom. As Matlin notes, Murray's critique of Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto* "placed Clark outside the boundaries of an authentic black sensibility."[211] Thus, not only was the notion of black cultural pathology wrongheaded, it was fundamentally foreign to Murray's paradigm of black identity. Murray's advocacy of black "heroism" and self-reliance is less a call for the rejection of black pathology than an encouragement to maintain an essentially self-reliant black idiom in the face of patronizing government meddling. Murray's 1970s ideology, then, was essentially

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[209] See, for example, Christopher Alan Bracey's *Saviors or Sellouts: The Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism, from Booker T. Washington to Condoleezza Rice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008)
[210] Dawson, *Black Visions*, 293.
[211] Daniel Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem?" 886.

optimistic about black culture, while the black neoconservatism that came later was essentially pessimistic.

II. "Aristocrats of Achievement": Elite Leadership in Stanley Crouch and W.E.B. Du Bois

Jazz critic and provocateur Stanley Crouch has until now received relatively little attention in the literature on jazz studies. Two important, although relatively brief, examinations of Crouch's critical approach to jazz come from John Gennari, in his 2006 book *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* and Charles Hersch, in his 2008 *Jazz Research Journal* article "Reconstructing the Jazz Tradition." Both authors include a discussion of Crouch as part of a broader analysis of the aesthetics of jazz neoclassicism. In a section of the eighth chapter of his book, Gennari outlines the broad themes of Crouch's jazz criticism, discussing his rejection of black separatism, his attempts to align jazz with the celebrated artistic traditions of Europe, his blues-and-swing-based definition of jazz, and his equation of acoustic jazz with traditional codes of black masculinity.[212] Gennari terms Crouch's advocacy for "real" jazz "a kind of new moldy-fig classicism," aligning neoclassicism with the 1940s jazz critics and fans who rejected the development of modern jazz.[213]

Hersch, in the first section of a paper analyzing "neotraditionalist" (or "neotrad") and "antitraditionalist" (or "antitrad") positions within jazz criticism and scholarship, makes an important link between jazz neoclassicism and Victorian ideas about the social role of art. Hersch links Crouch's position that jazz improvisation "giv[es] *form* to the present" to Matthew Arnold, the mid-19th

[212] Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool,* 353-355.
[213] Ibid., 354.

century educator and social reformer who argued that aesthetic form played an important role in staving off social chaos.[214] Hersch's linkage of Crouch and the neoclassicists to Victorian cultural politics is crucial for my discussion of Crouch in this chapter, although I disagree with his assertion that neoclassicism has an "antidemocratic core."[215]

Some useful coverage of Crouch comes from books focused on African-American conservatism, though the nature of Crouch's ideology makes any linkage between him and the neoconservative ideology of the 1990s difficult. Angela Dillard, in her 2001 book *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America*, characterizes Crouch as a "fellow traveler" of black conservatives, because while he has rejected the conservative label, he contributed to "constructing and legitimizing dissident, oppositional ideologies that have found a home, however problematic, within the mainstream conservative movement."[216] Dillard goes on to argue that Crouch is an "integrationist" black conservative, noting that while he "[has] been generally hesitant to identify with conservative political causes or with the New Right," his critiques of racial identification/essentialism strengthened the conservative rhetoric of color-blindness.[217]

Greg Robinson, in his essay "Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and Black Cultural Conservatism," also makes a somewhat uneasy link between

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[214] Charles Hersch, "Reconstructing the Jazz Tradition," *Jazz Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2008): 12-13.
[215] Ibid., 13
[216] Angela Dillard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 13.
[217] Ibid., 30.

Crouch and mainstream conservative ideology, discussing how Crouch (though critical of free-market economics) emphasizes self-reliance and blames black people for the state of their own communities in a way that is reminiscent of black conservatives.[218] Robinson ultimately sums up the difficulty of attempting to group Crouch together with black conservative spokesmen like Thomas Sowell, admitting that "Crouch's ideas, like those of Ellison and Murray, fit uneasily into any past or present model of black political conservatism."[219]

If Crouch's politics are difficult to pin down, his outlook is especially important to any intellectual history of jazz neoclassicism because of the central role he played in the 1990s as its public face. During the period, he was a repeated guest on television shows like *Charlie Rose* and published three books: *Notes of a Hanging Judge: Essays and Reviews, 1979-1989* (1990); *The All-American Skin Game, or, the Decoy of Race: The Long and Short of It, 1990-1994* (1995); and *Always in Pursuit: Fresh American Perspectives, 1995-1997*.

Drawing on Hersch's discussion of the Victorian undercurrents in Crouch's ideology, and calling discussions of Crouch as a black conservative into question, I argue that Crouch's advocacy for neoclassical jazz during this period reflects the influence of racial uplift ideology. Specifically, Crouch's elitist cultural politics are descended from W.E.B. Du Bois's positions in *The Souls of Black Folk* in that Crouch draws on Du Bois's model of the Talented Tenth to portray Marsalis and

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[218] Greg Robinson, "Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and Modern Black Cultural Conservatism," in *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History*, ed. Peter Eisenstadt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 162-163.
[219] Ibid., 164

his cohort as cultural leaders who could lift African American culture out of its state of decadence.

Indeed, the purported decadence of late 20th century African American mass culture is the key counterpart to the uplifting potential of the neoclassical jazz renaissance within Crouch's discourse. For Crouch, as we shall see, the misguided cultural developments that began in the late 1960s led black America into a rapid cultural decline from the transcendent political and cultural heights of the Civil Rights Movement. The neoclassical jazz of the 1980s and 1990s represented, for Crouch, the potential for cultural renewal after a decades-long interval of decay. Crouch would in his writings and appearances position the "Young Lions" as a sort of cultural elite that might lead African Americans—and Americans more generally—out of the state of degradation into which they had declined.

Crouch's strategy of presenting jazz musicians as agents of an uplifting black high culture separate from the supposedly degraded black mass culture relied on jazz's newfound institutional respectability as a music taught in conservatories and performed in sacralized concert halls once reserved for Western art music. His argument for jazz as high culture also depends on the music's embodiment of the Enlightenment ideals of universal humanism. In appealing to idealized notions of Enlightenment humanism and Western civilization, to quote Kevin Gaines's analysis of uplift ideology, Crouch attempts to "incorporat[e] 'the race' into ostensibly universal but deeply racialized ideological

categories of Western progress and civilization."[220] Thus, Crouch's position might best be understood as a return to the early-twentieth century cultural politics of uplift in response to the widespread influence of black separatism and ethnic identity studies, which he openly reviled.

This chapter of my dissertation will attempt to do three things. The first of these is to establish Crouch's pessimistic understanding of black American history, from the highlights of black engagement with the political and intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment to what he saw as the contemporary state of decadence. The second is to establish the relationship between Crouch's ideas and Du Boisian thought, using Crouch's writing in his 2004 book *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk* as a guide. After providing a general overview of Crouch's understanding of Du Bois, I focus on Crouch's endorsement of the Talented Tenth idea and its relationships to his advocacy for the Young Lions of jazz neoclassicism. Finally, I attempt to situate Crouch's cultured elite of young jazz musicians within broader historical trends in jazz education.

"Clichés of Degradation": Stanley Crouch on 20th Century Black America

Stanley Crouch's narrative of black American history hinges on black Americans' relationship to what he calls "Western civilization"[221]—a term that in his usage can be partially summarized as the artistic, political, and intellectual

[220] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv
[221] Stanley Crouch, *The All-American Skin Game, or, the Decoy of Race: The Long and Short of It, 1990-1994* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), 35.

legacy of the Enlightenment. "Seriously examined," he writes, "those Negro leaders and symbols of resistance to dehumanization [including Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and the song "We Shall Overcome"] have a moral ancestry rooted in the ongoing Western debate that has led to the redefinitions of society and the rights of the people in it."[222] Crouch argues that black America's original greatness came from black people's robust engagement with the Western heritage of the Enlightenment, in particular the framework of universal humanism and the development and application of objective standards of quality in both the sciences and the arts.[223]

Thus, Crouch's understanding of black America's trajectory centers on black Americans' willingness to assume what he sees as their rightful place within Western civilization, and to accept the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment as their own. Furthermore, aesthetic hierarchies and politics are inextricably intertwined within Crouch's narrative, both because Crouch sees political engagement in a democracy as growing out of a firm grounding in the exemplary traditions of the Western canon and because he draws firm boundaries between those canonical traditions and corrupting influences like the mass media. In this sense, then, the arts and humanities are the central component of Crouch's understanding of and prescription for black America, and his opinion on the state

[222] Ibid., 56.

[223] Crouch's position is based on, to say the least, a very sympathetic and generous understanding of the Age of Reason. His position on the relationship between black people and Enlightenment notions of universal humanism runs directly counter to the work of scholars like Orlando Patterson and to the discourse of Afro-Pessimism, both of which are based on the premise that Enlightenment notions of universal humanity are founded on a conception of blackness as inhuman.

of humanities education determines the trajectory of his narrative of black American history.

Within Crouch's narrative of black American participation in Western civilization, slavery and the American Revolution represent the start of black American's productive engagement with the ideals and cultural products of the Enlightenment West. When enslaved people risked their lives to learn how to read, Crouch explains, they were displaying "that most stubbornly human involvement in the development of an inner life" and in the process "inserting themselves into a world beyond the one imposed upon them" by the regime of chattel slavery. Their illicit engagement with literature and philosophy gave them what Crouch calls "intellectual tools" that worked to "broaden their recognition of how the world was detailed and assessed" until they were able to articulate "their own variations on the arguments against taxation without representation."[224]

Crouch argues that, by reading the literature of the Age of Reason and using it to argue for their own humanity, black Americans began to create what he calls a "flesh-and-blood Enlightenment" that "purified" Enlightenment ideology of its original racism. This "purified" Enlightenment tradition of universal humanism reached its zenith in Civil Rights demonstrations like the March on Washington, which Crouch argues demonstrated that "this culture is usually bettered when we

[224] Crouch, *All-American Skin Game,* xii-xiii.

have as many people as possible intelligently interacting, when quality takes precedence over point of social origin, class, race, sex, nationality, and religion."[225]

Crouch holds the Movement up as a culminating example of the potential of interracial collaboration and the recognition of shared humanity across demographic lines. In Crouch's telling, the Civil Rights Movement succeeded both because of the inclusive nature of universal humanism and because of the universal moral implications of black oratory as represented by Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. He describes the March on Washington as having exemplified American pluralism, because it brought together "representatives of many who had previously been done wrong and many who were presently suffering. They formed a rainbow coalition that was soon lost in an electrical storm of xenophobia."[226]

Furthermore, for Crouch, the power of black oratory harnessed by the black religious leaders of the movement is a powerful unifying force in American culture: "[The black preacher's voice] is a vernacular sound of majestic human engagement, whether personal or social, political or spiritual. And contrary to what many commentators seem to believe, it most definitely affects the sensibility of white Americans, having long resonated from one passageway of consciousness and psychology to another."[227] Figures like King, then, were powerful unifiers because the black preaching tradition represented a "majestic human engagement" that

[225] Ibid., 23.
[226] Stanley Crouch, *Notes of a Hanging Judge: Essays and Reviews, 1979-1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 7-8.
[227] Ibid., 6.

transcended racial, political, and social boundaries. This point—that black oratory is both a specifically black rhetorical tradition and that it has "universal" implications—recalls similar arguments that Crouch, along with Marsalis and Murray, make about the universality of jazz.

It might be useful here to pause and discuss what for Crouch constitutes the exemplary Western artistic and intellectual traditions with which black Americans should be engaged. Although Crouch is somewhat evasive in giving a definition of "Western civilization," we can glean some insight from the artists and works that he holds up as exemplary. For example, in a review of Leon Forrest's novel *Divine Days*, Crouch praises Forrest for fusing black "idiomatic detail" with the "worlds of literature and religion"—which are exemplified by "Shakespeare…Poe, Hawthorne, Joyce, Melville…Homer, Cain and Abel, Osiris and Set, Oedipus, Icarus, and Saint Paul."[228] Elsewhere in the same book Crouch groups jazz together with the work of "Picasso, Joyce, and Stravinsky."[229] What these references suggest is that Crouch is advocating for a cultural orientation towards canonical Western works of art like Shakespeare, Melville, the Bible, and classical mythology—albeit with a strong affection for modernism as represented by his evocations of Stravinsky, Picasso, and Joyce. To this we might also add American founding documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, both of which are frequent objects of Crouch's admiration.[230]

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[228] Crouch, *All American Skin Game,* 117.
[229] Ibid., 36.
[230] See, for example, his essay "Blues to be Constitutional" in *The All-American Skin Game*.

Crouch sees African Americans as Westerners and as the fellow heirs of these cultural riches. And yet he also sees black people as having contributed very little of value to Western culture. Indeed, Crouch has gone as far as denying that there has ever been "a substantial intellectual tradition among American Negroes."[231] Although he concedes that there have been "attempts here and there," he asserts that "very little arrived that would challenge the depth of thought found in the works of men like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edmund Wilson, T.S. Eliot, Gilbert Seldes, Lincoln Kirstein, Malcolm Cowley, Alfred Kazin, and so on." In his estimation, there is still not a "substantial body of thought on any Afro-American subject that was formed of deep studies, original theories, probing cultural examination, complex religious assessment, and schools of philosophical concern that raised questions about essences as opposed to superstitions, hearsay, and propaganda."[232] This opinion sits oddly with Crouch's celebration of individual black American theorists and writers like Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Ellison, though perhaps their individual contributions aren't enough to constitute a "substantial body of thought."

Most readers—including this writer—will interpret Crouch's near-complete dismissal of African American arts and letters as distasteful and utterly wrong. That said, his position is not without precedent in African American intellectual history. Crouch in the aforementioned statement recalls no one so much as

[231] Stanley Crouch, introduction to *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, by Harold Cruse (New York: New York Review Books, 2005), x.
[232] Ibid., x-xi.

Alexander Crummell, who struck a similar note in his 1897 Inaugural Address to the American Negro Academy:

> I doubt if there is a man in this presence who has a higher conception of Negro capacity than your speaker; and this of itself, precludes the idea, on my part, of race disparagement. But, it seems manifest to me that, as a race in this land, we have no art; we have no science; we have no philosophy; we have no scholarship. Individuals we have in each of those lines; but mere individuality cannot be recognized as the aggregation of a family, a nation, or a race; or as the interpretation of any of them. And until we attain the role of a civilization, we cannot stand up and hold our place in the world of culture and enlightenment.[233]

One possible reason for the striking similarity between these two black intellectuals almost exactly a century distant from each other is Crouch's complete disavowal of cultural relativism in favor of the "intrinsic" superiority of Western culture,[234] a critical move that instantly puts him at odds with most of his late twentieth century contemporaries and points back to the Eurocentric black thought of the late nineteenth century. As with Crummell's mixture of Anglophilism and anti-racism, Crouch's simultaneous commitments to universal humanism and the objective superiority of Western culture lead him to argue against racial discrimination even as he argues that most African American culture is inconsequential.[235]

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[233] Alexander Crummell, "Civilization the Primal Need of the Race: The Inaugural Address, March 5, 1897: And the Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect, First Annual Address" (Washington, D.C.: Published by the Academy, 1898), 4.
[234] Crouch, *All American Skin Game*, 41.
[235] In his 1989 biography of Crummell, Wilson Jeremiah Moses observes that Crummell and Edward Wilmot Blyden "forcefully defended the innate natural abilities of Africans as a race" even as they "nonetheless assumed the inferiority of African languages, cultures, and societies." Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 151-152.

Within this highly critical appraisal of black history and culture, the invention of jazz joins the Civil Rights Movement[236] as one of the very few highlights of black engagement in the Enlightenment intellectual project of American democracy specifically and the West more generally. Jazz, for Crouch, is a "victory for democracy" because it represents "the aesthetic dignity, which is finally spiritual, that performers can achieve and express as they go about inventing music and meeting the challenge of the moment."[237] It is a glorious black American contribution to Western culture because its musicians both "appropriated the best in Western music for their own purposes" and "extend[ed] the emotional and technical ranges of music-making."[238] Like the Civil Rights Movement, Crouch's ideal of jazz represents a combination of African American traditions with an Enlightenment appeal to a universal humanity. Or, to paraphrase his aforementioned praise of Leon Forrest, jazz combines "idiomatic detail" drawn from black life with the universal humanism of "Western civilization" at its best.

Conversely, the decline of black culture that Crouch claims began after 1965 came from black separatists' rejection of black America's Enlightenment heritage in favor of Marxism, identity politics, and Afrocentrism. This questioning of the

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[236] Although Crouch's use of the phrase "Civil Rights Movement" is somewhat ambiguous, he seems to be referring most consistently to the period from around the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Junior in 1968. For example, in implicit reference to the Movement, he writes, "In the sixties, we rather boldly said that everyone was basically the same, that if you cut someone, he or she bled, that love was love, hate was hate, hurt was hurt, evil was evil, courage was courage, and so on and on." [Crouch, *All-American Skin Game,* xiv]. He also makes reference to "the destruction of the Civil Rights Movement by black power" [Crouch, *All-American Skin Game*, 248].

[237] All-American Skin Game, 15.

[238] *Notes of a Hanging Judge*, 46.

hegemony of Western ideology represents, for Crouch, a foolish abandonment of the very values that made black America a major influence on world culture in the first place. He argues that Marxists and Afrocentrists "will use the contradiction to define the whole, asserting that Western civilization, for all its pretty ideas, is no more than the work of imperialists and racists, all seeking an invincible order of geopolitical domination inextricably connected to profit and exploitation, white over black":

> The ideals of Western civilization and of the democracies that have had to struggle at pushing their policies closer and closer to the universal humanism resulting from the Enlightenment are scoffed at. Where the Marxist looks forward to a sentimental paradise of workers *uber alles*, the Afrocentrist speaks of a paradise lost and the possibility of a paradise regained—if only black people will rediscover the essentials of their African identity.[239]

For Crouch, the "retreat" from the glories of black America's "purified" Enlightenment came as a direct result of black people's embrace of intertwined notions of cultural and political separatism:

> It was surely a flight that called for embracing black power, black nationalism, black studies, the racist rants that were known as 'revolutionary black art,' and a comical but tragic version of leadership that recently reiterated itself in the outlandish antics of the advisers in the Tawana Brawley case, all of whom were quick to call any Afro-American critical of their charges and tactics some sort of a traitor to the collective skin tone.[240]

[239] Ibid., 35.
[240] Notes of a Hanging Judge, x.

In this passage, Crouch groups ideological changes in academia together with the political changes that followed the Civil Rights Movement, specifically black power and black nationalism. As the reference to the Tawana Brawley case shows, Crouch saw the embrace of separatist ideology as having defined black politics for the worse from the late 1960s through the present day. He would lambaste NAACP director Ben Chavis, for example, for his separatist-inspired embrace of divisive figures like Louis Farrakhan.[241]

Crouch would eventually come to see himself as at war with intellectual and political tendencies toward separatism that became influential after the mid-1960s. Commenting on the twenty-five years between the 1965 and 1990, Crouch claims that "what must be addressed is the nature of the enemy within, the influential dimensions of what must finally be recognized as a vision of American society that leads not toward democratic vibrance but the limitations of Balkanization." "In fact," Crouch concludes, "I now believe the discussion of race is far too influenced by a body of ideas reflecting the amount of decay that has taken place in the Afro-American intellectual, political, and lower-class communities."[242]

Although Crouch's narrative of black decline is difficult to place on a spectrum of political affiliation, his description of the cultural decay that supposedly afflicted black communities after the mid-1960s triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement does have certain similarities with the narrative that drove black conservative discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. As Angela Dillard explains, the

[241] All-American Skin Game, 70-74.
[242] Ibid., 22.

Black Power movement and black cultural nationalism more generally were among the most common targets for black conservative criticism. Black conservative ideologues, broadly speaking, rejected these movements because of their emphasis on racial unity and black separatism at the expense of traditional conservative values like individualism and meritocracy.[243]

Eric Porter, in his important study *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists*, observes that Crouch joins neoconservatives in "demonizing the 1960s," because his criticisms of cultural nationalism "in effect place on the black freedom movement a heavy burden of blame for the problems of American society."[244] While this is broadly accurate, I would argue that there is a crucial difference between Crouch's position and those of his neoconservative contemporaries. This can be summarized as a difference in emphasis: Crouch's sense of the problem and its solution is based in culture, while black conservatives' sense of the problem and solution is centered on economics.[245]

Contemporary black conservatism, as codified at the Fairmont Conference in December 1980, grew from an effort to generate black support for the neoliberal

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[243] Angela Dillard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 81-82.
[244] Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 327.
[245] In this respect Crouch somewhat resembles Shelby Steele, a prominent black neoconservative and English professor. Nonetheless, Crouch would depart sharply from Steele in critiquing the neoconservative assault on federal antipoverty programs. For more on Steele, see Christopher Alan Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts: The Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism, from Booker T. Washington to Condoleezza Rice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 142-146.

economic policies of the Reagan administration.[246] The high-profile black spokesmen of what Hanes Walton, Jr. calls the black conservative "pressure group" worked tirelessly to popularize talking points that delegitimized the legacy of Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" reforms. They argued that excessive government intervention was a negative influence on the black community, and that the real solution to black America's problems lay in laissez-faire capitalism and the restoration of traditional family values.[247] Black separatism and black nationalism, within this framework, were negative developments in that they displaced the individualist ethic seen as crucial to success in a free market economy.[248] Culture is important to this explanation only insofar as the government safety net of Great Society liberalism was blamed for destroying the proudly self-reliant culture of poor black communities.[249]

Crouch, by contrast, places far greater weight on the value of capital-"C" Culture—in other words, the arts and humanities—within black American communities. Instead of celebrating what Ondaatje calls the "emancipatory

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[246] For a detailed discussion of the Fairmont Conference, see Hanes Walton, Jr., "Remaking African American Public Opinion, in *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 149.
[247] Hanes Walton Jr., "Remaking African American Public Opinion," in *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 151
[248] For further discussions of black conservative ideology's emphasis on individualism, see Walton, "Remaking African American Public Opinion," 145-146; Sherri Smith, "the Individual Ethos," in *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States*; Michael Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America*, 6. Smith argues that black conservative individualism has three tenets: the ability to "transcend" race, honesty with oneself and others, and the ability to see knowledge as the product of individual reasoning instead of collective consciousness. Smith writes that within black conservative ideology, "the notion of the collective is problematic because it supposedly undermines the heterogeneity of the African American community…In place of what they consider to be a homogeneous racial collective that emphasizes a victim status and collective oppression, black conservatives offer the individual."
[249] Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals*, 99.

potential of capitalism,"[250] Crouch encourages black students to cultivate an "inner life" and to recognize that "every ethnic group has a heritage of its own and is also heir to symbols of inspiration as different as Michael Jordan and William Shakespeare."[251] This broad cultural literacy would, presumably, give black students the intellectual tools essential for leading their communities into a better future. Indeed, he specifically criticizes neoconservative proposals in a long essay at the end of his 1995 book *The All-American Skin Game*:

> They have come to believe that the less government the society has the better. Washington, D.C. is perceived as the enemy of the people, of the honest citizen and the hard working businessman. Their sense is that things went off the deep end in the middle sixties when the Lyndon Johnson-led federal government attempted a Roosevelt redux with the legislation and social programs that game forward under the banner of building "The Great Society," a thrust intent on righting racial wrongs, lifting those stuck in the mud of the lower class, and battling with prejudicial hiring policies…Far too often, those residing in the command tower take on the stiffness of ideologues rather than the feeling of high-minded improvisers who realize that the United States is an extemporizing democracy that continually reinvents policy in order to come closer to resolving its difficulties in the face of folly, corruption, and mediocrity.[252]

Crouch, of course, also believes that things went off the deep end in the middle 60s, and he is in broad agreement with black conservatives about the degraded state of black culture and black communities in the 1980s and 1990s. But he points an accusatory finger at black cultural separatism rather than the government welfare programs he sees as countering "racial wrongs" and "prejudicial hiring

[250] Ibid., 93.
[251] Crouch, *All-American Skin Game*, 32.
[252] Ibid., 254-255.

policies." Crouch sees black separatism as encouraging black Americans not to engage with Western culture's "marvelously rich offering of human achievement."[253]

On this point, it is important to note that Crouch's characterization of post-1965 black cultural politics is based on what can most charitably be described as a profound misunderstanding of both the Black Power Movement and Afrocentrism. Crouch consistently underestimates the extent to which both of these political/intellectual developments were engaged with the heritage of the Enlightenment and with Western culture more generally. For example, prominent Party member Angela Davis is superbly educated in the Western tradition, having earned a BA in French from Brandeis University, an MA in Philosophy from the University of California San Diego, and a doctorate in Philosophy from Humboldt University in Berlin—incidentally, the same institution where W.E.B. Du Bois underwent graduate study in the 1890s. In the course of her studies, Davis engaged with the work of such canonical Western authors as Flaubert, Balzac, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Proust, Sartre,[254] Plato, Aristotle, and Kant,[255] among many others.

Furthermore, the Enlightenment ideology of the American Revolution had far more relevance to leftist revolutionaries than Crouch seemed willing to admit. Point number ten on the Ten Point Program of the Black Panther Party, for

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[253] Ibid., 32.
[254] Angela Davis, *An Autobiography* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), 125.
[255] Ibid., 134-135.

example, is essentially an extended quote from the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson's quintessential statement of universal humanism.[256] With this quotation from America's founding document, we see the leaders of the Party doing exactly what Crouch praises his enslaved black ancestors for doing—appropriating the humanistic ideology of the Enlightenment and using it to argue for the recognition of black humanity.

Vietnamese communist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh is another example of a radical leftist using the Declaration of Independence as inspiration. Historian David Armitage calls the Vietnamese declaration of independence, which begins with quotations from the second paragraph of Jefferson's Declaration, the post-World War II anticolonial document "most clearly patterned on the American declaration."[257] Armitage argues that, by patterning Vietnam's declaration on the American original, Ho Chi Minh hoped to encourage American support for the anticolonial struggle against the French and to place Vietnam's Communist revolution in the broader context of world revolution.[258] The Declaration might thus be said to have far more radical implications than Crouch concedes in his celebration of universal Enlightenment humanism and the heritage of an idealized West.

Furthermore, the Afrocentrism that Crouch derides is based on more than a rejection of Western culture in favor of romantic myth. As historian Wilson

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[256] http://www.blacklivesmattersyllabus.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BPP_Ten_Point_Program.pdf
[257] David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 134.
[258] Ibid., 135.

Jeremiah Moses discusses at length in his book *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History*, Afrocentric narratives generally represent attempts to assert African people's contributions to what is now known as Western high culture, rather than a rejection of that culture all together: "It is my contention that Afrocentrism has always been a vehicle for involving black Americans in the literate culture of the Western world."[259]

So much for Crouch's critique of Marxism and Afrocentrism. His denunciation of neoliberalism, however, suggests that he has a different intellectual allegiance than the neoconservative ideology of the Reagan era. Rather than attempting to position Crouch a black neoconservative, I would argue that Crouch's cultural politics represent a return to the Eurocentric advocacy of a transformative high culture that characterized Victorian thinkers like Matthew Arnold and, crucially, W.E.B. Du Bois. Crouch's appraisal of contemporary black culture and his elevation of the liberal arts represent not so much an embrace of neoliberalism as a turn to 19th century ideologies of cultural uplift. As we shall see below, Crouch's position also entailed a rearticulation of Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" ideology.

Stanley Crouch and *The Souls of Black Folk*

[259] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42.

W.E.B. Du Bois, with his progressive social vision, and Stanley Crouch, with his reactionary cultural conservatism, may seem like odd bedfellows, but Crouch's cultural politics align with Du Bois's in striking ways. Crouch's views as expressed in his 1990s writings reflect the influence of the cultural politics first articulated by Du Bois in his classic *The Souls of Black Folk*, which are themselves influenced by the cultural criticism of Matthew Arnold. Together with Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison, Du Bois might be considered a third major influence on Crouch's late 20th century thought. Indeed, between his co-authorship of the 2002 book *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk* and his lengthy critique of double consciousness in *The All-American Skin Game,* Crouch devotes more space to discussions of Du Bois than he does to any other intellectual in his body of written work.

At the end of *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk*, Crouch writes that Du Bois "encompasses all of the best and the worst of Afro-American thinking." We can easily surmise that the reference to the "worst" of African American thinking refers to Du Bois's Pan-Africanism and Communism, which Crouch spends large portions of the book criticizing. But which of Du Bois's arguments would Crouch hold up as representative of the "best" of black American thinking? I would argue that, for Crouch, a handful of Du Bois's ideas in *The Souls of Black Folk* hold the seeds of black America's potential rejuvenation. The ideas Crouch finds most relevant in the thinking of early Du Bois center around the importance of liberal arts education and elite leadership and the dangers that unrestrained greed poses

to cultural heritage. We might start our examination of Crouch's indebtedness to Du Bois by examining the key themes of two essays from *The Souls of Black Folk* that Crouch singles out for praise: "Of the Training of Black Men," and "Of the Wings of Atalanta."[260]

"Of the Training of Black Men," the sixth chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, is the book's lengthiest defense of the liberal arts as essential training for black students. Du Bois is in particular writing against the arguments of advocates for black industrial education, most prominently Booker T. Washington, who claimed that classical educations were frivolous and unnecessary for the majority of black students. He is suspicious of this trend, arguing that behind support for industrial training lies an effort to turn black students into raw material for Southern economies: "The tendency is here," Du Bois notes, "to regard human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends."

Du Bois sees the widespread enthusiasm for black industrial education not as an effort to uplift black men and women in the aftermath of generations of slavery, but rather as an extension of "race-prejudices, which keep brown and black men in their 'places.'"[261] Rejecting the model of industrial education for all, Du Bois suggests that the "internal problems of social advance" and "inevitable problems of civilization" facing black America require learned and judicious black

[260] Stanley Crouch and Playthell Benjamin, *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002), 232-233.
[261] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 72.

leadership. This recognition leads him to a pointed rhetorical question: "and can there be any possible solution other than by study and thought and an appeal to the rich experience of the past?"[262]

It is the purpose of black colleges, Du Bois concludes, to "develop men," "seek the social regeneration of the Negro," and "help in the solution of problems of race contact and co-operation." This work is important not only because of the pressing needs for black leadership, but so that the "unknown treasures of [black men's] inner life" might become part of the common heritage of all humanity.[263] Du Bois ends this stirring call to action with his oft-quoted evocation of the power of the Western classics to transcend the color line via the universality of truth:

> I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil.

This stirring celebration of the essential "Truth" communicated within the Western canon caps Du Bois's defense of the liberal arts as essential to black colleges' goal of training black leaders. The "unpleasant facts" of Southern racism, Du Bois argues, can only be met by the "breadth and broadening of human reason, by catholicity of taste and culture."[264] It is for this reason that black students need

[262] Ibid., 81.
[263] Ibid., 81-82.
[264] Ibid., 69.

a solid grounding in the liberal arts. A well-rounded population of upstanding men and "conservative, careful" black leaders is essential for what Du Bois terms the "final accomplishment" of "American civilization."[265]

"Of the Wings of Atalanta" is Du Bois's depiction of early-1900s Atlanta as it lay poised between the aftermath of the Civil War and the dawn of a new century. Although he has positive words for modern Atlanta's "striving" and "cunning handiwork," Du Bois worries that the city's enterprising spirit might sweep away the best of its old Southern culture in the name of financial gain. "Atlanta must not lead the South to dream of material prosperity as the touchstone of all success;" he warns. In his opinion, white Atlantans' pursuit of wealth was already "replacing the finer type of Southerner with vulgar money-getters" and "burying the sweeter beauties of Southern life beneath pretence and ostentation."[266] So, too, was the "deification of Bread" destroying the former ideals of black folk culture, as symbolized by the Preacher and the Teacher:

> In the Black World, the Preacher and Teacher embodied once the ideals of this people—the strife for another and a juster world, the vague dream of righteousness, the mystery of knowing; but to-day the danger is that these ideals, with their simple beauty and weird inspiration, will suddenly sink to a question of cash and a lust for gold.[267]

Du Bois's discussion of Atlanta shows an important facet of his skepticism of unrestrained capitalism. Elsewhere in *The Souls of Black Folk*, in "Of the Quest of

[265] Ibid., 78-79.
[266] Ibid., 61.
[267] Ibid., 62-63.

the Golden Fleece," he describes the ruinous effects of white landowners' greed on black farmers' economic independence. "Wings of Atalanta" shows that ruthless acquisitiveness also posed a threat to intangible aspects of culture. Indeed, a similar distaste for commodification seems to be at work in his discussion of black music in "The Sorrow Songs." Du Bois lists "the Negro 'minstrel' songs, many of the 'gospel' hymns, and some of the contemporary 'coon' songs" as "debasements and imitations" of the "real Negro melodies."[268] Du Bois's grouping of gospel hymns together with coon songs and minstrel songs would suggest that, while he surely abhorred minstrel-show stereotypes, his real object of scorn here is the sorrow songs' simplification for sale.

One important area in which Crouch shows his roots in Du Boisian thought is in his deep love of Western "civilization" and his belief that a thorough education in Western culture—i.e. the cultivation of an "inner life"—is essential preparation for responsible citizenship. *The Souls of Black Folk* is, of course, filled with admiring references to the classics of Western literature and the arts. Beyond the aforementioned references to Balzac and Dumas in "Of the Training of Black Men," there are the extended reference to Wagner's *Lohengrin* in "Of the Coming of John," the metaphors drawn from Greek mythology in "Of the Wings of Atalanta," and epigraphs by the likes of Byron and Tennyson. As Adolph Reed notes, Du Bois's perspective "saw the West as bearer of the principle of cultural evolution and thus as a model for the backward peoples." His "unreflective

[268] Ibid., 184.

acceptance of the self-referential, universalistic claims of European cultural ideology" was leavened somewhat by a belief that non-Westerners "could enrich…the main lines of progress in world civilization."[269]

Crouch, like Du Bois, believes that a well-rounded education in the Western tradition is the essential foundation for responsible engagement in American political life. This is because, for Crouch, the "democratic duty to cast a cold eye on the life of our policies"[270] can only be carried out with the appropriate intellectual equipment. Crouch sees the "intrinsically superior" cultural heritage of Europe and America as best suited to this task: "The West has put together the largest and richest repository of human value, primarily because the vision of universal humanism and the tradition of scientific inquiry have led to the most impressive investigations into the varieties of human life and the laws of the natural world, slowly winning out against one kind of provincialism after another."[271]

As the reference to Western culture's "intrinsic" superiority would suggest, Crouch is more strident than Du Bois ever was in asserting the cultural superiority of the West. Unlike Du Bois, Crouch never hints that non-Western cultures might have valuable contributions to make to the world. This could be an indication both of a difference in cultural politics and of the vast difference in Du Bois and Crouch's milieus. Du Bois, a political progressive, was writing from a turn of the

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[269] Adolph Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). 78-79.
[270] Crouch, *All American Skin Game*, 33.
[271] Ibid., 41-42.

20th century American academic landscape in which Western cultural hegemony went largely unquestioned. Crouch, a self-described pragmatist, was writing in the midst of the "Culture Wars" of the 1980s and 1990s, when earlier assumptions about the universality of the Western canon became the subject of sustained critique from academic leftists. In this respect Crouch's embattled position was not unlike that of University of Chicago philosophy professor Allan Bloom, who likewise attempted to defend the centrality of the Western humanities in his famous and controversial 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind.*[272]

Perhaps it is this point—the contentiousness of the environment in which Crouch wrote—that leads to what is arguably the most unpleasant aspect of Crouch's writing. Crouch's Eurocentrism often descends into open denigration of non-Western cultures, particularly those on the African continent. Unlike Du Bois at his most Eurocentric, Crouch's celebrations of the Western canon are accompanied by hostility to the very idea that African cultures contributed anything of value to global human culture. For example, during one effusive celebration of the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment, Crouch makes a lengthy digression into what he asserts was Africa's philosophical and moral vacuousness:

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[272] For more on Bloom and the Culture Wars in the humanities generally, see Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), particularly Chapter 8, "The Battle for the American Mind." Hartman's 2017 article "Culture Wars and the Humanities in the Age of Neoliberalism" (*Raritan* 36, no. 4, Spring 2017, p 128-140) is an insightful, if disheartening, look back at the culture wars from the perspective of the new Donald Trump presidential administration. Here Hartman argues that, in an era where institutional support for the humanities is coming under increasing threat, both the "conservative" and "liberal" positions in the Culture Wars are becoming increasingly marginalized.

> As far as those [democratic] ideals and the questions that they raised went, the kings of West Africa provided no ideas—or ideals—of any democratic importance because there was nothing inside the 'pure' African vision of life itself that would have ever led to the end of the slave trade, primarily because tribalism—which is the father of racism, by the way—was in full and bloody swing. That ethnic enmity was so strong that all was possible. But from beneath the tribal dress that identified these bigots, and even when accompanied by majestic and intricate poly-rhythms produced with hands attuned to the nuances of drums, no inspiring pearls of social philosophy ascended. None. Absolutely.[273]

Crouch's fierce dismissal of all of African culture is both intellectually lazy and historically inaccurate. Crouch never elaborates on what the "'pure' African vision of life itself" entails. Furthermore, his reference to bigoted slave-trading African kings imposes anachronistic and unfair expectations of pan-African unity on precolonial African societies, as though "ethnic enmity" wasn't equally strong in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. In Crouch, then, we see Du Bois's Victorian Eurocentrism distorted almost to the point of parody by both Crouch's personal animus and the combative atmosphere within the humanities in the 1990s.

Whether or not this bizarrely vicious passage represents Crouch's effort to purge his own former commitment to black nationalism,[274] it provides another example of the ironic resemblance between Crouch's fervently anti-Nationalist rhetoric and the rhetoric of classical black nationalism as it has been extensively

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[273] Benjamin and Crouch, *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk,* 72-73.
[274] In the introduction to *The All-American Skin Game,* Crouch calls Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison "the twin towers of a Southern and Southwestern one-two punch that flattened all of my former involvements with black nationalism and liberated me from the influence of LeRoi Jones {Amiri Baraka] whose work I once copied as assiduously as Sonny Stitt did Charlie Parker's." (p x)

discussed by scholars like Wilson Jeremiah Moses and Kevin Gaines. As Gaines points out, early black nationalists like William Ferris and often relied on "negative comparisons of black people to Anglo-Saxon power and civilization" in order to argue that black people needed to assimilate into Western culture in order to achieve nationhood.[275] Moses likewise notes that Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell operated according to an uncritical Eurocentrism that led them to "assum[e] the inferiority of African languages, cultures, and societies."[276]

In both Du Bois and Crouch, the important companion to this idea of the civic function of culture is the idea that unscrupulous capitalistic greed threatens to corrupt both culture and the civilization culture is intended to elevate. The Du Bois of *The Souls of Black Folk*, as mentioned earlier, personifies this greed in various ways: the "vulgar money-getters" of the New South corrupting Southern folkways in their pursuit of wealth; unscrupulous white landowners in the Black Belt reducing black farmers to serfdom; white and black musicians "debasing" the sorrow songs into gospel hymns and coon songs.

Following this theme, Crouch presents black culture as under threat from charlatans and drug dealers, both eager to make their fortunes at the expense of vulnerable or gullible black patrons. Crouch characterizes Afrocentrism this way in *The All-American Skin Game*. "Afrocentrism," he writes, "helps us recognize that we have evolved a kind of capitalism in which anything capable of proving a

[275] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race,* 101.
[276] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 152.

constituency can become a profession. Just as almost anything can be sold as art, no matter the lack of facility, almost any kind of an idea can make its way onto our campuses and into our discussions of policy."[277] In Crouch's pessimistic appraisal, the counterfeit offerings of Afrocentrism and bad art—perhaps a reference to hip hop, a perennial Crouch target—represent "simple-minded hustles" that both capitalize upon and further propagate black Americans' "decline in faith" in the "ideals of Western civilization" via the logic of unscrupulous capitalism.[278]

Elsewhere in the same book, Crouch compares the "amoral greed" of drug dealers to the inhumanity of the transatlantic slave trade, writing that "the slave trade of today is the drug business."[279] In his review essay on the film *Sugar Hill*, Crouch asserts that it was precisely this amoral capitalist greed—the "profit motive" shorn of the "morality" and "ethics" that were the "goal of civilization under capitalism"[280]—that led to the cultural decline of Harlem in the latter half of the twentieth century:

> Largely fled by its embattled middle class when the drug culture turned so much of its cultural blood into pus, Harlem is an emblem of our society's decline, of our inability thus far to sustain such an engine of spiritual, aesthetic, and communal vitality. Where the Negro-American elite of ball players, musicians, politicians, actors, writers, dancers, and so on once made its streets promenades of champions, Harlem now boasts few significant figures and remains under siege by the young criminals and the slicksters who provide the addictive poisons of one kind or another.[281]

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[277] Crouch, *All-American Skin Game*, 34.
[278] Ibid., 34-35.
[279] Ibid., 227.
[280] Ibid., 226.
[281] Ibid., 222.

For Crouch, black drug dealers' destruction of black communities' vibrant culture represents the "rot at the top, regardless of occupation" within a world dominated by morally empty capitalism.[282] Far from uncritically embracing free market economics, then, Crouch strikes a pose that is culturally conservative without being neoconservative. He recalls Du Bois in his suspicion of unrestrained capitalism as bringing corruption, if not outright destruction, of both black culture and black communities.

Crouch also recalls Du Bois in another important way, which is to say that his pessimism about the state of black America is coupled with an optimistic belief that cultural uplift is possible through education and leadership. Like Du Bois, Crouch in his 1990s writings would place this cultural leadership on the shoulders of a small, highly trained elite. It is here that Crouch's veneration of jazz as an enactment of American ideals intersects with his elitist Victorian cultural politics.

"Aristocrats of Achievement": Crouch and the Talented Tenth

W.E.B. Du Bois circa 1903 and Stanley Crouch are alike in their shared belief that black America was going to be saved by its "exceptional men." In his turn of the 20th century writings, Du Bois places the responsibility for this task on the

[282] Ibid., 226. The full passage reads, "[*Sugar Hill*] is a cold picture of the criminal world and of the rot at the top, regardless of occupation. It also does away with the explanatory clichés that blame the white man and the devil machine of capitalism, while longing for the reiteration of some mythical African—or Third World—humanism. *Sugar Hill* shows that amoral greed is a worldwide phenomenon." Here Crouch seems to be suggesting that while capitalism is not inherently a "devil machine" that brings destruction, its logic enables a type of destructive greed that transcends racial and religious boundaries.

broad-minded black elite being trained at black colleges like Fisk and Howard as well as northern predominantly white schools like Oberlin. Writing ninety years later in *The All-American Skin Game*, Crouch would offer a rearticulation of this idea, presenting the small but growing cohort of conservatory-trained black jazz musicians as role models who would both safeguard African American cultural heritage and lead the next generations out of cultural decadence. By interpreting Crouch's reading of Du Bois's early 20th century thought, we can see that Crouch follows Du Bois in building a model of black uplift based on the leadership of a cultured minority.

Two important points need to be made before launching into this comparison. The first is the vast difference in Crouch and Du Bois's historical contexts. Du Bois proposed the idea of the Talented Tenth in 1903, only forty years after Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Although the idea of leadership by a cultured black aristocracy sounds uncomfortably elitist today, it was progressive or even radical at a time when many white Americans doubted black people's ability to be educated or cultured at all. In contrast, Crouch was advocating a return to the Talented Tenth model in the 1990s, when nostalgia for the original era of racial uplift was being used to reinforce hostility to federal civil rights and antipoverty programs. The intervening ninety years, in other words, rendered a progressive idea markedly conservative.

The second point to remember that Du Bois himself gradually abandoned the Talented Tenth model during his later years. As his biographer David Levering

Lewis observes, Du Bois in the 1930s had abandoned his old program of elite leadership in favor of anti-capitalism and eventually pan-Africanism:

> The framer of the Talented Tenth concept now wished it to be clearly understood in 'Marxism and the Negro Problem' that the existence of a few hundred thousand educated and prosperous people out of a total Negro population of twelve million was of negligible significance. More to the point, this black petit bourgeoisie was a false class, of 'peculiar position' and too recent in origin and too remote from the real exploiters of wages and labor for its existence to correspond to the authentic conquering bourgeoisie.[283]

Even given these significant differences in context, it's valuable to examine the influence of Du Bois's early thought on Crouch. First, Crouch spent a significant amount of time commenting on *The Souls of Black Folk*, and he often borrowed Du Bois's language of cultural aristocracy in his discussions of jazz. Second, as Gaines notes, an analysis of the "black messianic leadership" epitomized by the Talented Tenth idea "leads us back to the turn of the century."[284]

Du Bois points to the Talented Tenth idea in "Of the Training of Black Men," one of the chapters of *The Souls of Black Folk* that Crouch would find especially relevant a century later. Du Bois presents his model of leadership by a highly trained elite as the preferable alternative to the educational philosophy of Washington and others, which focused on industrial training. While the industrial training model was "logically complete," Du Bois wrote, it was "historically impossible." The fact that universities had appeared before common schools in the history of higher education proved for Du Bois that societies should focus on

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[283] David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2000), 308.
[284] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xiii.

educating their brightest before sending those bright alumni to educate the masses.

Using the state of black education after the Civil War as an example, Du Bois wrote that the freedmen "must first have the common school to teach them to read, write, and cipher; and they must have higher schools to teach teachers for the common schools."[285] "Progress in human affairs," he concluded, "is more often a pull than a push, surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage-ground."[286] The progress of the race, for Du Bois, would best be realized if the educated black elite associated with universities would lift as they climbed.

Du Bois would apply a formal label to this educated black elite in an essay that appeared in the same year, articulating similar themes. In "The Talented Tenth," Du Bois wrote that because the "Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men," their proper training should be a dominant priority.[287] The issue of black education, therefore, should be understood first and foremost as an effort to prepare the best and brightest black men and women to lead their brethren: "[The problem of education] is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races."[288] Espousing his belief that "it

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[285] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Library of America Paperback Classics, 2009), 73.
[286] Ibid.
[287] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York: J. Pott & Company, 1903), 33.
[288] Ibid.

is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters," Du Bois presents his Talented Tenth as an "aristocracy of talent and character" whose taste and sensibility would trickle down to the "masses of the Negro people," thereby uplifting the whole race.[289] The Talented Tenth would in this way be both political leaders and "leaders of thought and missionaries of culture,"[290] outstanding models of cultivated taste for the struggling black masses.

Crouch would seize on Du Bois's idea of the Talented Tenth and mold it to fit his own understanding of America's cultural hierarchy and what he saw as the position of African Americans in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Although his own hostility to black separatism would lead him to dismiss Du Bois's most influential concept, double-consciousness, as "a muddle of ideas,"[291] the idea of the Talented Tenth seems to have been consonant with his own belief in meritocracy. Indeed, he alludes to Du Bois's model of black leadership in the otherwise negative reading of *The Souls of Black Folk* contained in his 1995 *The All American Skin Game*, writing that "*The Souls of Black Folk*—as a whole—swings back and forth between ideas about racial consciousness and a sense of greater humanity, based on talent and sensibility rather than skin tone."[292] Crouch doesn't elaborate on what that "sense of greater humanity" entails, but I would argue that it represents an allusion both to Du Bois's deep investment in Western culture and to the Talented Tenth as a model of elite leadership that was indeed "based on talent and

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[289] Ibid., 45.
[290] Ibid., 75.
[291] Crouch, *The All-American Skin Game*, 48.
[292] Ibid., 49.

sensibility." This reading of Crouch's statement is borne out by the discussion of the Talented Tenth that he includes in *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk*.

In that later book, Crouch writes that "Du Bois was quite right in saying that all groups are moved forward, or upward, by the most gifted among them." "The big difference in the Talented Tenth model," Crouch continues, after comparing Du Bois's "exceptional men" to star athletes, "is that the gifted ones are committed to replicating themselves in the mass and to removing all obstacles in the interest of fairness from the paths of the rest."[293] For Crouch, then, the Talented Tenth model in action means both that each generation of talented leaders would foster the next generation and that they would be committed to breaking down barriers for everyone else.

Crouch knows that in enthusiastically endorsing Du Bois's Victorian conception of leadership, he might bring criticism from people who criticize the elitism inherent in this idea. He asserts that, contrary to popular belief, the Talented Tenth represents a "democratic improvement on the traditional conception of an elite" in which members of the elite distinguished themselves by their individual merit rather than via a noble bloodline or other inherited privilege.[294] "What Du Bois sought," Crouch concludes, "was the preparation of Negroes ready to work hard in college, no matter where they might have come from."[295] Crouch sees Du Bois's Talented Tenth model, in other words, as a means

[293] Crouch, *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk*, 231.
[294] Ibid., 231-232.
[295] Ibid.

by which not only could the most skilled African Americans assume positions of leadership on the basis of merit, they would be able to use their positions to make way for future generations of leaders. This language of meritocracy and leadership is central to the rhetoric Crouch uses to discuss young black jazz musicians like Wynton Marsalis.

Despite his overwhelming negative evaluation of the state of post-Civil Rights Movement African American culture, Stanley Crouch communicates a great degree of optimism about the future. Although he believes that "our heads, our minds, our ways of reasoning, have been pushed under a lot of muck," he writes that "we are now rising, head first, from that debilitating ooze." Swept up in one of his frequent elaborate metaphors, Crouch writes that American civilization is rising up while "singing, as always, the blues to give the bum's rush to the blues," and that that singing "match[es] the tone of that eternal American saxophone. Offering his cultural criticism as a "cleansing hose, some towels and some robes for those readers rising from the wet darkness with me," Crouch concludes with a strident declaration that "VICTORY IS ASSURED."[296] And so, despite his firm belief that African Americans (and Americans more generally) had drifted far from the humanistic spirit of the Enlightenment, Crouch evinces an equally confident belief that a reversal of that societal decadence was soon to come.

Crouch often relies on metaphors of blues and jazz to represent that coming cultural renewal. This rhetorical device is consistent with Crouch's habit

[296] Crouch, *All-American Skin Game*, xvi-xvii.

throughout *The All American Skin Game* of presenting jazz as an engine of cultural uplift. Indeed, on more than one occasion in this book and elsewhere, Crouch presents the Young Lions of jazz neoclassicism as singularly important leaders in the uplift of American culture. During a long discussion of the Constitution, Crouch writes that "the fact that a good number of young Negro musicians are leading the movement that is revitalizing jazz suggests a strong future for this country." "What those young jazz musicians symbolize," he continues, "is a freedom from the taste-making of mass media and an embracing of a vision that has much more to do with aesthetic satisfaction than the gold rush culture of popular entertainment." [297]

Crouch sees the "wit," "good grooming," "disdain for drugs," and artistic "command of the down home and the ambitious" among this group of young black artists as an indication that "though America may presently be down on one knee, the champ is about to rise and begin taking names."[298] Later, he lauds the Young Lions as "true blue rebels" whose artistry "predict[s] the increasing freedom from decadence we will see in American youth over the next few decades."[299]

For further context, we might turn to an interview Crouch, Wynton Marsalis, and Marcus Roberts recorded for *Charlie Rose* in 1992, during the period that Crouch was writing the essays that would become *The All American Skin Game*. In that interview, Crouch summarized the significance of what he called

[297] Ibid., 12.
[298] Ibid., 12-13.
[299] Ibid., 191.

the "great story of jazz": "These guys became aristocrats, these great singers like Billie Holiday, they became aristocrats through their achievement, not because they were related to somebody else, not because of what they had in the bank. It was what they could *do*." Crouch agrees with Rose's statement that it was the "quality of their excellence," that made jazz musicians "aristocrats."[300]

If we interpret Crouch's published statements from the same period regarding the Young Lions leading America's cultural renewal in light of this construction of jazz musicians as "aristocrats of achievement,"[301] we arrive at something remarkably similar to Du Bois's rhetoric of the Talented Tenth. In Du Boisian terms, we might frame the new generation of black jazz musicians as an "aristocracy of talent and character" who could "guide the Mass away from the contamination and death" of the decadent late 20th century mass media. Crouch's framing of the problem, along with his construction of a solution, thus firmly place him within the early 20th century racial uplift rhetoric that characterizes Du Bois's arguments in *The Souls of Black Folk* and "The Talented Tenth."

Crouch's "Aristocracy of Achievement" and the Expansion of Jazz Education

[300] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpo56tzHsNg

[301] This is not the only time Crouch describes jazz musicians as aristocrats. In *The All-American Skin Game*, he refers to jazz as the "product of a down-home aristocracy." (p 19). Charles Hersch notes in his 2008 essay "Reconstructing the Jazz Tradition" that "By calling the jazz elite a 'down-home' aristocracy, [Crouch] suggests that it is what Thomas Jefferson called a 'natural aristocracy', an aristocracy based on talent, not birth, though rooted in African American culture." (Hersch 14). Hersch and I are in agreement here. I would argue, however, that it is much easier to trace this idea in a straight line back from Crouch to Du Bois, a connection that Hersch doesn't make in this essay.

In order to better contextualize Crouch's arguments about both jazz's place among the Western humanities and his jazz elite as a well-dressed, polite, and drug-free cohort within jazz history, it is important now to turn to jazz's integration into the system of American higher education. Indeed, a figure like Crouch could only make such arguments at the end of the 20th century, when jazz was firmly established as art music and was being taught in colleges and secondary schools around the country.

Crouch's description of Marsalis and the Young Lions as a "movement" that was rejecting "the taste-making of mass media" and the "gold rush culture of popular entertainment" somewhat obscures the important ways in which jazz neoclassicism reflected the broader changes that accompanied jazz's institutionalization. Rather than a movement driven by purely aesthetic concerns and a rejection of popular music, Crouch's "aristocracy of achievement" might better be understood in the context of increasingly focused jazz education curricula at both the college and secondary school levels beginning in the late 1970s. Not unlike Du Bois's "aristocracy of talent and character," Crouch's aristocracy was grounded in educational institutions that had the power to turn out "missionaries of culture." A fuller contextualization of Crouch's positions as described in my earlier sections, then, requires a brief discussion of jazz's increasingly inseparable relationship with institutions of higher education.

Jazz instructional materials had existed since the 1930s in the form of musical exercises and solo transcriptions in trade magazines like *Downbeat*,[302] and jazz performance training in universities began in the 1940s with "dance band" programs at the Berklee College of Music and the University of North Texas. However, there were two key developments in the 1950s and 1960s that enabled the flourishing of university jazz education in the succeeding decades. The first of these was jazz composer and theorist George Russell's pioneering systematization of modern jazz improvisation in his 1953 *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*. The second was academia's increased openness to non-European musical traditions after the upheavals of the 1960s.

George Russell began his musical career as a drummer, and his development of the Lydian Chromatic Concept came as a result of his involvement in the late 1940s New York jazz scene and his fascination with bebop. For example, Russell would later claim that a conversation with Miles Davis at a jam session was the initial impetus for formulating his theory. Davis made the offhanded remark that he wanted to "learn all the changes."[303] Similarly reflecting his rootedness in bebop, Russell explained in his 1953 book *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* that he was inspired to investigate the Lydian mode because of the

[302] Ken Prouty, *Knowing Jazz: Community, Pedagogy, and Canon in the Information Age* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 52-53
[303] Duncan Heining, *George Russell: The Story of an American Composer* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 76.

flatted fifths (or augmented fourths) common in bebop improvisation, which also characterize the Lydian mode.[304]

Russell's concept was, in essence, a system of using scales rather than chords as a basis for jazz improvisation. By relating each chord to a corresponding scale, Russell gave aspiring jazz musicians a means of navigating the increasingly complicated harmonic progressions of modern jazz. The chord-scale system was a crucial development because, as David Ake explains, it both gave students a straightforward means of improvising through a harmonic progression with a minimum of wrong notes and provided a ready source of materials for jazz improvisation classes.[305] In an academic musical environment that had long been skeptical of musical improvisation,[306] the chord-scale method derived from Russell's theory allowed jazz educators like David Baker to construct "effective and easily replicated models" that legitimized jazz studies as an academic musical discipline.[307]

The social unrest of the 1960s, meanwhile, would lead educators to reevaluate their curricula, gradually broadening them to include traditions formerly excluded from college and secondary education. In the third chapter of his dissertation, Randy Snyder argues that this "begrudging" introduction of jazz studies courses into university and high school curricula came as the result of

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[304] Olive Jones, "Conversation with George Russell: A New Theory for Jazz," *The Black Perspective in Music* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 63.
[305] David Ake, *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 123.
[306] Prouty, *Knowing Jazz*, 70.
[307] Ibid., 75. For an extensive discussion of the way David Baker used the chord-scale system derived from Russell's theories to teach jazz improvisation, see JB Dyas, "Defining Jazz Education," in *David Baker: A Legacy in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 65-120.

pressures like "protests of college students, changes in racial attitudes, favorable perceptions of jazz, and eroding boundaries between high culture and pop culture."[308] Prouty agrees broadly with Snyder but argues that, in addition to broader societal trends, the activism of black jazz musicians like Sonny Rollins and Max Roach led to an association between jazz, social justice, and racial equity. Jazz education's advances into higher education in the 1960s, for Prouty, should be understood in the context of this specific connection between jazz and the Civil Rights Movement.[309]

A landmark indication of these shifts in music education came at the Music Educators' National Conference symposium at Tanglewood in 1967. In the Tanglewood Declaration, the symposium attendees declared that "music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum" and that "the musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety."[310] The social climate of the 1960s and the resultant openness to change on the part of music educators, then, led jazz education to make important strides during this period at both the secondary school and college levels. Crucially, this expansion of jazz education was taking place just before Wynton Marsalis and the rest of the first wave of jazz neoclassicists were entering high school, in the mid to late 1970s.

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[308] Snyder, Randy Lee. 1999. College jazz education during the 1960s: Its development and acceptance. Ph.D. diss., University of Houston, http://proxy01.its.virginia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/304505426?accountid=14678 (accessed October 23, 2017), 62.
[309] Prouty, *Knowing Jazz*, 56.
[310] Choate, et. al, *Documentary Report of the Tanglewood Symposium* (Washington: Music Educators' National Conference, 1968) qtd in Prouty, *Knowing Jazz*, 57.

Indeed, if jazz neoclassicism accompanied the expansion of jazz education, as Prouty observes,[311] it is at least partly because the first wave of neoclassicists were coming of age at just the right moment to reap the full benefits of institutionalized jazz education. As most of this group was born around 1960,[312] they reached high school in the mid-1970s, after jazz education had begun to establish a significant presence in high schools and colleges. The precocious technical skill for which many of them would become famous might reflect the focused training in classical music and jazz that most of them received at the secondary level in arts magnet schools.

Donald Harrison, Terence Blanchard, and the elder Marsalis brothers, for example, were among the first jazz students at the newly established New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. Winard and Philip Harper, who released a series of hard bop albums in the late 1980s and early 1990s, graduated from a similar program at North Atlanta High School in Atlanta, Georgia. Trumpeter Wallace Roney graduated from yet another arts magnet program, the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, DC. If these teenaged and early-twenties musicians displayed a premature facility with complicated chord progressions and an unusual amount of knowledge of jazz history, it was at least partly due to the systematized jazz curricula at the specialized high schools and conservatories that the vast majority

311 Prouty, *Knowing Jazz*, 73. "Accompanying jazz education's explosion over the past few decades is the rise of the neo-traditionalists, led by trumpeter and Jazz at Lincoln Center artistic director Wynton Marsalis, and heralded in the press by critics such as Stanley Crouch."
312 See Chapter 7 of Stuart Nicholson's book *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995). Examples include Branford Marsalis (b. 1960), Wynton Marsalis (b. 1961), Marcus Roberts (b. 1963), Wallace Roney (b. 1960), Winard Harper (b. 1962), and Philip Harper (b. 1965).

of them attended. They were among the first beneficiaries of the struggles of educators and critics like David Baker, Dr. Billy Taylor, and Martin Williams to boil decades of jazz history and improvisational techniques down into a curriculum that music students could readily digest.

What implications does this historical context have for Crouch's ideas of a jazz elite that would help to restore African-American and American culture? First, the resurgence of jazz that Crouch touts as an indicator of the "increasing freedom from decadence we will see in American youth over the next few decades" represented less a generational rejection of cultural decadence than a predictable result of the expansion and refinement of jazz education in the 1960s and 1970s. This is an important point to make because, in all of his writings on the neoclassical jazz renaissance of the 1980s, Crouch makes scarce reference to institutions of music education as training grounds for this generation of musicians. Here, for example, is Crouch's description of the influx of young talent on the New York jazz scene of the 1980s:

> These were the years when one young musician after another came to New York and seemed intent on doing only one thing—learning how to play jazz while fully aware that it was not the kind of art in which anything lucrative was guaranteed. People such as Wynton Marsalis, Wallace Roney, Geri Allen, Greg Osby, Rene Rosnes [*sic*], Cyrus Chestnut, Lewis Nash, [*et. al*] and still more younger players kept leaving home for The Big Apple, surging up out of the ground, as if the music had its own will to live.[313]

[313] Stanley Crouch, *Considering Genius: Writings on Jazz* (New York: Basic *Civitas* Books, 2006), 281.

Crouch gives the impression that jazz in the 1980s was a vernacular tradition strong enough to cause dedicated young musicians to "[surge] up out of the ground" rather than a newly-established academic art music steadily turning talented young graduates out of conservatories. This is a striking contrast with Du Bois, who points back to colleges and universities as the source of his chosen elite, and with Crouch himself, who elsewhere expresses his own reverence for education. I would suggest that this might represent a tension within Crouch's discourse between an Uplift-based support for a highly educated black cultural elite and the jazz community's own well-established ambivalence toward university jazz studies programs.[314]

Jazz, Black Class Stratification, and Cultural Elites

Stanley Crouch was far from the only black American public intellectual to resurrect the Talented Tenth model of racial uplift in service of his arguments; one might say that it never really died in the first place. Indeed, a glance at the work of African American political scientists from the late 20th and early 21st centuries shows that, if anything, the Talented Tenth model of racial leadership gained

[314] For further discussions of this ambivalence, see Eitan Wilf's 2014 study *School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity* and David Ake's 2010 *Jazz Matters: Sound, Place, and Time Since Bebop.* Wilf writes that "the expansion of academic jazz education has generated much ambivalence in different circles. Many veteran jazz musicians who received their training by prolonged apprenticeship with master musicians prior to the full-blown academization of jazz training have been dismissive of the very idea of the jazz program." (Wilf 5). Ake argues that jazz's "far-reaching and seemingly inexorable move from clubs to schools" is often "ignored, marginalized, or denigrated throughout a wide range of jazz discourse." (Ake 75).

renewed attractiveness after the Civil Rights Movement, when anti-discrimination legislation led to the creation of a larger group of well-educated and affluent African Americans.

Michael Dawson, for example, notes that politicians and theorists who see themselves as heirs to the activist traditions of Du Bois, Wells, and King continue to "emphasize what they see as the need for continued elite leadership of the African-American community." He includes late 20th century figures like Jesse Jackson, Henry Louis Gates, and Cornel West as examples.[315] Adolph Reed argues that Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" model of leadership led to the "victory of the custodial approach to politics" and "petit bourgeois hegemony" within black political life in the United States.[316] Noting that civil rights legislation succeeded in "consolidating the goals of class differentiation that advocates of racial uplift ideology at the turn of the century had desperately sought to achieve and maintain," Kevin Gaines argues that the ideology of racial uplift and elite leadership "became post-civil rights orthodoxy."[317]

Indeed, in light of the consolidation of class differentiation that Gaines observes as the legacy of Civil Rights legislation, it is clear that Crouch's commentary on jazz is one part of this larger discourse of class differentiation within the black community. The first factor in this process was jazz's institutional clout, as in its aforementioned acceptance within higher education and the

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315 Dawson, *Black Visions,* 270-271.
316 Adolph Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28-29
317 Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 259.

establishment of high-profile programs like Jazz at Lincoln Center. Jazz's movement into "segregated temples devoted to 'high' or 'classical' art," to quote Lawrence Levine's helpful phrase,[318] was gradually erasing its remaining connections to popular culture.

This situation was is marked contrast to hip-hop, a newer form of black vernacular music that was growing to dominate popular culture in the early 1990s even as it remained associated in many observers' imaginations with the irresponsible and pathological urban black poor.[319] In fact, the association of hip-hop with stereotypes of the black lower classes was only increasing at the time, as gangsta rap groups like N.W.A. presented shocking narratives of urban violence and crime. As Tricia Rose notes, this connection became so strong that by the early 2000s, "debates about hip-hop [became] a means for defining poor, young black people and thus for interpreting the context and reasons for their clearly disadvantaged lives."[320] Thus, in the early 1990s, the divergent positions of these two black genres were mirroring the growing class divide within black America at large. To paraphrase Levine, we can interpret Crouch's jazz-centered cultural elitism as an effort to distance himself and the growing black middle class, "culturally at least, from those below them on the socioeconomic scale."[321]

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[318] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 234.
[319] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—And Why It Matters* (New York: Basic *Civitas* Books, 2008), 1-6.
[320] Ibid., 5.
[321] Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 227.

The vastly differing notions of technique and professionalism between the two genres served to reinforce this divergence. The notions of "achievement" and "quality" that Crouch associates with jazz neoclassicism are of a piece with the musical professionalism that had been fundamental to jazz since the Swing Era. As discussed in my Introduction, jazz musicians from the late 1920s onward honed their musicianship to exacting standards of respectable professionalism in order to remain competitive in the increasingly commercialized dance band world. More broadly, as Scott DeVeaux argues in *The Birth of Bebop*, professional jazz musicians' prizing of technique, theoretical knowledge of music, and versatility drove many of jazz's stylistic changes:

> Highly personal combinations of ingenuity, hard work, and a determined eclecticism contributed to nearly all of the major technical advances in jazz. By whatever means, the goal was to expand in any direction from a limited technical base, leading not just to instrumental facility in its narrow sense but also to those felicitous discoveries of style and technique that have given jazz its originality.[322]

This progressive musical sensibility, as DeVeaux points out, was an extension of the responsibility for self-improvement that was fundamental to the ideology of racial uplift.[323]

Indeed, both Murray and Marsalis invoked this ethos of black musical progressivism and expertise when they debunked "noble savage" stereotypes of innate black musicality and highlighted the technical mastery required to perform jazz well. Murray wrote in *Stomping the Blues* that "on close inspection what was

[322] DeVeaux, *Birth of Bebop*, 57.
[323] Ibid., 59.

assumed to have been unpremeditated art is likely to be largely a matter of conditioned reflex, which is nothing other than the end product of discipline, or in a word, training." "In any case," he concluded, "practice is as indispensable to blues musicians as to any other kind."[324] Marsalis echoed his mentor in his 1988 essay "What Jazz Is—and Isn't," when he decried the persistence of an insulting narrative that "regards jazz merely as a product of noble savages—music produced by untutored, unbuttoned semiliterates for whom jazz history does not exist." He argued that the "noble savage" narrative had found new advocates in critics and musicians who valued musical eclecticism over fidelity to a rigorous jazz tradition. "If everything is good," Marsalis wrote, "why should anyone subject himself to the pain of study?" He concluded bitterly that his opponents' "disdain for the specific knowledge that goes into jazz creation" indicated "contempt for the basic values of the music and of our society."[325]

The ascendancy of hip-hop represented an unprecedented challenge to these notions of musicianship and professionalism that were foundational to jazz neoclassicism and earlier stylistic periods in jazz. Certainly, hip-hop presented its own suite of challenging techniques to be mastered. But mastery of rapping or production, for example, weren't legible as such within a discursive framework that equated musical professionalism with instrumental dexterity, musical literacy, and knowledge of Western music theory.

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[324] Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, 98.
[325] Wynton Marsalis, "What Jazz Is—and Isn't," in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 335.

To make matters more difficult, many professional hip-hop artists were open or even proud of their lack of formal musical training. "Because few rappers are formally trained musicians, rarely compose elaborate melodic phrases, and do not frequently play 'real' instruments," notes Tricia Rose, "rap has been accused of not being music at all." These attacks on hip-hop artists as not being "real" musicians are, as Rose argues, tied to Eurocentric ideas of music and cultural progress. Furthermore, as she shows, some hip-hop producers have argued that their lack of formal musical training fuels the innovativeness of their music.[326] Hip-hop thus represented a challenge to Eurocentric ideas of music and musicianship. But it also flew in the face of concepts of musical professionalism that tied music education to black progress for many black musicians and music lovers.

These conflicting musical standards between straight-ahead jazz and hip-hop form part of the rationale for Crouch and Marsalis's attacks on the new genre. Furthermore, they help to explain why hip-hop was a target of special vitriol for Marsalis and Crouch from the 1990s onward. If Marsalis disliked the "base type of sexual thing"[327] that he saw in funk, pop, and R&B, he could at least give qualified praise to a musician like Prince.[328] Hip-hop, however, kept the lewd sexuality and

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[326] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 101.
[327] Rafi Zabor and Vic Garbarini, "Wynton Vs. Herbie: The Purist and the Crossbreeder Duke It Out," in *Readings in Jazz History*, 343.
[328] Ibid., 344. Marsalis calls Prince's guitar solo on "Purple Rain" a "rehash of some white rock," but also admits that he "listen[s] to it all the time" and that "[Prince] can do stuff [Jimi] Hendrix never thought of doing."

crass commercialism that Marsalis deplored in other popular music but while removing the veneer of musical knowledge.[329]

We can see this discourse of musical standards, class stratification, and cultural leadership by an elite in "Why We Must Preserve Our Jazz Heritage," Wynton Marsalis's November 1990 essay in *Ebony* magazine. In his article, Marsalis extolls jazz as the highest expression of what he terms "Negroid values":

> When you hear Louis Armstrong play the trumpet, you hear Negroid values upheld and expressed with so much soulfulness you want to go over there where he is and get some of that. The same with Ellington, with Charlie Parker, Monk—any musician who could say things that important with so much beauty. They wanted to show you that strength, knowledge, integrity and a sense of history made it possible for you to say beautiful things, for you to *be* beautiful, and for your beauty to be respected internationally. But before they found out what could happen outside of America, they were defining the greatness available in human terms in this society, regardless of obstacles.[330]

Marsalis contrasts this black musical nobility with the black American culture in the 1990s, "where everything has been confused and the true significance of Negroid expression has been cast by the wayside in favor of clown costumes, of co-signing garbage, of kissing the hind quarters of those in power in order to get grossly overpaid for grossly insignificant work."[331] He chastises the black middle class for being "so worried about being accused of not identifying with the man in

[329] See Chapter 3 for a longer discussion of Marsalis's highly negative portrayal of hip-hop in his book *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road.*
[330] Wynton Marsalis, "Why We Must Preserve Our Jazz Heritage," in *Ebony,* November 1990, 161-162.
[331] Ibid., 162.

the street that they refuse to discern the interest in quality that makes for a true elite."[332]

In the language of class distinction, Marsalis points to the qualitative difference between jazz and hip-hop and calls for the black middle class to embrace jazz as an art that is "superb in Negroid terms." He concludes with a call for the black middle and upper classes to return to their early-20th century position as cultural leaders: "That is what the Black middle and upper class must do: Take the time to learn what makes great art and move to support it." "Much has already been lost and many of the masters from earlier eras are dying every year," he concedes, "but that might not make a difference if we choose to aspire to higher standards."[333] Marsalis thus positions jazz as the appropriate music of a black cultural elite and calls on the black middle class to uplift the lower classes through their culturally specific discernment. His essay make it clear that, within the uplift rhetoric of jazz neoclassicism, jazz is a both a means of black class distinction and form of black high culture by which the black working and lower classes might be "improved." By the same logic, Crouch's jazz "talented tenth" is the agent of that uplift project.

Crouch's stated concern over the degradation of the black lower classes and Marsalis's call for the black middle classes to reject the "clown costumes" and "garbage" of hip hop point to Martin Summers's observation about the nature of racial uplift projects. Summers argues that one "could only participate in an uplift

[332] Ibid., 164.
[333] Ibid.

ideology if there were people who needed to be raised up, improved."[334] For jazz to become legible as a form of cultural uplift, Marsalis and Crouch have to cast hip-hop as a cultural form that is both degrading and harmful to black people. In this sense, they participate in the widespread and longstanding stigmatization of black American cultural forms and black Americans themselves in order to consolidate jazz's growing clout as a "respectable" black art form.

Crouch's vision of a jazz "talented tenth" and his placing jazz at the top of the cultural hierarchy is also based on his interpretation of jazz as a reflection of American democracy and Western culture more broadly. Jazz, for Crouch, is the "highest American musical form because it is the most comprehensive, possessing an epic frame of emotional and intellectual reference, sensual clarity, and spiritual radiance."[335] The music "puts democracy into aesthetic action" because of the combination of individual responsibility and collective cooperation that Crouch sees at work within jazz ensembles: "Each performer must bring technical skill, imagination, and the ability to create coherent statements through improvised interplay with the rest of the musicians."[336]

Crouch posits the "flexible profundity" of jazz as a representation of human heroism in the increasingly technologized world of the 20th century, or what he calls "industrial lyricism": "the musician putting personal and collective human meaning through the machinery of an instrument, swinging the blues to be here,

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[334] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 59.
[335] Crouch, *All-American Skin Game*, 13.
[336] Ibid., 15.

swinging the blues to be there, swinging the blues to be anywhere." In other words, the jazz musician is a "perfect symbol of human being and machine" whose art represents humanity's mastery of the modern world.[337] Given Crouch's understanding of jazz's place at the center of American identity and the American sensibility more generally, it is unsurprising that the appearance of increasing numbers of young black jazz musicians in the 1980s and 1990s represented for him a premonition of cultural renewal and the uplift of black American culture from its state of decadence.

As we have seen, jazz's late 20th century status as an art music allowed Crouch to do things like credibly propose a jazz-driven cultural revival, assume a culturally conservative position in the 1990s Culture Wars, and position jazz as part of a universal Western cultural heritage, was due precisely to the 1960s radicalism that Crouch often targeted for criticism. It was the activist efforts of the late 1960s –the very same ones that Crouch sees as ushering in Afrocentric madness—that finally convinced music educators to make space for jazz in conservatories and high schools. This institutionalization, in turn, would give Crouch the jazz critic and gadfly the credibility—albeit frequently contested—to make despairing pronouncements about the decadent state of culture from a position of superiority. What we see in Crouch's writings about jazz and the decadent state of African American culture in the 1990s, then, is a culturally elitist

[337] Ibid., xv.

stance influenced by the uplift rhetoric of the previous century and enabled by jazz's newfound institutional respectability.

III. Young Lions and Old Oak Trees: Wynton Marsalis and Respectable Black Masculinity

In November 2000, as Wynton Marsalis's Jazz at Lincoln Center began construction on its multimillion-dollar facility in New York City's Columbus Circle, Lara Pellegrinelli's *Village Voice* article "Dig Boy Dig" placed new and uncomfortable scrutiny on Marsalis's hiring practices. After briefly recounting previous Jazz at Lincoln Center controversies around ageism and supposed reverse racism, Pellegrinelli points out that "what nobody seems to have noticed is the profound, and unchanged, absence of women from the bandstand."[338] Although women were well represented in administrative positions and other behind-the-scenes roles—executive director Rob Gibson called the organization an "EEOC dream"—the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra had never had a female member.[339]

Pellegrinelli insightfully links this glaring problem to the orchestra's lack of a formal audition process. Rather than holding open auditions like major orchestras in the world of classical music, Marsalis filled the open seats in his orchestra through his own judgment and in consultation with the men in the band. This informal hiring process effectively worked to exclude women from consideration, as Pellegrinelli notes with support from pianist Renee Rosnes: "'When a male musician is looking for a substitute,' [Rosnes] says, 'it's a natural impulse for him to call a friend first, most likely someone who is also a man. I've

[338] Lara Pellegrinelli, "Dig Boy Dig," *The Village Voice,* Nov. 7, 2000. https://www.villagevoice.com/2000/11/07/dig-boy-dig/

[339] As of this writing, in fall 2017, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra still has never had a permanent female member.

had male friends tell me this and experienced it myself.'"[340] Marsalis's failure to recognize the names of several prominent young female jazz musicians made Pellegrinelli's critique of the orchestra's hiring practices even more plausible and damning.

Pellegrinelli's critique of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra's hiring practices raises larger questions about Wynton Marsalis's views on gender. If we investigate Marsalis's writing about jazz in the early 1990s, within a few years of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra's establishment as the official orchestra of the Jazz at Lincoln Center program in 1991, we see that Marsalis's gender politics reflect a concern with the uplift of black men that parallels the rhetoric of early 20th century black fraternal organizations. In this final chapter of my dissertation I explore Marsalis's statements on gender, race, and music, situating them within the broader context of these ongoing efforts to construct a respectable image of black manhood.

My analysis of Marsalis's gender politics centers around his tendency—on full display, for example, in his 1994 *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*—to discuss the jazz community as a sort of fraternity of proud black craftsmen. These "old oak trees of men," as Marsalis labels them, hold fast to their musical and cultural commitments in spite of shifting cultural trends. They induct younger musicians, like Marsalis himself, into their brotherhood through supportive but exacting mentorship.

[340] Pellegrinelli, "Dig Boy Dig."

In exploring the significance of Marsalis's construction of the jazz community as a black masculine institution, I draw on Martin Summers's analysis of the Prince Hall Freemasons in his 2004 book *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930*. I argue that, like the Prince Hall Freemasons of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Marsalis's idealized version of the jazz community conferred a traditional patriarchal identity on black men at a time when anxieties were swirling around black masculinity. Also like the Masons, Marsalis's depictions of black jazzmen offered an image that conformed to traditional ideas of manhood (responsibility, regularity, protectiveness) and thus served to "uplift the race" in the eyes of white observers.

If the connection between jazz and African-American Freemasonry seems tenuous, it is important to note that many of the most celebrated black jazz musicians of the first half of the 20th century were themselves Prince Hall Freemasons. Some of the most famous names among them include Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Johnny Hodges, and Earl Hines.[341] In his autobiography, Dizzy Gillespie remembers having his application to join a Masonic order denied after it was discovered that his marriage license hadn't been sealed.[342] His peers likely motivated his interest in Freemasonry. Gillespie was a member of Cab Calloway's orchestra at the time, and bassist Milt Hinton reported in his

[341] Raphaël Imbert, "'Masonic Inborn': Jazz, societies initiatiques et afrocentrisme," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 54, no. 216 (2014): 1002. See pg. 1002 of Imbert's article (in French) for a much longer list of black jazzmen who were Prince Hall freemasons.
[342] Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To Be, or not…to Bop: Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1979), 121.

memoirs that many members of the orchestra—along with Calloway himself—had already joined the Masons:

> Many of the established guys in the [Calloway] band, including me, were Masons. Cab joined too. Most of us had been initiated at the Pioneer Lodge No. 1, Prince Hall, in St. Paul, and every time we played there we'd try to spend some time at the lodge. If someone in the band had shown himself worthy and had a desire to join, one of us would recommend him and try to set up an initiation. But there were enough of us in the band to have our own meetings on the road.[343]

We might connect the surprising number of African American jazzmen who were Prince Hall Masons to the Masons' solidly middle-class image within the black community. Masonry's class connotations corresponded to the ethos of middle-class professionalism that prevailed among jazz musicians beginning in the 1920s, as noted by Scott DeVeaux.[344] Given the popularity of Prince Hall Freemasonry among black politicians and black businessmen,[345] masonic lodges offered spaces within which successful musicians could network with influential black community leaders, solidifying their own middle-class identities in the process.

The facets of the idealized black jazz masculinity that Marsalis celebrates in his 1990s and early 2000s rhetoric strongly resemble the qualities fraternal organizations like the Prince Hall Freemasons used to, in Summers's words, "invent a collective masculine self."[346] The first of these is a celebration of artisanship. Artisanship appears within Marsalis's rhetoric as the committed

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[343] Milt Hinton with David G. Berger and Holly Maxson, *Playing the Changes: Milt Hinton's Life in Stories and Photographs* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 111.
[344] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 50-54.
[345] Summers, *Masculinity and Its Discontents*, 38.
[346] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 30.

musicianship of the "old oak trees of men" and their neoclassical acolytes. Despite the eroding standards of mainstream popular music, Marsalis's jazzmen remain committed to high standards of musical excellence. At the root of this attitude, there are strong traces of the pride Swing Era black musicians took in their musical training and professionalism. As Scott DeVeaux notes in *The Birth of Bebop*, black musicians in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s came to view the development of musical technique as an extension of the self-improvement necessary for black progress.[347]

The second is the strong association between musicians' sartorial style and their personal integrity in Marsalis's rhetoric. In other words, Marsalis and his bands' decision to play only in suits and ties symbolized a commitment to professionalism and, more broadly, to serving as good role models for impressionable audiences. Conversely, the casual dress of Marsalis's contemporaries in jazz fusion and hip-hop represented not only sloppy musicianship, but potentially lax morality as well. We might on one level see Marsalis's commitment to role modeling as reflecting Murray's views on the didactic role of the artist as discussed in Chapter 1. They also indicate a connection to the longstanding emphasis on "respectable" dress codes in the histories of groups like the Prince Hall Freemasons, administrators at historically black colleges, and members of the early 20th century black elite more generally.

Finally, of Marsalis's statements on black women articulate an old-fashioned concept of "romance" that celebrates idealized gender differences and

[347] Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 59.

places black jazzmen like himself in the symbolic position of "protectors" of black womanhood. At the same time, Marsalis seems to have two understandings of romance that exist in tension with each other. Playing jazz romantically, for Marsalis, involves an elevation of black womanhood that "protects" black women from the vulgarity and misogyny of popular music, particularly hip-hop—treating them "gently," in the words of a 2006 Marsalis composition. At the same time, Marsalis's celebration of himself *as* a romantic involves elements of sexual conquest that aren't far from the hip-hop misogyny he claims to abhor. The overall impression one draws from his 1994 book *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, for example, is that Marsalis wants readers to know both that he respects women and that he's having a lot of sex with beautiful women.

These three concepts—black artisanship, "respectable" dress, and black men as protectors—connect Marsalis to idealized constructions of black masculinity that featured prominently in fraternal organizations like the Prince Hall Freemasons. These paradigms allowed black Masons to include themselves within traditional definitions of masculinity at a time when many of the markers of manhood, like proprietorship and providership, were inaccessible to black men. These same ideas about black male mentorship, "respectable" self-presentation, and protecting black women maintained their enduring relevance in the early 1990s in light of contemporary anxieties around black fatherhood and the popularity of gangsta rap. In this sense, as was the case with Murray and Crouch in the previous two chapters, Marsalis is both engaged in contemporary debates

within black America and drawing on much older ideas about black manhood and racial uplift.

Previous explorations of representations of black masculinity in Marsalis's work, such as Dale Edward Chapman's 2003 dissertation *Specters of Jazz: Style, Ideology, and Jazz as Postmodern Practice* and Tracy McMullen's 2008 article "Identity for Sale: Glenn Miller, Wynton Marsalis, and Cultural Replay in Music" have focused on the role that images of well-dressed young black neoclassicists played in the marketing of jazz to an affluent elite. Without contradicting this earlier scholarship, I am attempting to explore how Marsalis's representations of himself and his fellow jazzmen in his writing and his public statements are in dialogue with other black attempts to construct a positive vision of black masculinity. It is therefore important to consider not only Marsalis's posing for luxury watch advertisements, for example, but also the way those expensive watches and his general fashion sense place him in a long line of African American attempts to project a respectable image through their sartorial choices.

Unlike my earlier chapters, this chapter doesn't involve Marsalis's engagement with the politics of a specific black leader like Du Bois or Washington. Instead, I examine the ways in which Marsalis draws on strategies of black masculinity that date back to the early twentieth century that remain relevant—albeit contested—in the late 20th and early 21st centuries because of continued debates about gender and representation within black communities.

First, I provide a brief overview of the Prince Hall Freemasons and summarize Martin Summers's analysis of their construction of black masculine identity. Then, I discuss Marsalis's representations of an all-black, all-male jazz community of dedicated artisans and committed mentors. I connect this idealized image of the jazz world both the earlier efforts of the black Freemasons and to attempts by African American media leaders to contest popular stereotypes about black fatherhood and black male irresponsibility in the 1990s. In doing so, I analyze Marsalis's representations of his mentors in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* and his discussions of his own father's musical career, showing how he uses both to exemplify black artisanship, integrity, and patriarchal authority.

Next, I discuss how Marsalis's insistence on formal masculine dress draws on older strategies of black respectability politics that connected a neat appearance to moral rectitude. I connect Marsalis's ideas to those of longstanding black community institutions, while also showing how they constituted a direct rejoinder to more controversial fashions associated with hip hop. Marsalis's stances on proper masculine attire, I observe, drew much of their relevance from the moral panic surrounding newer forms of black popular music.

Finally, I discuss selected representations of black women in Marsalis's rhetoric from the late twentieth century through the early 21st century. I show how he contrasts his "grown-up" concept of romance with the crass sexuality of popular music using a close reading of his writing on the subject as well as an analysis of

one of his compositions. In the process, I note the rhetorical ambiguity between this protective stance and his implicit celebration of himself as a "player."

The overall image of black masculinity that Marsalis articulates is one grounded in traditional ideals of black patriarchy and inflected with a strong sense of pessimism regarding the direction of late 20th century African American culture. Marsalis's rhetoric constructs himself and his colleagues as heroic race men, debunking stereotypes about black manhood, providing inspiring examples of dignified attire to impressionable audiences, and protecting black women from the defamatory stereotypes of a decadent late 20th century black popular culture.

The Prince Hall Freemasons: Constructing a Traditional Black Masculinity in the 19th Century

The Prince Hall Freemasons, a black Masonic organization that developed in parallel with white American Freemasonry, are important to this discussion because of the part they played in articulating an alternative, positive vision of black masculinity during their long history. A brief outline of their development, activities, and symbolic importance will provide necessary context before we return to our analysis of Marsalis's attempts to construct a positive image of respectable black masculinity from the jazz world of the 1990s.

Prince Hall, the namesake of the Prince Hall Freemasons, founded the organization in 1775. After the white Freemasons of Massachusetts rejected his attempt to start a Masonic lodge, Hall approached the British soldiers occupying

the city of Boston and made a second attempt. The British Masons approved his proposal, and after the end of the Revolutionary War, he successfully petitioned for a charter from the Grand Lodge of England. Thus, the first lodge of the Prince Hall Freemasons, African Lodge No. 459, was established in 1784. After Prince Hall's success in Boston, the Prince Hall Freemasons quickly spread around the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, with black Masons establishing lodges in Philadelphia, New York, and Providence. From there, Prince Hall Masonry spread to the Caribbean.[348] In this sense, black Masonry was, in Martin Summers's words, a "diasporic project," with black Masons articulating a vision of brotherhood that crossed national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries.[349]

Black Masonic organizations played an important role in black communities from the beginning, although their activities were often sharply circumscribed by their membership. Prince Hall Freemasons engaged in charitable work like caring for the families of sick Masons, paying for the burial fees of recently deceased Masons, and setting up insurance policies and relief funds for members of the brotherhood who had fallen on hard times. While these services were mostly limited to members, they certainly had a positive impact on community members other than the men who made up a given lodge.[350] Beyond this, Prince Hall lodges were important sites for political and business networking

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[348] The historical details above are taken from Stephen Kantrowitz's article "'Intended for the Better Government of Man': The Political History of African American Freemasonry in the Era of Emancipation," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 4, 1005.
[349] Martin Summers, "Diasporic Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transnational Production of Black Middle-Class Masculinity," *Gender & History* 15, no.3 (November 2003), 553-554
[350] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 38.

for leaders in the black community. They provided a sorely needed space at a time when advancement opportunities for black businessmen and politicians were limited.[351]

The other important function of black Masonry, and the one more relevant to the discussion at hand, is the role that the black fraternal organization played in shaping and projecting a construction of respectable black masculinity. Martin Summers, in his book *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930*, provides an analysis of gender in Prince Hall Freemasonry that is also useful for understanding Wynton Marsalis's gender politics. Prince Hall Freemasons were expected to adhere rigorously to codes of respectable bourgeois manhood, both within their lodges and—even more importantly—outside of them. The performance of respectable masculinity was crucial to the Masons' project of presenting themselves as upstanding middle-class black men.[352]

"As members of a fraternal organization that conferred an ideological bourgeois status," Summers argues, "Prince Hall Freemasons concretely and symbolically constructed their gender identities within the paradigms of providership, production, and respectability." Black Masons constructed a respectable masculine identity by "assuming the role of protectors of women and children and through a productive engagement with the marketplace." At a time when black men were often unable to achieve things like landownership and

[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid., 51.

providership, Masonry gave them "an imaginary claim to traditional, nineteenth-century notions of manhood."[353] The symbols of artisanship, as represented by Masonic paraphernalia like leather smocks and compasses, were central in the Masons' process of placing themselves within the paradigms of providership and production.[354] By adhering to traditional norms of masculinity and by laying symbolic claims to traditionally masculine values like artisanship, providership, and production, black Masons were able to distinguish themselves as respectable men who might lead the process of racial uplift.[355]

What, then, does this nineteenth-century black fraternal organization have to do with black jazzmen in the 1990s? An analysis of the rhetoric Marsalis uses to construct a positive black masculinity shows that there are strong parallels between the work he was doing in the early 90s and the work the Prince Hall Freemasons were doing in the 18th and 19th centuries. Like the members of the Prince Hall Freemasons, Marsalis presents his black male subjects as respectable artisans, giving them symbolic access to traditional notions of manhood at a time—the 1980s and 1990s—when many white and black observers saw black manhood as under threat. Also like the Masons, Marsalis articulates a positive black manhood and a project of uplift by constructing a negative referent—hip-hop fans and musicians.

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[353] Ibid., 30.
[354] For a thorough discussion of this symbolism, see Maurice Wallace, "'Are We Men?': Prince Hall, Martin Delany, and the Masculine Ideal in Black Freemasonry, 1775-1865.' *American Literary History* 9, no. 3 (1 October 1997): 396-424.
[355] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents*, 59.

In Marsalis's depictions of the jazz community, we see similar process of using an arcane, exclusive, and respectable community of black men as a means of representing a positive image of black manhood. It comes as no surprise that Marsalis presents the older black jazzmen in his first book, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, as a sort of tight-knit fraternity (or "the illuminati," as he memorably calls them). With Summers's analysis of this earlier black fraternal organization in mind, we can turn to Marsalis's book.

"Old Oak Trees of Men": Constructing a Traditional Black Masculinity in the 1990s

In *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, Marsalis describes the older black jazzmen who were his mentors as "old oak trees of men." He uses the oak tree metaphor to evoke their strength and their rootedness in the jazz tradition: "Strong, proud, with far-reaching roots deeply embedded, sucking nourishment from the original stream, their branches stretching out boldly against the sky to proclaim the majesty of the blues. You could walk right past a big ol' tree and never look, let alone see."[356] Because they have been on the scene for so long, Marsalis explains, they "have seen important things come and go."[357] Wizened and majestic in their immovable artistic integrity, the old oak trees of men are too deeply rooted in the jazz tradition and the Albert Murray-esque blues sensibility to

[356] Wynton Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1994), 150.
[357] Ibid.

be swayed by the "social decay of the late twentieth century."[358] Instead, they hold fast to the traditions of acoustic jazz, "one with their cause, proclaiming the majesty of the blues, the jazz blues. Not by playing or telling but by being big ol' oak tree [sic] of men."[359]

Unlike the "fraudulent, would-be hip hitmen of media and commerce," Marsalis continues, the old oak trees are "true hipster[s]" whose hipness "flows from an unsurrendering battle with the realities of American life."[360] Indeed, for Marsalis, these men are hip in part because they possess a secret and mystical knowledge about the reality of American culture. Marsalis articulates this knowledge using Murray's language of racial mixture: "Americans are mulattoes. Whether we hate or are indifferent to each other, that is our reality."[361] Furthermore, this reality is encapsulated in jazz, the art form "born in the too-hot, smoked pot of combo that is New Orleans, Louisiana, where creoles, dark-skinned Negroes, white folks, Indians, and others were cooked in a roux called the blues."[362] "They have touched divine intelligence through music," Marsalis concludes, "and that is their identity."[363]

Another aspect of their identity, in Marsalis's presentation, is their position as principled artisans in a world increasingly filled with charlatans. The old oak

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[358] Ibid., 152. Note that Marsalis's reference to the "social decay of the late twentieth century" here echoes Stanley Crouch's own commentary on America's social decay due to the influence of post-1960s popular culture (see Chapter 2).
[359] Ibid., 151
[360] Ibid., 153.
[361] Ibid., 155.
[362] Ibid., 155.
[363] Ibid., 165.

trees of men are dedicated to their craft in spite of the declining standards of the world around them. Eschewing the empty posturing of "copy-cat slang" and "profanity," they express their identity through "the careful shaving of a reed, or the days and nights of practice, study, and reflection."[364]

The old oak trees of men are willing, even eager, to share their secrets with members of the younger generations who are willing to listen. "Ask earnestly," Marsalis explains, "and the telling of ancient secrets becomes commonplace." [365] Like oak trees, they have "always been there, silent, listening, still but ever changing, waiting to tell you what you need to know, emitting ageless information on frequency detected by only the most sensitive ears."[366]

Marsalis's admiring, even worshipful, description of his elders on the jazz scene presents his black mentors as a proud fraternity of musical artisans—or "the illuminati," as he describes them[367]--who possess deep mystical knowledge and communicate through a wordless language of "soul gestures."[368] He and his fellow Young Lions, men like Marcus Roberts, Todd Williams, Herlin Riley, and Wessell Anderson, are young initiates to this mystical order, presumably sitting amidst the old oak trees and listening closely for the "ageless information." On one hand, it's not unusual for a younger jazz musician like Marsalis to adopt such an admiring attitude towards their musical mentors. Paul Berliner notes in his 1994 tome

[364] Ibid., 152-153.
[365] Ibid., 150.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid., 165.
[368] Ibid., 152.

Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation, after all, that "from the student's side, these relationships [with their mentors] sometimes verge on idolatry."[369]

On the other hand, Marsalis's decision to frame the jazz community as a fraternity of wise black craftsmen is itself significant in the broader context of African American ideology. Marsalis's celebration of black jazzmen as dedicated musical artisans is a process of "invent[ing] a collective masculine self," in Martin Summers's words.[370] Much like the symbolic importance of the artisan in black Freemasonry, Marsalis's descriptions draw upon what Maurice Wallace has called "the historical relevance and respectability of the artisan in African-American masculine life."[371] Furthermore, if we analyze Marsalis's comments in the context of depictions of black jazzmen in the late 1980s, we can see that his presentation of a positive black jazz masculinity was an important intervention in many respects.

Within the decade leading up to Marsalis's writing, the two most high-profile media representations of black jazz musicians had been Dale Turner in *'Round Midnight* (1986) and Charlie Parker in *Bird* (1988). Both films depict their subjects as selfish, dysfunctional, and ultimately self-destructive. They film the central artists from the perspectives of sympathetic white caretakers who, as Krin Gabbard notes, are intended as stand-ins for the audience.[372] They conform

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[369] Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 40.
[370] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 30.
[371] Maurice Wallace, "'Are We Men?': Prince Hall, Martin Delany, and the Masculine Ideal in Black Freemasonry, 1775-1865.' *American Literary History* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 405.
[372] Krin Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 89.

closely to what Vance Bourjaily, in a 1987 essay for the *New York Times Book Review*, called "The Story": a genius musician destroys their life (through substance abuse, mental illness, or other means) after being frustrated by racism, commercialism, or their own inability to realize their artistic vision.[373]

Stanley Crouch had leveled an incisive, devastating critique of *Bird* in a 1989 review, calling it a "very bad film" that revealed the depth of white observers' "unintentional, liberal racism"[374]: "At best [Eastwood's Parker] is an idiot savant, in possession of natural rhythm, with little more than boyish charm and a sense of bewilderment. There is no sign of the sophistication, the curiosity, the aggressiveness, the regality, the guile, the charisma of which all who knew Parker still speak."[375] Like Crouch's emphasis on Charlie Parker's positive attributes, Marsalis's loving description of his mentors—some of whom, like Art Blakey, were themselves recovered drug addicts—emphasizes their admirable qualities while recontextualizing the seedier aspects of their lives as "the battle scars inflicted by a society that resentfully projects negative intentions onto them as punishment for their willful sophistication."[376] In doing so, Marsalis succeeds in constructing a black masculine self that counters a media discourse saturated with melodramatic stereotypes of black pathology.

On one level, then, we might see Marsalis's comments on the preceding generation of black jazz musicians as part of the broader proliferation of diverse

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[373] Vance Bourjaily, quoted in Gabbard 1996, p 67.
[374] Crouch, *Considering Genius*, 66.
[375] Ibid., 68.
[376] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing*, 155.

black creative voices in American media during the 1980s and 1990s. As American audiences became gradually more accepting of ethnic difference in media representations—provided that depictions of ethnic experience pointed back to "universal" themes—an unprecedentedly diverse array of black voices came to national prominence. Artists as wildly different as Spike Lee and Bill Cosby presented black perspectives on black life and culture that challenged longstanding negative stereotypes and began to introduce non-black Americans to the immense variety of black experience.[377] This trend, which Charles Banner-Haley terms "integrative cultural diversity," is also at work in Marsalis's homage to his elders, which serves as both a rejoinder to specific anti-black stereotypes and a commentary aimed at white readers on what Marsalis, following Murray and Crouch, sees as a racially mixed American identity.

There are, however, major problems with imagining the jazz tradition as a fraternity of black artisans passing mystical omni-American truths on to their young acolytes. The first of these is that Marsalis's appeals to a lineage of great jazz musicians, and his construction of the older jazz musicians quoted in the chapter as heroic objectors to the degradation of American culture, are inherently self-validating. Grouping jazz musicians as wildly different as Jackie McLean, Clark Terry, and Art Blakey together as seeking to express an "undeniable truth of America" discards the very different positions all of these men assumed toward

[377] For a longer discussion of this trend in American media, see Charles Banner-Haley, *The Fruits of Integration: Black Middle Class Ideology and Culture, 1960-1990,* p. 162-174.

America in their work[378] in favor of a Murray-esque ideology of "mulatto" America reminiscent of no one more than Marsalis himself. To cite another example, the claim that musicians like McLean and Art Farmer dedicated their lives to "the majesty of the blues" in defiance of the "social decay of the late twentieth century" ignores McLean's 1960s excursions into the avant-garde and Farmer's funky 1970s CTI recordings, both of which deviate significantly from Marsalis's sense of stylistic purism. In effect, this narrative reads Marsalis's, Murray's, and Crouch's positions on jazz back into the past, transforming most of the significant black jazz musicians of the previous generation into neoclassicists—"Old Lions," perhaps.

More significantly and troublingly, Marsalis's presentation of jazz as a sort of mystical black fraternal organization reads as reactionary at a time when more women than ever were learning to play jazz and vying for prominence on the scene. By the 1990s, the decades-long proliferation of university jazz programs (in theory, at least) gave young women a place to study the music while protected from the potential dangers of the after-hours jam sessions where previous generations had learned to play.[379] This is the underlying structural shift that Lara Pellegrinelli references in "Dig Boy Dig" article when she notes that "the number of

[378] For instance, Art Blakey's interest in Pan-Africanism, Jackie McLean's 1959 homage to Fidel Castro on his album *Jackie's Bag*, and Clark Terry's 1957 homage to Rosa Parks on his album *Serenade to a Bus Seat*

[379] Unfortunately, if the university setting protected young women from the potential dangers of the jam-session environment, it did nothing to protect them from the dangers of the university environment. The #MeToo movement has brought numerous testimonies of sexual harassment and assault in jazz studies programs to light. For examples, see https://medium.com/@kaliamariev/token-girl-564457c86f13 and http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mishandled-sexual-harassment-complaint-against-uofm-jazz-prof-1.4289078.

female instrumentalists has grown substantially in recent decades."[380] In this context, Marsalis's paean to the "illuminati" of jazz legends and their protégés reads as a celebration of the social forces that excluded—and continue to exclude[381]—women from the jazz scene.

Narratives of Black Paternal Dysfunction in the 1970s and 1980s

Marsalis's framing of these black jazz musicians' commitment to their art in terms of manly integrity and respectable artisanship points to the way that his idealization his black mentors in the jazz community was in dialogue with contemporary anxieties about black manhood—specifically, black fatherhood—that crossed racial and political boundaries. Although black leaders had been expressing concern with the status of the patriarchal black family since the late 19th century,[382] narratives about black familial dysfunction became especially prominent in the 1980s and 1990s due to the lingering impact of the Moynihan

[380] Lara Pellegrinelli, "Dig Boy Dig," *The Village Voice*, November 7, 2000.
[381] For a detailed discussion of how codes of masculine conduct continue to exclude women from jazz in university contexts, see Eitan Wilf, *School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 106-108.
[382] See, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois's assessment of the state of the black family in 1890s Philadelphia in his classic *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, where he noted the unusually high number of black wives deserted by their husbands: "The number of deserted wives, however, allowing for false reports, is astoundingly large and presents many intricate problems. A very large part of charity given to Negroes is asked for this reason. The causes of desertion are partly laxity in morals and partly the difficulty of supporting a family." W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 67.

Report, increased class stratification in the black community, and vociferous debates around federal antidiscrimination policies.

The increasing numbers of black families headed by single women were a significant source of anxiety for members of the black middle class in the 1980s.[383] Although both white and black women had become increasingly likely to head their own families after 1960, the demographic change was much exaggerated within the black community. In their 1990 sociological study *Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* National Research Council staff members Gerald Jaynes and Robin Williams described these trends in detail. In 1984, almost 25 percent of never-married black women headed families, as opposed to only 5 percent of white women. There was a similar discrepancy between the number of divorced black women who headed families (66%) and the number of divorced white women who headed families (49%).[384] Jaynes and Williams commented that "these demographic data unambiguously describe an increasing black-white difference with regard to the family living arrangements of adults and their children." Furthermore, this discrepancy was troubling in that it meant that black children were more likely to grow up in poverty and thus be at risk of "having health problems, a poor education, and poor future employment prospects."[385]

Black and white conservative pundits used data like this to advance their arguments against the women's movement, welfare, and affirmative action, all of

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[383] Charles Banner-Haley, *The Fruits of Integration: Black Middle Class Ideology and Culture, 1960-1990,* 46.
[384] Gerald D. Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, *Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (National Academies Press, 1990), 519.
[385] Ibid., 523.

which they blamed for the large number of single-parent households in black communities. George Gilder, a prominent 1980s white conservative, argued that because affirmative action programs and the women's movement had more of a positive effect on black women than on black men, they both made it harder for men to find work and wounded their masculine self-image. This, in turn, made black men more likely to abandon their families, thus explaining the disproportionate number of woman-led black single parent households.[386]

Black neoconservatives rejected policies based on government intervention in impoverished black communities, arguing that the restoration of the male-led black family was the cure for black America's ills.[387] Conservative columnist and economics professor Walter Williams, for example, argued against government subsidies for unwed mothers, claiming that they rewarded irresponsible behavior that was weakening the foundation of the black community—i.e., the two-parent household.[388] Likewise, Charles Banner-Haley notes that, for black neoconservative Thomas Sowell, the success of individual black people was largely "the result of the absorption of middle-class values and the existence of a strong traditional family that encouraged educational achievement, self-reliance, and morality."[389] The majority of black people's failure to achieve similar success was

386 Banner-Haley, *The Fruits of Integration*, 71.
387 Ibid., 78.
388 Christopher Alan Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts*, 134.
389 Charles Banner-Haley, *Fruits of Integration*, 75.

due to "misguided civil rights legislation, welfare dependency, and affirmative action."[390]

In the wake of the Moynihan Report, both scholarly and lay audiences in the 1970s and 1980s latched onto the image of the black "hit-and-run father" who fathered children and then abandoned them.[391] "According to this portrayal," explain researchers Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Ronald Mincy, "men who father children outside of a martial bond are interested only in sex, not fatherhood. When their female conquests come up pregnant, they quickly flee the scene, leaving the expectant mother holding the diaper bag."[392] The increase in scholarly attention paid to black single-parent households after the release of the Moynihan Report meant that the stereotype of the irresponsible and absentee black father came to "[play] a dominant role in the public discourse about poverty, family structure, and race."[393]

With these debates in mind, we can turn to Marsalis's rhetorical use of the aforementioned ideology of respectable black manhood in reference to his own father. His public admiration for his father can be seen as a high-profile attempt to uplift the image of the black father in the eyes of an American public increasingly fascinated by stereotypes of black male irresponsibility.

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[390] Ibid.
[391] Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Ronald Mincy, "Claiming Fatherhood: Race and the Dynamics of Paternal Involvement among Unmarried Men," in *The Moynihan Report Revisited: Lessons and Reflections After Four Decades* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 150-151.
[392] Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Ronald Mincy, "Claiming Fatherhood: Race and the Dynamics of Paternal Involvement among Unmarried Men," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621, The Moynihan Report Revisited: Lessons and Reflections after Four Decades (January 2009), 150-151.
[393] Ibid., 151.

Ellis Marsalis and Respectable Black Fatherhood

We might look at Marsalis's contemporary discussions of his father, Ellis, for another example of his using the ideology of black artisanship to counter negative stereotypes about black masculinity. Indeed, Ellis Marsalis was in many ways the prototypical old oak tree in Marsalis's life, both because of his importance as a musical mentor to his sons and his commitment to acoustic jazz in the face of changing musical trends. Ellis started teaching jazz at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts in 1974, and was frustrated with his students' seeming disinterest in straight-ahead jazz. Ellis came to see 1970s popular music as fostering a discouraging acceptance of musical mediocrity among his students and dimming their appreciation of jazz masterworks.

"Since the high school musicians during my school days were discouraged from playing jazz," he later reflected, "I mistakenly thought that having a program that formally introduced jazz techniques would be cause for celebration. I assumed these students would eagerly embrace the music of Monk, Miles, Dizzy, and Bird. I was in for a rude awakening."[394] In response to his students' indifference to the music of Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk, Ellis took pessimistic view of the popular culture of the day foreshadowed the position his own son would take two decades later.

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[394] Ellis Marsalis, qtd. in D. Antoinette Handy, *Jazz Man's Journey: A Biography of Ellis Louis Marsalis, Jr.* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 14.

Indeed, the elder Marsalis came to believe that acoustic instruments were in danger of being replaced by electric instruments that were "constantly being modified to meet the demands of the young players searching for hit recordings," and that the "low expectation of musical excellence" in underfunded school systems had caused jazz to fall out of favor.[395] In his own words, he "had no idea that kids in the 1970s were interested in jazz." Ellis believed that the jazz scene had been effectively been wiped out by newer genres of popular music: "The 1970s were producing fusion, and nobody was talking about jazz. There was nothing out there."

Despite this, Ellis doggedly continued to perform straight-ahead jazz even when his own sons Branford and Wynton began out-earning him with their pop and funk gigs. His commitment to straight-ahead jazz made a deep impact on Wynton, who celebrated his father's "integrity" and "morality" in a 1990 television interview:

> For a long time he wasn't working. And he was teaching high school part-time, and he's a great piano player. And he knew all this stuff about music but what he was doing wasn't in demand in that time. But I never saw his belief or confidence in the music waver based on his economic situation…So for my whole life I looked up to him just in terms of how he approached art, and how serious he was. And as a man he would shoulder whatever the responsibilities he had to shoulder without complaining.[396]

[395] Ibid.
[396] *Later with Bob Costas*, interview with Bob Costas. New York, April 16, 1990.

Not unlike Marsalis's aforementioned comments on the "old oak trees of men," his comments about his father group his dedication to straight-ahead jazz together with the attributes of respectable manhood: responsibility, stoicism, commitment, and above all, artisanship. We might understand the "responsibilities" that Marsalis mentions his father shouldering as not only his responsibilities to his wife and children, but also his responsibility to maintain the integrity of his art. Furthermore, he is so dedicated to his craft that he remains steadfast despite economic hardship for himself and his family. If he falls short of achieving the providership that Summers identifies as a key quality of traditional Victorian manhood, his deep conviction is more than enough to make him a manly role model for his son.

Indeed, only two years after he made the aforementioned comments, Marsalis would begin using his and Ellis's model father-son relationship to uplift the image of the black father in popular culture. The two men became directly involved in the black press's ongoing attempts to debunk the "hit-and-run father" stereotype by participating in two early 1990s features on black fathers and sons in *Ebony* magazine.

The first of these, "The Other Side Of The Black Father Myth," appeared in the June 1992 issue of *Ebony*. Subtitled "The family patriarch is alive and well in the African American community," the article's author sets out to dispel the "perception that Black men have a make-a-baby-and-run attitude about their children." "Nothing could be farther from the truth," the author argues, "for the

vast majority of Black men love their families and will do almost anything to keep them together and raise their children properly."[397] Ellis Marsalis, with his sons Branford and Wynton, is profiled as a positive example of a proud black father who nurtured his sons' artistry. "Sometimes Wynton will say that I taught him how to be a man," Ellis is quoted as saying. "Half of the time, I was trying to learn that myself."[398]

A second article, "Like Father, Like Son: Following In The Footsteps Of Fame," appeared several months later in the February 1993 issue. Similarly to the earlier article, "Like Father, Like Son" features profiles and quotes from famous black fathers and sons including O'Jays lead singer Eddie Levert and his recording star son Gerald, Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder and his son, Virginia Representative L. Douglas Wilder, Jr., and director Melvin Van Peebles and his director son, Mario, among others. In a brief profile, Marsalis praises his father as his main early musical influence and mentor, remembering how "[Ellis] used to take me to all the gigs with him" and calling him "a library of information that I can always call on."[399]

We might plausibly read the discourse of black manhood that Marsalis articulates in his conversations about his father and the aforementioned section of *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* as part of the widespread attempt to uplift the image of the black man and the black father in the popular imagination. The

[397] "The Other Side of the Black Father Myth," *Ebony*, June 1992, 56.
[398] Ibid.
[399] "Like Father, Like Son: Following In The Footsteps Of Fame" *Ebony*, February 1993, 98.

various wise, responsible, and supportive black men in Marsalis's representations of the jazz community during the early '90s—who he identifies as "father-like figures," serve as another refutation of what *Ebony* called the "Black Father Myth" and of damaging "myths" around black men more generally.

"Old-Style Negroes": Dress and Black Masculinity

Another passage from "Crescendos and Diminuendos" points to a second important element of Marsalis's vision of upstanding black manhood. The "old style Negr[o]" Marsalis presents as the archetypical old oak tree is a well-dressed man of Murray's generation: "Hat-wearing, shoe-shined, vine-pressed, thin-mustached, hair-swept, sweet-cologne-smelling, thin-razor-shaved, willfully sophisticated Americans of all persuasions for all occasions."[400] The attributes Marsalis lists—pressed suits, shined shoes, hats—are markers of a well-dressed pre-war black masculinity that he and the other members of his band would famously emulate in their own conservative fashion choices. Indeed, many of the photographs of Marsalis and his bandmates included in the book feature them in just such attire.

In keeping with this theme, the book's final chapter, "Twelfth Bar," is a description of preparing for a nighttime performance that pays special attention to seemingly insignificant activities like ironing suits, buttoning sleeves, and

[400] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues,* 152

adjusting collars. Like Marsalis's celebration of father-son musical relationships, the images and descriptions of well-dressed black men that appear in this chapter and throughout *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* present a conservative black masculine aesthetic that grounds Marsalis's performance attire in the intertwined traditions of black musical professionalism and respectability politics. They also offer yet another example of the persistent tendency within neoclassicist rhetoric to make questions of appearance into issues of moral character.

The importance of fine clothes as a symbol of sophistication, professionalism, and fidelity to the patriarchal jazz tradition was already a well-established theme in Marsalis's public persona by the time *Sweet Swing Blues On The Road* appeared in 1994. Marsalis's fashion choices were attracting attention from music journalists by the late 1980s. "Leaning against a nightclub wall in a tapered suit and silk tie," writes Linda Williams in a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* article, "[Marsalis] could pass for a Gentleman's Quarterly model."[401] In a 1995 *60 Minutes* profile, Marsalis would explain what he saw as the ceremonial importance of dress clothes: "Every night it's a ceremony, and [a freshly-pressed suit] is a part of that ceremony…[The audience has] taken their time to come out and check out our concert. And that's a serious thing to me. I want to have something on that's going to make them feel good, too."[402] The young Marsalis's image—clean-cut, always conservatively yet fashionably dressed in tailored suits—quickly became

[401] Linda Williams, "A Young Musician Trumpets a Revival of Traditional Jazz—Zealous About Black Culture, Wynton Marsalis Draws Prizes and Packed Crowds," *Wall Street Journal*, September 24, 1986.
[402] *60 Minutes*, interview with Ed Bradley, CBS-TV, broadcast November 26, 1995.

the template for the young black jazz musicians signed by major labels in his wake. On the covers of 1980s and 1990s albums by artists like Marcus Roberts, Terence Blanchard, and Wallace Roney, we see similar images of young African-American men in suits, often with pensive or serious expressions on their faces if not depicted in the act of playing.

In their writing, both Marsalis and Crouch make connections between dress codes and morality, with departures from conservative or formal style seen as indicative of decadence and moral decline. A brief exchange in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* between Marsalis and a young hip-hop fan encapsulates this theme: "Not all rap is about that bad stuff."[403] "The kind you like is," Marsalis retorts. "Look at how you're dressed."[404] In one sentence—"Look at how you're dressed"—Marsalis equates a young man's clothing with his morality, with the "bad stuff" of hip-hop culture. Although his outfit isn't described in the text, to Marsalis it clearly represents his misguided embrace of a popular culture he characterizes as vapid, vulgar and antisocial.

But perhaps the most striking example of the tendency to collapse clothing, the aesthetic value of music, and moral standing comes in Stanley Crouch's profiles of Miles Davis, who appears and reappears as a symbol of fallen elegance in Crouch and Marsalis's writings and interviews. For example, in his celebratory 1998 essay "Miles Davis in the Fever of Spring, 1961," Crouch connects the peak of

[403] In this exchange, "bad stuff" encompasses all of the negative qualities Marsalis ascribes to hip-hop, including misogyny, "cussin', posturing, and whining," and "antisocial behavior."
[404] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing*, 136.

Miles Davis's early 1960s musical influence with the perfection of his masculine sartorial style: "The trumpeter was ahead of the curve," Crouch writes, "holding a position that was much larger than the sound of anybody's music. His attire was under as much awed scrutiny as the notes he chose to play. He had been setting styles among Negro musicians and others for at least six years, defining what was hip and what was not."[405] Crouch muddles the two areas in which Davis was a trendsetter—music and fashion—so that by the last sentence of the passage it becomes impossible to tell which one he is talking about. When Crouch says "setting styles" here, he refers both to musical style and sartorial style.

Conversely, in his infamous 1986 article "On the Corner: The Sellout of Miles Davis," Crouch makes an explicit connection between Miles Davis's supposed morally bankrupt embrace of pop culture and his abandonment of suits and ties for flamboyant 1970s fashions: "Davis's music became progressively trendy and dismal, as did his attire; at one point in the early 1970s, with his wraparound dark glasses and his puffed shoulders, the erstwhile master of cool looked like an extra from a science fiction B movie."[406] In this passage, Miles's abandonment of swinging acoustic jazz for electrified jazz-rock fusion parallels his abandonment of conservative masculine dress for outlandish costumes. Going further, Crouch connects both of these things, summarized as Davis's "abject surrender to popular trends," to the overall decline of African American culture that he blames on a misguided desire for authenticity:

[405] Crouch, *Considering Genius*, 41.
[406] Ibid., 251-252.

> Davis's corruption occurred at about the time that the 'Oreo' innuendo became an instrument with which formerly rejected street Negroes and thugs began to intimidate, and often manipulate, middle-class Afro-Americans in search of their roots, and of a 'real' black culture. In this climate, obnoxious, vulgar, and antisocial behavior has been confused with black authenticity.[407]

Crouch locates most of post 1968 black culture, including the work of Spike Lee, Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy, and Public Enemy, and the activism of Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party, within this climate of vulgarity. While Marsalis doesn't name names like Crouch does—although his use of "antisocial" to describe hip hop shows Crouch's influence—he clearly saw dress, specifically performance attire, as symbolic of one's relationship to the corrosive popular culture of the day. It might be said, then, that his and his ensembles' strict observance of formal dress codes served as an important bulwark against what he calls the "fake air of informality"[408] of the late twentieth century.

The practice of constructing morally upstanding masculinity through formal dress has deep roots in African American uplift ideology that date back more than a century before Marsalis's writing. In the late 19th century, for example, prominent African American men used clothing as an essential element of what Willard Gatewood calls the "Genteel Performance"—rules of behavior and etiquette that the black elite followed in hopes of presenting a respectable image. In this context, carefully selected and well-tailored clothing was a way for the

[407] Ibid., p 252.
[408] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing*, 152.

black elite to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the white mainstream and to provide an instructive example for the uplifting of the black masses. One admiring description of Reconstruction-era senator Blanche K. Bruce, for instance, praises the texture and "fashionable cut" of his clothes as further evidence of his good character and worthiness for inclusion in American society[409]

The Prince Hall Freemasons also used conservative ideals of masculine dress to project an image of respectable masculinity in opposition to stereotypes of black slovenliness. In doing so, they regularly equated sartorial style with morality. Summers describes how one black magazine depicted the investiture of a black Masonic lodge in terms that "conflated the respectable character of [Carthaginian Lodge No. 47] and the sartorial style of its ceremony." "Indeed," Summers continues, "the article [in *Colored American* magazine] suggested that the ceremonial clothing of the lodge's members was a reflection of their respectability and a harbinger of future success."[410]

Other prominent black institutions of the era, such as universities, also used dress codes to mold respectable identities for their students. Black colleges instituted strict dress codes as part of the uplifting process of moral training, with administrators espousing their belief that neat, conservative clothing indicated upstanding character. Leaders at Fisk University, for example, "took pride in the fact that the institutions' dress code was both a reflection, and a facilitator, of its

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[409] Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 7.
[410] Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 53.

students' good character…As educators drew a correlation between 'good taste' and personal integrity, so they mapped out a relationship between 'bad' taste and questionable character."[411]

The Victorian morality implicit in Marsalis's formal masculine dress code accompanies a deep reverence and nostalgia for the professionalized standard of dress that became the norm in jazz in the 1920s and 1930s and persisted through the 1950s. As Scott DeVeaux notes, "successful dance musicians [of the 1930s and 1940s] dazzled the lay public with the sophistication and elegance of their attire."[412] Within the entertainment world of the 1920s and 1930s, black dance musicians' taste in clothes, like their dependability and craftsmanship, made them into a new class of respectable professionals at a time when prestigious occupations were out of reach for most black Americans. A similar sensibility of responsible middle-class professionalism underlies the aforementioned last chapter of *Sweet Swing Blues*, in which Marsalis groups ironing his suit together with tuning up and reviewing chord changes as part of preparing for a performance.[413] The grouping together of musical and sartorial preparation—"Adjust your reeds, slides, and ties"[414]—featured in the chapter illustrate that in Marsalis's understanding of professional musicianship, a fastidious appearance is as important as, say, accurate intonation.

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[411] Ibid., 209-210.
[412] Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 49.
[413] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues,* 182-187.
[414] Ibid., 186.

The fictionalized audience quotes included in the book's third chapter, "Chorus,' further emphasize the idea that the clothing of Marsalis and his musicians would ideally make as much of an impact on audiences as their playing. "I like the way they look, just playing," one woman says. "It looks dignified, makes me feel proud."[415] "Those young men are the greatest musicians I ever heard," another woman enthuses to her grandchildren. "Even better than Duke Ellington and Count Basie. You should have heard their trombonist. And the way they dressed."[416] The first quote, about the feeling of dignity that the musicians onstage impart to the (implicitly black) woman in the audience, hearkens all the way back to the uplift-derived idea of the genteel performance as inspiration for the black masses. The second quote, though, is much darker and more revealing of Marsalis's cultural pessimism when understood in the context of the longer passage.

Mrs. Martin, the grandmother who is so impressed with the Marsalis septet's elegance, returns home to the projects after "saving for months" to attend the concert. Her grandchildren are gathered around the television watching a hip hop video, which Marsalis describes in nightmarish terms as "women in drawers assum[ing] semipornographic poses while men with hands on genitalia chant rhymed doggerel to an incessant beat."[417] Because they "do not respect" their grandmother, they ignore her suggestions that she come with her to the next jazz

[415] Ibid., 45.
[416] Ibid., 58.
[417] Ibid., 58.

concert. Their vulnerable minds "go on frying in visual projections of the purest ignorance and worst intentions."[418]

In stark terms of moral panic, Marsalis contrasts the dignified appearance of himself and his musicians with the obscene posture and dress of his imaginary hip-hop musicians. Mrs. Martin's grandchildren, tellingly depicted as fatherless,[419] are made to represent a generation of black children whose minds are being "slowly destroyed" by deviant images of blackness. Marsalis strongly implies that, bereft of both a father and edifying black male role models like himself and his bandmates, these "victims of grown-up" play will remain adrift.

It is clear, then, that formal dress carries a heavy symbolic weight in Marsalis's understanding of his own position relative to late 20th century African American culture. Indeed, suits and ties also became associated with Marsalis and his cohort among the wider jazz audience—according to critic Tom Piazza, they were eventually given the condescending epithet "young black men in suits" by an unsympathetic observer. Despite these associations, it is interesting to note that by the time Marsalis became a star in the early 1980s, dress codes among jazz musicians had already begun to revert to more formal styles after the eclectic casual trends of the 1970s. The World Saxophone Quartet had begun performing in tuxedos by the late 1970s. Critics variously interpreted this move as either parodic or, in the case of Crouch, as an homage to "aristocratic modes of dress"

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[418] Ibid.

[419] "She lives in the Hill housing projects with two granddaughters and a grandson. Her daughter is there, too. Her no-good son-in-law, however, is nowhere to be found." (p 58)

among prewar black performers.[420] Art Blakey, following the suggestion of his well-dressed bassist Charles Fambrough, also bought tuxedos for all of the musicians in his band soon after Marsalis joined in 1980.[421]

This is not to say that dress codes among jazz musicians hadn't loosened during the 1970s; a cursory survey of jazz photography from the era will reveal an eclectic mixture of formal and casual clothing strikingly different from the dark suits of the 1960s and earlier. It does, however, suggest that the attention paid to Marsalis's attire was due to something other than his unique appearance in the jazz world of the 1980s and 1990s.

Christopher Coady, in his 2016 book *John Lewis and the Challenge of "Real" Black Music*, describes a similar situation in 1950s and 60s descriptions of the Modern Jazz Quartet as strikingly formal. After noting that the MJQ's formal dress—including their occasional wearing of tuxedos—was not at all different from their contemporaries, Coady argues that the trope of the group as resembling "bearded undertakers" represented an attempt to position them in an oppositional relationship to African-American culture at large.[422]

A similar process is at work in descriptions of Marsalis as a Gentleman's Quarterly model or a young black man in a suit. While Marsalis was in fact one of a great many black male jazz musicians in suits in the 1980s, descriptions like these ones served to construct Marsalis as a young black celebrity removed from and in

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[420] Stanley Crouch, quoted in *Blowin' Hot and Cool*, 355.
[421] Leslie Gourse, *Wynton Marsalis: Skain's Domain: A Biography* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 77.
[422] Coady, *John Lewis and the Challenge of "Real" Black Music,* 77.

opposition to the African American youth culture of his day. These descriptions in the press—the "young man in the dark blue Versace jacket" of the 1990 *Time* profile, for instance—drew their effectiveness not from Marsalis's difference from other jazz musicians, but from his difference from the increasingly influential hip hop fashions of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Marsalis himself participated in this process, and indeed uses stereotypes of urban black dress and behavior throughout *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* to reinforce his image as a respectable and serious young black musician. In *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, as in earlier iterations of respectability politics, the production of racial respectability relies in part on what Kevin Gaines calls "formulaic representations of urban pathology."[423] Marsalis's descriptions of the degraded spectacle of urban black popular culture serve as foils against which he and his colleagues appear as dignified representations of respectable black masculinity.

Martin Summers's comment on the Prince Hall Masons "could only participate in an uplift ideology if there were people who needed to be raised up, improved"[424] is also true of Marsalis. His construction of himself as a black culture leader in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* depends on the existence of a group of black people—devotees of a dysfunctional hip-hop culture—who need an uplifting example.

[423] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 158.
[424] Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents*, 59.

"Love and Broken Hearts": Idealized Gender Difference and Romance in Marsalis's Rhetoric

A final element of the idealized black manhood in Marsalis's gender politics is respect for and protection of black women. While laudable in some respects, Marsalis's articulation of male-female relations and his underlying objectification of women lock female musicians into a sharply circumscribed role in his idealized jazz social world. "Sweet Refrain," the sixth chapter of *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, is dedicated to relationships between men and women—specifically to Marsalis's particular understanding of romance. Marsalis lays out his definition of romance in a sentence that reappears throughout the rapturous prose of this chapter: "Romance is an intense relationship with reality." While the meaning of this sentence is initially vague, it quickly becomes clear that the "reality" Marsalis is referring to is what Kevin Gaines calls "patriarchal gender conventions of sexual difference." "You will hear that men and women are the same," Marsalis writes, "and publicly you will agree, except on holidays and in moonlit rooms around the world. At these times you will be reacquainted with your oldest selves."[425] He goes on to connect romance to the stylish cooperation necessary for good jazz: "That is romance. Willful participation with style and in the groove, like the many jazzmen who have swung their way across this globe throughout the twentieth

[425] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing*, 92.

century."[426] For Marsalis, then, romance as exemplified in the ethos of the jazz ensemble is an "intense," sensual affirmation and celebration of gender differences between men and women.

The imagery scattered throughout this chapter serves to make Marsalis's discussion of romance "raced." Of the fourteen women pictured in this chapter, all but three are visibly of African descent. In the context of the whole book, the playful and loving black couples pictured here stand in sharp contrast to both the vulgar image of the black man and woman in the rap video or the depressing description of the black single mother, both of which appear in Chapter 3. In contrast to those earlier depictions of dysfunctional black male-female relationships, the various intimate photographs of black couples spread throughout the chapter—many, though not all, are of Marsalis with different women—show hugs, kisses, and flirtatious glances. They illustrate the elements that Marsalis presents as essential to a mature conception of romance. Marsalis further evokes this conception by drawing on established tropes of courtship, which for him go hand in hand with "maleness and femaleness":

> This is the end of the twentieth century, we still love our maleness and femaleness. We still love our twilight dinners, low tv [sic] glows, morning sunshines, dancing dates, sentimental songs, silent smiles, eye winks, hand-holdings, phone exchanges, awkward revelations, standoffish flirtations, disappointments.[427]

[426] Ibid., 93.
[427] Ibid., 97.

Indeed, the importance that Marsalis give to these interactions works to elevate them from sentimental or even repressive clichés of dating and courtship into timeless expressions of grown-up love, much as his vision of jazz centers on what he characterizes as timeless ideals of style, elegance, and heroism.

Of course, the intimacy on display in this part of the book has other connotations as well. The various photos of Marsalis embracing women have more than a hint of the young trumpeter's sexual braggadocio—a theme also hinted at in Marsalis's reference to the archetypical trumpeter as "somebody [who] takes your girlfriend."[428] Indeed, one might come away from this section under the impression that Marsalis's real critique of misogynistic rappers isn't their celebration of sexual conquest—it's their celebration of sexual conquest without the accompanying gentility of "romance." In this sense Marsalis's florid language conceals a celebration of masculine virility not unlike the "semipornographic" hip-hop he criticizes. Nevertheless, we can draw clear links between his celebration of old-fashioned courtship and the ideological currents of respectable black masculinity discussed throughout this chapter.

I argue that Marsalis's discourse of romance as presented in "Sweet Refrain" and reiterated elsewhere in his body of work reflects the "respectable" black man's symbolic position as protector of black women. Furthermore, in a manner similar to what I describe above, Marsalis's construction of himself and his colleagues as chivalrous protectors of black womanhood depends on a construction of hip hop

[428] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, 11.

as misogynistic despoiler of black women's collective image. This contrast is implicit in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* and explicit in "Love and Broken Hearts," the Marsalis composition I discuss below.

If nineteenth-century advocates of a traditional black masculinity were unusually concerned with the black man's ability to "protect" black women, it was because black women remained unusually vulnerable to white sexual violence. As Gaines shows, the emphasis that black leaders of this period placed on protected femininity was a direct response to both painful memories of sexual exploitation during slavery and the continued threat of sexual violence against black women. The rhetorical image of strong black fathers protecting their wives and families was empowering for many black men and women at a time when mainstream American society continued to deny black men "the attributes of power as protectors and providers."[429] While this patriarchal rhetoric was more reflective of aspiration than of any real power in the hands of black men at this time, the patriarchal family became and remained an important symbol of security for black communities under continual threat.

This issue of protection was far from a strictly 19th and early 20th century concern. As Danielle L. McGuire explains in her 2010 study *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance,* cases like the 1944 gang rape of Recy Taylor "[were] not unusual in the segregated South. The sexual exploitation of black women by white men had its roots in slavery and continued throughout the

[429] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 107.

better part of the twentieth century."[430] Thus, the threat of white sexual violence and the ability of black men to protect their wives and daughters was a concern that appeared during slavery and didn't begin to dissipate until the second half of the twentieth century.

Marsalis's construction of romance builds upon these longstanding attempts by black men to protect black women from a variety of threats. By celebrating the gender distinctions that constitute men and women's "oldest selves," he symbolically places black men firmly within the traditionally masculine role of protector. This is a reassertion of the "patriarchal gender conventions of sexual difference" that Kevin Gaines identifies as an important feature of uplift ideology. Within his gender politics, Marsalis casts himself and his colleagues as defenders of a black womanhood under attack by "pimps," "hustlers," and "con-men." If we turn to his composition "Love and Broken Hearts," a track from his 2007 album *From the Plantation to the Penitentiary*, we can see the ideology of protective black masculinity at work. In a real sense, we can hear Marsalis in 2006 elaborating on the ideas of romance that he first articulated in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*.

Marsalis's original composition "Love and Broken Hearts" is the fourth track on *From the Plantation to the Penitentiary*, an angry commentary on early 21st century African-American culture. Joining Marsalis on the album are a band made

[430] Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Rights Movement From Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xviii.

up of sidemen from the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra—tenor saxophonist Walter Blanding, pianist Dan Nimmer, bassist Carlos Henriquez, and drummer Ali Jackson—and young vocalist Jennifer Sanon.

Marsalis's lyrics for "Love and Broken Hearts" present a forceful critique of the misogynistic elements of popular culture. However, the alternative he proposes is a cultural vision in which women continue to serve as the passive inspirations of male creativity rather than exploring romantic and erotic love on their own terms. The first, *rubato* section of the verse starts with a few lines that criticize the objectification of women in commercials and hip-hop culture in general:

> I don't need good looks to sell no cars or beer,
> T.V.s or new machines, oh!
> All you con-men can hang up your schemes,
> Pimps and hustlers put up the Vaseline

As the *rubato* section of the verse ends and the song assumes its normal tempo, Marsalis labels the "safari-seekers" and "thug life coons" of hip-hop "modern day minstrels," making his and Stanley Crouch's oft-repeated connection between hip hop culture and minstrelsy. Other lines of the verse, like "I ain't your bitch, I ain't your ho" and "Don't take me down your memory lane,/ I've got my own mem'ries just the same," seem to suggest that the woman speaking is taking control of her own identity back from mass media purveyors of misogyny. The body of the song quickly dispels this initial impression by making it clear that the speaker isn't articulating feminist critique of pop culture but instead is issuing a plea to be

courted. The content of the lyrics in this section strongly echoes the imagery of romantic love in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*. For example, the second eight-bar phrase is a wistful list of sweet romantic gestures:

> It's time for moonlit glances
> And crazy playful love games
> It's time for candy roses
> And silly names
> It's time for you to hold me
> And touch my soul
> It's time for me to hold you
> And let you know
> We bring the starlit skies
> When we're together

Marsalis's lyrics—and his band's recording—end with the speaker asking her (presumably male) listener to "treat [her] gently now." This request that men treat women gently is significant for two reasons. First, it negates, or at least complicates, the aforementioned suggestion in the verse that this woman has her own memories and doesn't want to be led down the memory lane of misogyny. The memories she refers to, it is now clear, are memories of traditional, respectful flirtation with men—the "memory lane" of idealized old-school courtship as opposed to the "memory lane" of 19th century minstrelsy.

Second, and most importantly, the final lines of the song connect "Love and Broken Hearts" to the broader discourse within racial uplift rhetoric of protected womanhood. By ending with a plea to be treated gently, the speaker puts the onus on responsible men—whether lovers or artists—to protect the black women

currently under threat from unscrupulous "pimps," "hustlers," and "con-men." In short, although she voices her rejection of the damaging elements of contemporary popular culture, the female voice in "Love and Broken Hearts" is still in need of a chivalrous man to articulate any possible alternatives. Much as 19th century black leaders constructed ideals of protective masculinity and protected femininity in response to the ever-present threat of sexual violence, Marsalis juxtaposes his own "gentle" treatment of women with what he characterizes as the sexual exploitation of hip hop culture.

The themes of gender difference and protection in the lyrics are supported by the musical arrangement and performance. "Love and Broken Hearts" is perhaps best understood formally as a heavily modified and expanded 32-bar popular song. The second and the final eight bar sections (or the second and third "A" of an AABA form) are both followed by a four-bar tag. A 12-bar interlude takes the place of what would be the 8-bar bridge of a traditional popular song from the Great American Songbook. A final, and crucial, formal element of "Love and Broken Hearts" that points to Marsalis's evocation of the early to midcentury American popular songs is the inclusion of a verse. Marsalis's decision to write a verse for the beginning of his composition both points back to the form's roots in Broadway musicals and connects it with well-known standards that feature verses, such as Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me." [see Fig.]

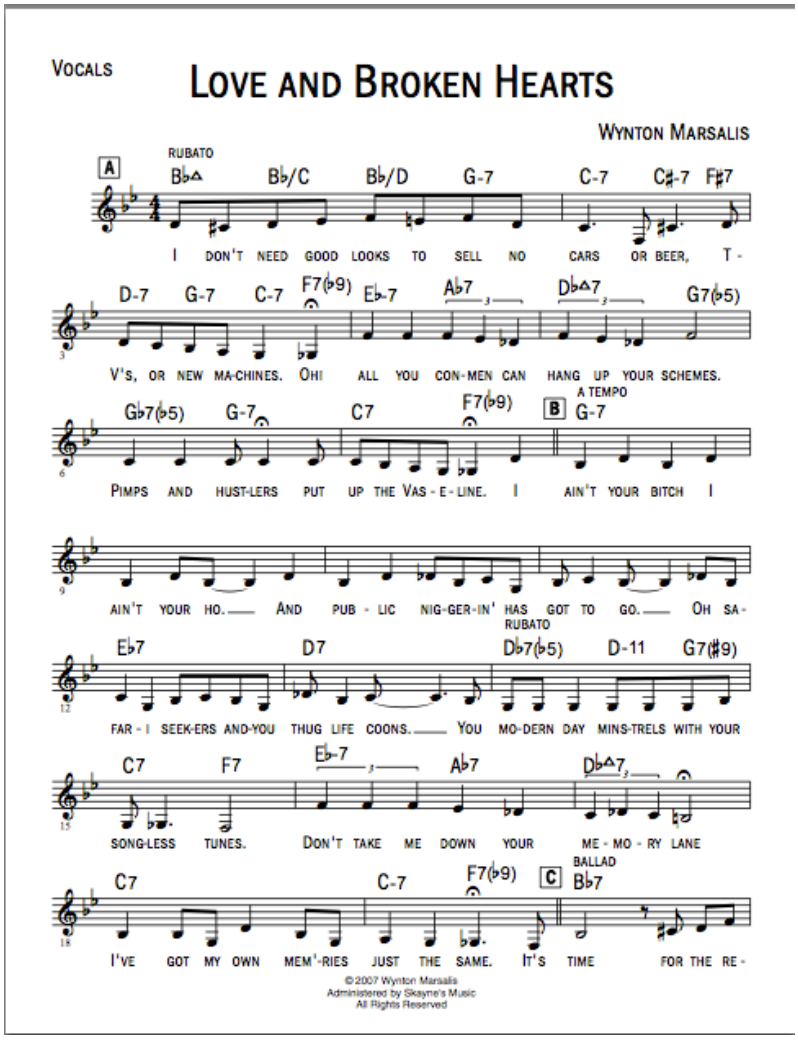

Fig. 3.1 –The verse encompasses letters A and B on the printed vocal score

"Love and Broken Hearts" combines familiar elements of mid-20th century popular song harmony with progressions of Marsalis's own invention. For example, Marsalis makes prominent use of the ii-V-I harmonic progression that is so common in jazz standards written in the first half of the 20th century in both the 4-bar tag sections and in the 12-bar interlude. In a departure from popular song harmony, however, the first "A" section has significant harmonic differences from the second "A" section, which features alternation between a DbMaj7 chord and a

Gb7 chord in its last four bars to evoke the I-IV harmonic movement of the blues. Despite these differences, the three "A" sections are united by both harmonic (both starting on a Bb7 chord) and lyrical (phrases beginning with "It's time…") elements [See Fig. 3.2 and Fig. 3.3]

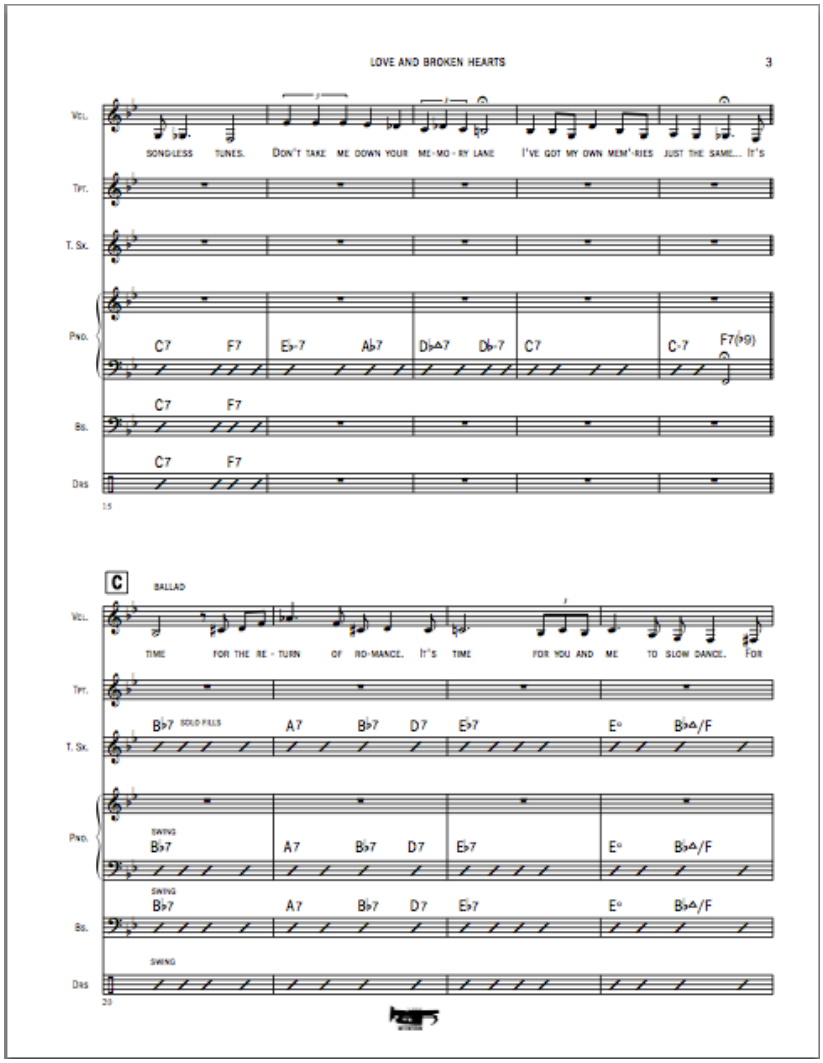

Fig. 3.2–1st A section of "Love and Broken Hearts." Also note inclusion of tenor sax fills in score

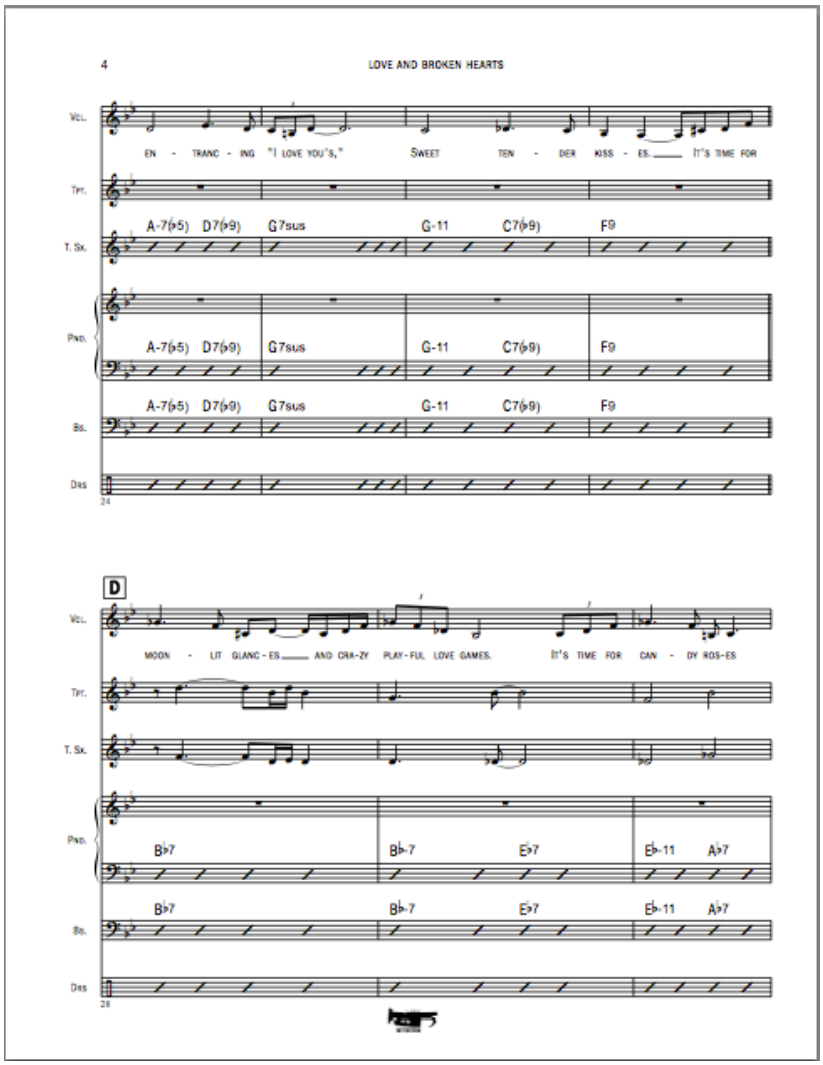

Fig. 3.3–Excerpt from 2nd A section of "Love and Broken Hearts"

In the context of this discussion of gendered romance, the evocation of 32-bar popular song form in "Love and Broken Hearts" is significant because of the importance Marsalis had long attached to the 32-bar ballad as an exemplar of idealized romantic and erotic love. For example, Marsalis gave his 1990 album of ballads—featuring well-known 32-bar standards like "Skylark," "My Romance," and "Everything Happens to Me"—the significant title *The Resolution of Romance*. In *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, he likens performing the Hoagy Carmichael

standard "Stardust" to "making love to a woman you will never please": "Slowly pushing myself out into an audience of strangers become coconspirators in an intrigue of intimacy. Telling of broken, mended, and rejuvenated hearts, a confluence of romantic experiences."[431] His rendition of the old song thus becomes a dramatization of an archetypical—or, as Albert Murray might say, mythic—narrative of falling in and out of love.

Marsalis's arrangement of his composition and the resulting performance on *From the Plantation to the Penitentiary* also highlight what seems to be an effort to represent idealized romantic male-female interactions through music. The performance of "Love and Broken Hearts" on the album is largely built around the musical interplay between vocalist Sanon and tenor saxophonist Blanding, which takes up the most space of any musical element on the track.[432] Blanding's saxophone obbligato might be understood as the absent male romantic partner to whom Sanon directs lyrics like "It's time for you and me to slow dance." Indeed, the sonic contrast between Sanon's delicate vocals and Blanding's tenor saxophone evokes nothing so much as an intimate conversation between male and female lovers. This impression of gender difference is heightened by Blanding's frequent use of the subtone technique in the low register of the saxophone, increasing the contrast between his and Sanon's respective timbres and giving his improvised

[431] Wynton Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, 47.
[432] A close second is Marsalis's own solo feature after the first chorus of singing, but he only plays through the first two "A" sections, while Sanon and Blanding play for all three "A" sections of the first chorus, with the exception of four bars given to pianist Dan Nimmer.

lines a sensual, breathy sound reminiscent of famed jazz tenor saxophone balladeers like Ben Webster.

Moreover, the tenor saxophone-voice pairing inevitably calls to mind the celebrated musical interplay between Billie Holiday and Lester Young, whose sensitivity to each other in performance was frequently characterized as romantic and led to suspicions that they were lovers.[433] That Marsalis specifically puts the solo fills in the tenor saxophone part in his arrangement [see Fig. 3.2], when in theory any of the other instrumentalists in the ensemble could have played them, suggests that he deliberately employed this contrast to achieve an effect.[434]

Marsalis's depictions of romantic love, with their undertone of male sexual conquest, are too complex to be reduced to celebrations of Victorian black patriarchy. Instead, following Tricia Rose, it might be more fruitful to ask how the often-contradictory discussions of black courtship and sexuality presented above work "within and against"[435] dominant Eurocentric patriarchal narratives. An interesting, if qualified, success of the "Sweet Refrain" chapter of *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, for example, is that Marsalis's depiction of black women as sexual beings avoids caricaturing their sexuality as either pathological or degraded.

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[433] For a discussion of this persistent myth, see John Szwed, *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* (New York: Viking, 2015), 122-125. Sherrie Tucker discusses the tendency in jazz literature to present Young and Holiday's musical collaboration as "sexually overdetermined," noting the "sexual overtones" in descriptions of their performances, in *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 358 n48. Another relevant example is the 2002 Sony CD *Billie Holiday + Lester Young: A Musical Romance*

[434] Marsalis, "Love and Broken Hearts," score

[435] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 167.

While Marsalis is almost certainly, on one level, celebrating the fact that he has had sex with many different women, he also avoids stigmatizing his lovers. Indeed, nearly a quarter century after the original publication of *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*, Marsalis's rhapsodic paeans to erotic love still read as resoundingly sex-positive:

> Do not feel guilty. Enjoy what we have been given. As the schoolkids used to say, 'If you don't use it, you lose it.' Let us not forget the range of textures and shapes and touch, like a blind man slowly proceeding sequentially to learn the meaning of each shape. Then remembering. Remembering the ins and outs of every environment by feel. Remembering to touch greedily, desperately, hungrily, slowly, patiently, happily, then thoroughly in a ritual we have enjoyed since before fire.[436]

If the lack of stigma in the above passage seems less than remarkable in 2017, it must be kept in mind that black women's sexuality—particularly outside the confines of heterosexual marriage—was and continues to be stereotyped as inherently deviant across race and gender lines. Writing in 1991, for example, Patricia Hill-Collins argued that sexually assertive black women were stereotyped as "hoochies" in both white and black popular culture. "African-American men and women alike routinely do not challenge these and other portrayals of Black women as 'hoochies' within Black popular culture," explains Hill-Collins in her classic *Black Feminist Thought*. "Not only does such acceptance mask how such images provide financial benefits to both 2 Live Crew and White-controlled media,

[436] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing Blues,* 95.

such tacit acceptance validates this image."[437] While Marsalis's "intense relationship with reality" is grounded in a rigid conception of gender difference, and while he seems very interested in celebrating male trumpet players' irresistible sexual magnetism, his presentation of black women as sexual beings in *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* also works against dominant narratives of black sexual deviance.

Even the more obviously conservative rhetoric of protected femininity in "Love and Broken Hearts" should be considered in light of the fact that it reflects a real and continuing tension within African-American gender relations. Black feminist scholars including Hill-Collins and Barbara Omolade have argued that, since Emancipation, some black women's real need for black male protection has coexisted uneasily with the traditions of independence that black women developed during centuries of enslavement, convict leasing, and mass incarceration.[438] But in the context of continuing insults and violence against black women, Hill-Collins notes, not only do "efforts by Black men to protect Black women become valued," there are many Black women who "want protection."[439]

Thus, while "Love and Broken Hearts" is still a celebration of a narrow idea of protected femininity and patriarchal courtship, it must also be pointed out that American popular culture continually refuses to treat black women "gently" and that traditional attributes of femininity have long been kept off-limits for black

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[437] Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 82.
[438] See Barbara Omolade, *The Rising Song of African American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 12-16, and Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 156-157.
[439] Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 156-157.

women. The problem, as Omolade notes, is less with black men's well-intentioned efforts to defend black women's image than with the tendency of those efforts to drown out black women's own voices.[440]

Omolade's insightful observation leads to the single biggest problem with Marsalis's representations of idealized black femininity. The gendered binary of protective male artists and protected female listeners, lovers, and so on contributes to the erasure of women in jazz that scholars including Sherrie Tucker, Lara Pellegrinelli, and Christina Baade have critiqued at length. Indeed, the repeated metaphorical comparisons between male-female lovers and all-male "jazzmen"—as in, "willful participation with style and in the groove, like the many jazzmen who have swung their way across this globe throughout the twentieth century"[441]—imply that while women may join men in acting out romance, the bandstand remains the province of heroic men who transform that passionate love into art. This is of course in keeping with what Pellegrinelli identifies as the masculinist ethos that renders jazz as a "serious" music: "In general, the ideology of the 'artist' gives women and singers little symbolic capital; they may find a place among the muses that inspire male creativity, feeding the wellspring of anonymous folk material from the past, but they rarely count as important historical figures or icons."[442]

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[440] Omolade, *The Rising Song of African American Women*, 201.
[441] Marsalis, *Sweet Swing*, 93.
[442] Lara Pellegrinelli, "Separated at 'Birth': Singing and the History of Jazz," in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 42.

While the women pictured or ventriloquized in Marsalis's discussions of romance certainly serve as muses for jazzmen who "stomp, hop, jump, slap, shout, cry, laugh, eat, and cuss the blues with accuracy and feeling," their roles within neoclassicist discourse remain heavily circumscribed by Marsalis's gendered conceptions of romantic love and creativity. Black women instrumentalists like Gerri Allen and Regina Carter, whose work during this period reflected their deep knowledge of and engagement with jazz history, are reduced to marginal figures within a restrictive formulation that links membership in the jazz community to a respectable image of black manhood and black fatherhood. Performances like Allen's solo piano homages to Thelonious Monk on her 1985 album *Homegrown* or Carter's eloquent improvisations on two early 1990s albums with the all-woman jazz quartet Straight Ahead (1991's *Look Straight Ahead* and 1993's *Body and Soul*) are insistent challenges to this limiting gender ideology. At the height of jazz neoclassicism, both women resolved to interpret jazz's history in their own voices and on their own terms.

CONCLUSION

During the week before the inauguration of President Donald Trump, Wynton Marsalis wrote a Facebook post that inadvertently showed the distance between the uplift-based ideals of jazz neoclassicism and the more critical stances of Generation Z. "Yesterday, while fellowshipping with a number of college-aged youngsters," Marsalis wrote, "both my willingness to perform, and my interest in joining a protest were called into question. 'Would I perform, if asked?' 'Yes,' I said. 'Would you protest the accepted outcome of the election?' 'No,' I said, and quickly followed up with. 'I'll at least wait for him (or them) to actually do something that I feel should be protested against.'"[443]

When the his students became agitated, Marsalis explained his view that "when a process yields results you really don't like, that's the perfect time to endorse that process. It proves your belief in the larger agenda." "And that's why," he concluded, "I would be happy to play [at Trump's inauguration]. As far as protesting, I did that on November 8th. The election was the protest."[444] Marsalis explained his opinion with an appeal to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement:

> Being a child of the Civil Rights Movement, I grew up knowing that activists from all walks of life courageously faced injustice head on… Being present was their calling card. I think that many of the people boycotting this inauguration seem to have forgotten our democratic mandate to participate and our responsibility to be present. Now is not the time for leaders to disappear and allow the national dialogue to be shifted away from the sometimes impossible negotiations of conflicting viewpoints that are essential to the well being of our democracy.[445]

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[443] http://wgno.com/2017/01/18/wynton-marsalis-eloquently-explains-why-he-would-play-at-trumps-inauguration/
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid.

This exchange between Marsalis and his college-aged students exemplifies the inadequacies of Murray's blues idiom, with its de-emphasis on political protest and its themes of working pragmatically within the American system, as a response to the uniquely dire political situation in the United States after the 2016 presidential election.

President Trump's attempts early in his term to defund the National Endowment for the Arts were a painful blow to Stanley Crouch's optimistic vision of a cultural renewal led by disciplined agents of a transcendent African-American high culture. Only a few months after Marsalis had called on his students to let the process work, Donald Trump had done something that Marsalis found worthy of protest, if only of the most mild and conciliatory kind. Marsalis denounced Trump's proposed cuts to arts funding on an April 3rd, 2017 interview with *CBS This Morning*, even briefly implying that Trump was a "fascist" before quickly backtracking to say that "I'm not saying that [Trump]'s a fascist." He went on to criticize the "ridicularity [*sic*]" of "the left's" attacks on Trump.[446] This moment, in which the normally confident and articulate Marsalis is caught flat-footed in his attempt to dissemble, demonstrates the difficulty of adapting 1990s notions of blues heroism and jazz as a civic good to a new administration that seemingly cared little for the arts or, indeed, for African Americans.

[446] Wynton Marsalis and Jon Batiste, interview by Charlie Rose, Norah O'Donnell, and Gayle King, *CBS This Morning*, April 3, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXYGqzRIvZY

Furthermore, the ideals of black respectability that lay at the foundation of jazz neoclassicism and racial uplift ideology are the subject of new and sustained critique from a new generation of black activists and political commentators associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. The title and subtitle of one 2015 Salon.com article written by Shannon M. Houston can perhaps sum up both the new spirit and the generational divide among black activists: "Respectability will not save us: Black Lives Matter is right to reject the 'dignity and decorum' mandate handed down to us from slavery: A Washington Post op-ed by a Baby Boomer Civil Rights activist yearns for the old ways, but that time has passed."[447] Denunciations of respectability politics have become a sort of genre. Similar op-eds published at around the same time include Zach Stafford's 2015 *Guardian* op-ed "Respectability politics won't save the lives of black Americans";[448] Eion Higgins's 2016 *Medium* op-ed "The Respectability Politics Trap";[449] and Tom Hawking's 2015 *Flavorwire* op-ed "If Black Lives Matter, Respectability Politics

[447] Shannon Houston, "Respectability will not save us: Black Lives Matter is right to reject the 'dignity and decorum' mandate handed down to us from slavery: A Washington Post op-ed by a Baby Boomer Civil Rights activist yearns for the old ways, but that time has passed," last modified August 25, 2015. https://www.salon.com/2015/08/25/respectability_will_not_save_us_black_lives_matter_is_right_to_reject_the_dignity_and_decorum_mandate_handed_down_to_us_from_slavery/. It is important to note that Houston's argument, although compelling, is rooted in a deeply flawed understanding of the social dynamics of the plantation. Houston acknowledges Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's research on respectability politics before discarding Brooks's argument to argue instead that the real roots of respectability politics are in the semi-mythical house slave-field slave dichotomy. Eugene Genovese notes, in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, that only the wealthiest plantations could support a "house slave elite" and that most enslaved people did a combination of house work and field work as required. See Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 327-330.

[448] Zach Stafford, "Respectability politics won't save the lives of black Americans," last modified October 12, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/12/respectability-politics-wont-save-black-americans

[449] Eoin Higgins, "The Respectability Politics Trap," last modified February 27, 2016. https://medium.com/@Catharticme/the-respectability-politics-trap-28691d9a823a

Should Be a Thing of the Past."[450] Even if these recent criticisms of "respectability politics" are based on a somewhat oversimplified understanding of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's original concept of the politics of respectability—as Higginbotham herself suggested in a 2015 interview with *For Harriet*[451]--they certainly signal a profound disillusionment with a main source of the Young Lions' initial appeal.

However, if the politics of jazz neoclassicism haven't aged well in the intervening decades, its crowning institutional achievement remains dominant on the jazz scene. Jazz at Lincoln Center, the concert jazz institution that sprang from the aesthetic vision of Murray, Crouch, and Marsalis, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017. In a September 2017 article in the *New York Times*, Giovanni Russonello observed that under Marsalis's continued directorship, JALC remains stylistically conservative even as it continues to expand its influence:

> In the last five years, its education operation has blossomed, and now reaches thousands of schools nationwide. Its multimedia offerings—including hundreds of educational videos and streams of most concerts—have been accessed millions of times. It has been busily pioneering new angles of engagement and outreach, even as it holds the line against broader artistic changes sweeping the jazz world. At a time when canon-busting is nearly the national consensus, Jazz at Lincoln Center's founding artistic director, Wynton Marsalis, maintains that jazz is a classical music with a fixed roster of heroes, and a nonnegotiable rhythmic foundation.[452]

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[450] Tom Hawking, "If Black Lives Matter, Respectability Politics Should Be a Thing of the Past," last modified September 17, 2015. http://flavorwire.com/537942/if-black-lives-matter-respectability-politics-should-should-be-a-thing-of-the-past

[451] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, interview by Kimberly Foster, *For Harriet*, October 13, 2015. http://www.forharriet.com/2015/10/wrestling-with-respectability-in-age-of.html

[452] Giovanni Russonello, "At 30, What Does Jazz at Lincoln Center Mean?," *New York Times*, September 13, 2017.

Indeed, as Russonello points out, JALC's acquisition of the URL jazz.org represents a dovetailing of Marsalis's canon building with his organization's ambitious expansion. Russonello writes that the move "echo[es] Mr. Marsalis's decades-old argument that his definition—and now, his programmatic choices—divides 'what jazz is—and isn't.'"[453]

The other most important legacy of neoclassicism is the generation of musicians who came onto the scene in the years after Marsalis's establishment at the top of jazz's institutional hierarchy. Young African-American musicians like Jonathan Batiste, Aaron Diehl, and Cecile McLorin-Salvant take the neoclassicist respect for the jazz canon as their starting point for broader explorations. Batiste, for example, has Marsalis's grasp of the jazz tradition with little of Marsalis's purist sensibility. He is seemingly as comfortable performing R&B covers on Stephen Colbert's Tonight Show as he is playing John Lewis compositions with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.[454] Vocalist McLorin-Salvant, who also performs frequently with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and at JALC venues like Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, combines a deep knowledge of the Great American songbook with inventive arrangements of lesser-known pieces by African American women like Ethel Waters and Ida Cox.

Examples like these suggest that, just as the uplift-inflected neoclassicism of the '80s and '90s sought to make the musical and political past relevant to the

[453] Ibid.
[454] See the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra's 2017 recording *The Music of John Lewis,* which features Batiste's piano throughout.

present, the next generations of black jazz musicians will work to make traditions of African American music and African American thought speak to their own circumstances.

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