SOUNDS POWERFUL

West African Islamic Considerations in African American Song

Zohour Alsabbagh

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University of Essex

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is interdisciplinary in nature; it comprises linguistic, historical, religious, scientific in addition to literary discussions. It examines aspects of African American music from a West African and Islamic perspective. The introduction explains how Jungian analytical psychology is adopted as a primary research methodology. In the first chapter, Islamic elements are identified in African American song in order to provide valid interpretations that are made by introducing Qur'anic verses and Prophetic sayings (i.e. Hadiths). The second chapter examines how music and spirituality affect the human psyche by working as a healing power. This chapter contains scientific facts that, again, help in understanding and interpreting African American song, especially slave song. The first and second chapters pave the way for the discussions of the third chapter in which spirituals are discussed as songs that are about life and death. The last chapter explores how seeking knowledge is an essential part of the Islamic faith, and how education was sought after by slaves, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, in their quest for freedom. The link that connects all of the chapters is presented in the introduction and conclusion of the thesis; both discuss the interrelationship between them, taking note of the research methods and including cross-referencing to clarify the connection between the chapters and make stronger arguments.

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INTRODUCTION

An Overview

African American literature has greatly relied on historical African origins in its religious and oral traditions for artistic creativity. Many songs, especially spirituals, contain Islamic characteristics that are frequently overlooked in major scholarly disciplines, including literature, history, musicology, and religion. Spirituals' religious stories and figures are often seen as inherently Christian. For example, the story of Moses ﷺ is largely interpreted as a biblical one, never Islamic. This thesis offers valid and alternative interpretations of some of the most popular African American musical creations, especially spirituals.

There are a number of authoritative sources that instruct or advise anyone who attempts to approach African American literature and dialect to first explore their roots in West Africa. [1] For example, in "The African-American Spiritual: Traditions and Performance Practices" (1991), Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud believe that "The cultural life of the area called West Africa is important […] because the slave trade

[1] Such as Turner, Lorenzo Dow. *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002; Gates, Henry Louis. *Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; and Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud, "The African American Spiritual: Tradition and Performance Practices." *The Choral Journal*, v. 32, no. 4 (November 1991) <http:/www.jstor.org/stable/23548375>.

concentrated on Africans from this region of the continent."[2] They go on to say that "Oral history – the passing down of music, folklore, superstitions, traditions, and history through words from generation to generation – was an important element of this culture. It was a means of establishing a living history of the people". [3] Likewise, in his introduction to *Trouble the Water* (1997), Jerry W. Ward, contends,

> Like the origins of poetry throughout the world, the beginnings of African-American poetry are in speech and song. […] What is primal about its origins and strongly marked in its continuity as a tradition suggests the value of listening to the poetry as carefully as we read it silently. The beginnings of African-American poetry is the sound of Africans in the complex process of becoming Americans. Those historical moments of transformation are inflected with resistance, the trauma of loss, adaptation, cross-fertilizing, and synthesis.[4]

Similarly, the editors and compilers of *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (1998) state in the preface to the anthology that they "believe that African American literature as a distinct tradition […is] one originating in the African and African American cultural heritages and in the experience of enslavement in the United States and kept alive beyond slavery through song, sermon, and other spoken and written forms."[5] Literary theorist Henry Louis Gates, Jr., too, believes that

> The black Africans who survived the dreaded "Middle Passage" from the west coast of Africa to the New World did not sail alone. Violently and radically abstracted from their civilizations, these Africans nevertheless carried with them to the Western hemisphere aspects of their cultures that were meaningful, that could not be obliterated, and that they chose, by acts of will, not to forget: their music, […] their myths, their expressive institutional structures, their metaphysical systems of order, and their forms of performance.[6]

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[2] Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud, "The African-American Spiritual: Traditions and Performance Practices," *The Choral Journal* v. 32, no. 4 (November 1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23548375> 16
[3] Ibid.
[4] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water: 250 Years of African-American Poetry* (New York: Mentor, 1997), xix.
[5] Patricia Liggins Hill, et al., eds., Preface to *Call & Response The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), xxxiii.
[6] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-4.

Many linguists, likewise, hold similar views; in his frequently quoted linguistic study *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (1949), Lorenzo Dow Turner starts his book by advising researchers interested in speech patterns of black people who lived in South Carolina and Georgia to familiarise themselves with some languages spoken in West Africa, from where many African slaves were captured to be transported to the United States.[7]

Hence, focusing on West Africa is essential for two main reasons: first, most slaves were captured from the Western part of the African continent, and, second, in West African cultures, there is special importance to oral tradition which, according to most scholars including Harold Courlander (1963), was 'transferred' with them across the Atlantic to be transmitted as slave songs. Courlander contends that their oral legacy survived because he finds it "difficult to imagine that huge numbers of African exiles, gathered in a new setting, would forget everything they knew and become a vacuum into which the attributes of another culture could be poured at will."[8] This is particularly true of Muslim slaves who held on strongly to their faith and its practices; French historian Sylviane A. Diouf writes in her introduction to *Servants of Allah* (1998), "Literate, urban, and in some cases well traveled, the Muslims realized incomparable feats in the countries of their enslavement. They came as Muslims and they lived as Muslims."[9] For example, in Chapter I of this thesis, there is an account of a number of Muslim slaves who resisted converting to Christianity and were successful in maintaining their names and Muslim identities and upholding their Islamic duties, conversing and writing in Arabic (Islam's liturgical language), praying, fasting, wearing Muslim clothes, etc. Although some

[7] Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1949), 1.
[8] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 3.
[9] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1.

scholars and historians, such as Anthony B. Pinn (2013), argue that the presence of Muslim slaves in the Americas was minimal (between 5-15 per cent of the total slave population), their influence was acknowledged by both white and black people. Pinn contends,

> both white colonists and Africans mentioned the presence of some brought over as slaves who prayed numerous times each day in an odd posture, who gave their children foreign names, refused to eat certain foods, and did not practice the Christian faith. Over the course of time, scholars came to recognize these observations as references to the early presence of Islamic practices in North America amongst enslaved Africans. In fact, it is estimated that anywhere between 5 and 15 percent of the enslaved Africans brought to the Americas were Muslims. And while not all of these African Muslims would have come to North America, we do know that some did. We have some biographical information on a few of these Muslims. One of these Africans was Bilali, who resided in Georgia and served as a religious leader on the plantation where he was held. In addition, documents left to us by overseers and other planters speak to black "Mohammedians" – an inaccurate naming of Muslims – being disciplined and unlike other slaves in certain ways based, for instance, on the scheduling of time entailed by their tradition of praying at various points during the day, etc. Not every aspect of Islam was present within these early Muslim communities of enslaved Africans; yet, there was enough about their practiced separating them from Christians to make their stories important as well as making their tradition a reason to avoid defining African American religion strictly in terms of Christianity.[10]

Also, some African thinkers held strong views about the religious affiliations of black people in the world; Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), for example, claimed that "as a global religion for blacks, Islam was preferable to Christianity."[11] This statement was made as he became more engaged in Islam later in his life. In fact, many African American people have been accepting Islam, a wave that has started in the twentieth century with different interpretations – mostly political or racial – of Islam, and according to the "Comprehensive Survey of U.S. Muslims" (2001), it is evident that a large number of African American people convert yearly to Islam.[12]

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[10] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 5-6.
[11] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 47.
[12] Associated Press, "Comprehensive Survey of U.S. Muslims," The New York Rimes on the Web, Apr. 26, 2001, p. 2.

The importance of examining West African cultures when slave and African American literature is in mind leads to the important realization that Islam, which is the religion of the majority of people in most West African countries,[13] has a strong presence with slave communities. This is because most slaves were captured from West Africa. This means that there were a good number of African Muslims taken into slavery — as discussed in Chapter I of this thesis. Despite the general assumption that the number of Muslim West Africans enslaved in the United States is not substantial, many historians and scholars contend that West African Muslims were among the first and the very last slaves to be shipped as slaves to the New World.[14] In fact, according to Diouf, Islam was "the first religion freely followed—as opposed to imposed Christianity—by the Africans who were transported to the New World."[15] Many scholars, including Diouf, Alan Austin, Richard Brent Turner, and Muhammed A. Al-Ahari, acknowledge African Muslims' influential role within slave communities in which they lived. Many Muslim slaves relied largely on their religion to find strength and inspiration to defy their misfortune.[16]

This research aims to investigate and discuss a subject that has received little attention; for evidence suggests that there is lack of appropriate scholarly and literary investigation of slave and African American music and poetry by examining their African and Islamic origins. Although there are studies that address the subject by focusing on the linguistic, musicological, psychological, anthropological, religious, sociological, and cultural values, there is a general trend of overlooking the Islamic contribution, especially that of African Muslim slaves in America. If this topic continues to be receive little attention and investigation, identifying, understanding and interpreting important

[13] A statistical study of this is included in Chapter I of this thesis.
[14] Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the* Americas, 1.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in the Antebellum America* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3.

information about the making of American society of today will continue to be hidden and unknown.

After establishing the presence of Islam within slave and African American culture in Chapter I, the thesis seeks to examine how music, mainly vocal music, functions within slave and African communities and societies and why it is a prominent characteristic of slave life. To understand this, there is an investigation of the psychological and emotional functions of music. The purpose of such discussion is to help in identifying how music and religion are related by introducing examples of spirituals.

One important and frequently discussed aspect of slave worship practised with vocal music is ring shouts (or prayer meetings, "hush arbors", Camp meetings).[17] This religious practice is frequently described as *Christian* meetings. For example, Anthony Pinn describes such gatherings as definitively Christian meetings, during which spirituals developed. He explains,

> It was […] within these meetings that Christian slaves developed the spirituals – a unique form of American music developed by slaves that told biblical stories and spoke of their desire for salvation and physical freedom. The spirituals are still with us, and they have influenced more recent musical developments such as gospel music.[18]

Pinn's view of spirituals – that they are Christian songs – is the most commonly held view among scholars, including some prominent African American thinkers and theologians, such as Howard Thurman, who tend to agree with the view that spirituals are Christian. Thurman states,

> I located three major sources of raw materials over which the slave placed the alchemy of his desiring and aspiring: the world of nature, the stuff of experience, and the Bible, the

[17] The difference between the exact names to which the worship gathering is referred to varies according to the rituals or practices performed during them. One important distinction to point out to here is that ring shouts usually involve going in circular motion; Camp meetings were not exclusive to black people only; in other words, white people used to have their own Camp meetings, too; and finally "hush arbors" is mainly when pots were used to capture the loud shouts of the worshiping slaves.
[18] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 37.

> sacred book of the Christians who had enslaved him. It was from the latter two that the songs of life and death [i.e. spirituals] originate.[19]

It is clear from Thurman's quote that he was dismissive of the role of other religions, including Islam. However, it is important to note that part of his view implies that slave experiences inspired many spirituals. This reflects the analytical psychology perspective on the interpretation of creative productions and supports the overall methodology of the research.

Despite the general view that spirituals and slave meetings are Christian, the rituals of these religious meetings resemble a combination of Islamic acts of worship, additionally, spirituals themselves are very similar to Muslim *du'a*, a form of supplication, a discussion of which is presented in Chapter III. Slave religious meetings usually took place in the woods, away from slaveholders' and overseers' sight. Pinn says,

> [S]laves often went deep into the woods to what were referenced as 'hush arbors' to conduct religious services free from the restrictions in place when whites were present. […] Coded announcements of these secret meetings could be spread to enslaved Africans and free Africans through song. For example, 'Go Down Moses' could be sung as code for the announcement of a meeting to take place in the slave quarters, or in the woods."[20]

During these meetings, explain many historians including Pinn, "slaves would preach a different version of the gospel, one that highlighted God's desire that they be freed."[21] Suggestively, slaves' "different version of the gospel" might be some Qur'anic verses that emphasise the reward and importance of freeing a slave, which is, in Pinn's words, "God's desire that they be freed." This and other Islamic elements of these gatherings are discussed in Chapter I.

The goal is to challenge definitive statements of un-proclaimed religious affiliations of slaves that are almost always attributed to either Christianity, the newly-acquired religion of many slaves, or other African indigenous religions, such as

[19] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 13.
[20] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 36.
[21] Ibid., 37.

Voodooism. For example, historian Lawrence Levine examines spirituals as means with which "slaves used Christianity to transcend their bondage"[22]; whereas, Albert J. Raboteau argues in his article "Conjure" that "magic complemented African-American Christianity and provided a means of cultural self-definition."[23] This is despite the fact that Islam shares a lot of the Christian beliefs; in fact, Islam does not see Judaism and Christianity as different religions; rather, the Islamic belief is that they are all a continuation of the same divine message that is, according to Islamic theology, revealed to mankind in stages. Additionally, like Voodooism and Christianity, there is a belief in Islam that magic and its powers do exist, although practising it is forbidden and people are warned of its ill-fated consequences and punishment. Again, although statistical studies of West African peoples' religious affiliations, for at least the last two centuries, show that the majority of people there follow Islam, it is clear that Islam is repeatedly and generally overlooked in scholarship.

Admittedly, it is important to acknowledge that delving into the subject requires important knowledge of West African Islamic literary features. Anyone aiming to conduct such research needs to be able to identify points of similarity between slave and African American music and poetry on one hand and West African Islamic orality on the other. Bearing this in mind, this research strives to present an appreciation of aspects of slave and African American music by identifying levels of expression and meaning that might otherwise remain concealed or undervalued. To do so, the research introduces examples that, although far from being definite and inclusive, are illustrative and supporting of the claims and interpretations made throughout the research. The ultimate

[22] Lawrence Levine, "Slaves Spirituals" in Goodheart, Lawrence B., et al. ed., *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society* (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), 99.
[23] Albert J. Raboteau, "Conjure" in Goodheart, Lawrence B., et al. ed., *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society* (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), 123.

goal is to share interpretations and understanding of knowledge that may open up new possibilities in the study of African American poetry and music.

Motivation

This thesis's topic was chosen for two reasons, one general and the other personal. Both reasons are inextricably intertwined with each other. The first, as aforementioned, is a recognition that the contribution of African Muslims is largely neglected in spite of their influential role within slave communities in the New World. The research introduces Islamic slave texts that are vibrant testimonials of slavery and how Muslim slaves practised their religion, which requires daily commitment.

The personal reason that prompted focusing on this topic is the familiarity that I found in many West African poems and some Arabic poems in terms of the themes, structure and performance. This familiarity led to recognizing West African Islamic features in slave song and African American poetry and music. Additionally, I was particularly curious about learning about how Islam and Arabic manuscripts made it to the New World after reading and translating some of the texts that include Arabic poetry in them. Sadly, despite the great historical and literary value of such texts, some, up until today, have not been translated in a scholarly manner.[24]

Lack of scholarship, challenges, and limitations

Despite the availability of scattered reports of music in West Africa and aboard slave-trading ships, they fall short in answering important questions, such as how long it maintained its pure African qualities; when and how it started to transform and absorb features from the new environment; how performances were held and how songs were

[24] This is information I received from Muhammed Al-Ahari, an American scholar interested in Islamic studies, via social media in 2016.

composed and sung and by whom. Attempting to answer these questions is not an easy task to say the least. In fact, there is a general consensus among scholars approaching the topic that even "published literature on the thirteen colonies say very little about the black population and still less about music. Seemingly Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man was already invisible."[25] In light of this, it is even more difficult to approach the topic from a focused perspective, such as locating Islamic aspects. Therefore, when discussing the period of slavery, although it stretches for more than three and a half centuries it is not in the interest of the study to attempt to decide on the time and location a song or poem is made up and sung, because, in the light of what has been explained above about the lack of scholarship, such task would be very difficult to achieve. Of course, by lack of scholarship I do not mean it is non-existent. There are valuable works that this thesis has benefited from greatly, including Allan Austin's *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (1984), Sylviane A. *Diouf's Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (1998), and Richard Brent Turner's *Islam in the African-American Experience* (1997). Nevertheless, the latter two rely on Austin's work and consult it quite frequently. The introductory paragraphs of chapter I of this thesis examine some of the available scholarship.

Moreover, the problem of lack of serious and adequate scholarship on the topic of African American music, including spirituals, blues, jazz, etc., is reflected in the fact that it "has generally been excluded by the academic American musical society", state Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud (1991). They also go on to suggest that the exclusion of African American music from proper examination and appreciation has led to the emergence of stereotypical notions and underestimation of very important historical evidence. As a result, African American music is stereotypically viewed as "a vehicle of

[25] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1977), 21.

light entertainment. This is particularly disturbing in the case of the African-American spiritual."[26]

In addition to the general lack of relevant scholarship, there is the problem of notation which is frequently encountered by most scholars appreciating slave song. Writing about songs without listening to them risks underappreciating them, because they are not being received the way they are meant to be. This is obviously mainly due to lack of recording technology.[27] This problem is as old as *Cabin and Plantation Songs, As Sung by the Hampton Students* (1874) in whose preface Thomas Fenner expressed the difficulty he faced as he was trying to "copy"—a word used to describe the process of notation[28]— he wrote,

> Tones are frequently employed [in slave songs] which we have no musical characters to represent. Such, for example, is that which I have indicated as nearly as possible by the flat seventh, in "*Great Camp-meetin*'," "*Hard Trials*," and others. These tones are variable in pitch, ranging through an entire interval on different occasions, according to the inspiration of the singer. They are rarely discordant, and often add a charm to the performance. It is of course impossible to explain them in words, and to those who wish to sing them, the best advice is […] *go listen to a native.*[29]

Obviously, Fenner's recommendation was made in 1874; and, "listening to a native" is no longer an option. Because of this issue, many African American thinkers and writers, such as Zora Neale Hurston, hold the view that spirituals are not fit for concerts.[30] They cannot be reproduced with the same powerfully charged emotions. This problem is made even more difficult as it is also a hard task to "fully understand their [West-African

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[26] Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud, "The African-American Spiritual: Traditions and Performance Practices," *The Choral Journal* v. 32, no. 4 (November 1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23548375>
[27] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, 326.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*. Preface to the section dated Hampton, Va., Jan. 1, 1874, 174.
[30] Richard Newman, "Spirituals, African American," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 1776.

musical material's] impact or subtlety if we consider only the bare words on a printed page."[31]

Another challenging issue faced when writing this thesis is that of using appropriate language and terms when approaching a topic that deals with sensitive issues regarding race. As I set out to write about slave and African American song, I was making every effort to avoid using the word 'slave,' mainly by using 'the enslaved Africans' instead. The reason behind that is that I felt that people who were enslaved would not have use the word 'slave' to express their identity. Nevertheless, using a phrase instead of a noun proved to have complicated the writing process and, hence, it was abandoned.

Likewise, when 'God' is mentioned, the intended reference is the God of all three so-called Abrahamic faiths, i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This also means that Allah and God are used interchangeably. Similarly, names of Prophets ﷺ are also used interchangeably, i.e. Moses and Musa, Jesus and Issa, and so on. It is also important to note that after Prophets' names I use this religious symbol ﷺ which is made up of four words in Arabic, meaning "peace be upon him." This is purely due to my sense of religious obedience.

Research Methodology

This thesis is interdisciplinary in nature; it comprises linguistic, historic, religious, scientific, and, of course, literary discussions. Therefore, there is flexibility of methodology. Having said that, it is important to identify the appropriate methodological framework, because it forms the first step for any research, and because it guides the way in which researchers constitute knowledge claims. The research primarily adopts the

[31] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 1970, 2012), 7.

Jungian analytical psychology of approaching works of arts and literature. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung believes that it is important for psychiatrists to delve into many disciplines of knowledge and acquire as much understanding of the human psyche as possible. In his valuable work on psychology and literature, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, originally published in 1966, Jung states, "The psychologist is […] obliged to make himself familiar with a wide range of subjects, not out of presumption and inquisitiveness but rather from love of knowledge, and for this purpose he must abandon his thickly walled specialist fortress and set out on the quest for truth."[32] Jung also justifies his logic in the legitimacy of assessing "poetic imagination" by explaining that it is a "literary science […and] also a psychic phenomenon, and as such it probably must be taken into account by the psychologist."[33] Therefore, adopting the Jungian approach in appreciating literature is primarily implemented in the thesis.

The importance of Jung's analytical psychology emerges from the relevance of Jung's views to the topic of this thesis, which is primarily connecting religion, psychology and music in its first two chapters. Jung remarks, "psychology and art […] cannot be compared, the close connections which undoubtedly exist between them […] arise from the fact that the practice of art is a psychological activity and, as such, can be approached from a psychological angle."[34] Relying on Jungian thought, then, is an effort to understand two fundamental questions: why religion? And why song? In other words, why did slaves sing religious songs?

To answer this question and to guide the discussion, two works of Jung's are examined. They are *Psychology and Religion* and *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*. In the former, as the title suggests, Jung investigates how God is perceived by the human

[32] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 68.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid, 53.

psyche; he first makes it clear that there is "undeniable connection between psyche and brain"[35] and that there is "spiritual need […for his] patients".[36] This means that Jung was a strong believer in the power of spirituality for people with psychological issues. Believing in God is not an issue to the Jungian school of psychology. This is because "It is an almost ridiculous prejudice to assume that existence can only be physical."[37] For Jung, having faith is an essential 'need' to human beings; in other words, lack of spirituality can lead to mental problems; he states, "If dull people lose the idea of God nothing happens – not immediately and personally at least. But socially the masses begin to breed mental epidemics, of which we have now a fair number."[38] During slavery, many slaves recognised the importance of God to them. As discussed in chapter III, they strove to keep God's presence all the time and everywhere.

In *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (1966), Jung explores the legitimacy of psychological approaches in investigating art. "It is obvious enough that psychology, being a study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear on the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the arts and sciences. The investigation of the psyche should therefore be able on the one hand to explain the psychological structure of a work of art," he states.[39] In Chapter III, spirituals are discussed as "psychological mode works", a classification phrase that denotes works of art that reflect the psychological levels about the artist. This means that when a piece of art is produced, it shows what the artist absorbed and portrays it on a psychological level. The artist is but a tool. He/she might think that they are composing or singing freely, but, in fact, they are being carried by "invisible currents." In Jung's words,

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[35] Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 10.
[36] Ibid., 76.
[37] Ibid., 11.
[38] Ibid., 105.
[39] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, 68.

> Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is "man" in a higher sense—he is "collective man," a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind.[40]

This is how the black artist is frequently described, a "collective man," the voice of his people, his race; the racial 'I' and 'we' that is found in many slaves' songs and even in poems by prominent Harlem Renaissance literary figures, including Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, is discussed in Chapters III and IV. Jung believes that when it is "no longer the weal or woe of the individual that counts, but the life of the collective. That is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, and yet profoundly moving. And that is also why the personal life of the artist is at most a help".[41]

In short, it is important to note that Jung's analytical psychology approach to literature is the primary methodology adopted in this thesis. Jung declares that "The secret of creativeness, like that of the freedom of the will, is a transcendental problem which the psychologist cannot answer but can only describe."[42] The transcendental part of creative productivity is addressed in the concluding section of Chapter III, in whose discussion religious and emotional catharsis is also examined briefly.

Throughout the thesis, interpretations made are based on an insight made by Jung. In the following excerpt, Jung pondered the meaning of *meaning.* For him, we need to interpret things in order to understand them. There is a clear difference between the 'creative process' and 'cognitive understanding.' The creative process, as explained earlier, cannot be answered by a psychologist; it can only be described; whereas, 'cognitive understanding' is part of science, which deals with when we try to understand things by interpreting them. This is why there is scientific information introduced in some

[40] Ibid., 80.
[41] Ibid., 83.
[42] Ibid., 79.

discussion, especially in Chapter II, in which Stefan Koelsch's *Brain and Music* (2012) is frequently engaged with to understand the effect of music on the brain and psychological wellbeing.

> Perhaps art has no "meaning" at least not as we understand meaning. Perhaps it is like nature, which simply *is* and "means" nothing beyond that. Is "meaning" necessarily more than mere interpretation – an interpretation secreted into something by an intellect hungry for meaning? Art, it has been said, is beauty, and "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever." It needs no meaning, for meaning has nothing to do with art. Within the sphere of art, I must accept the truth of this statement. But when I speak of the relation of psychology to art we are outside its sphere, and it is impossible for us not to speculate. We must interpret, we must find meanings in things, otherwise we would be quite unable to think about them. We have to break down life and events, which are self-contained processes, into meanings, images, concepts, well knowing that in doing so we are getting further away from the living mystery. As long as we ourselves are caught up in the process of creation, we neither see or understand; indeed we ought not to understand, for nothing is more injurious to immediate experience than cognition. But for the purpose of cognitive understanding we must detach ourselves from the creative process and look at it from the outside; only then does it become an image that expresses what we are bound to call "meaning." What was a mere phenomenon before becomes something that in association with other phenomena has meaning, that has a definite role to play, serves certain ends, and exerts meaningful effects. And when we have seen all this we get the feeling of having understood and explained something. In this way we meet the demands of science.[43]

It is clear that, according to Jung, 'the creative process' and meaning do not work together as do meaning and science. This is the difference between artistic creativity and understanding and interpreting a work of art.

Finally, recognising the uniqueness of African American literature, it is only right to refer to major theories of approaching it. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. contends that it is important to "allow the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than read it, or analyze it, in terms of literary theories borrowed whole from other traditions, appropriated from without."[44] It is important to note here that although Jung's analytical psychology is established by a European psychiatrist, it is implemented as a scientific method of investigation not as a literary or linguistic one.

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[43] Ibid., 61-62.

[44] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Introduction to *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xix.

Admittedly, it is adopted to help make interpretations of songs and poems in order to examine how music functions as a means of relieving repressed emotions.

Structure

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into four chapters, although each of which can stand as an independent investigation, all four chapters aim to answer one main question: What West African Islamic elements can be identified in slave song and African American music?

The first chapter attempts to establish the substantiality of the number of Muslim slaves who were captured in West Africa, where, according to a statistical study conducted in 2010, the Muslim population has been more than half in eleven West African countries between 1870 and 2020.[45] The purpose of this discussion is to stress the influence of Muslims during slavery and the appropriateness of discussing Islam when investigating slave and African American music, especially religious songs.

When religious discussions are introduced, only the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Hadiths are quoted to support claims and interpretations made. For example, the discussion of "Go Down, Moses" recalls a few verses from a Qur'anic chapter, Surah Taha, in which there is very similar, if not identical, recounting of the story of Moses ﷺ. The story of Moses inspires discussions of relevant concepts to slaves, including Africa, slavery, speaking to God and freedom. Therefore, the story of a black ex-slave called Bilal Ibn Rabah, who accepted Islam and became a prominent figure among Muslims, is introduced. The name Bilal is then discussed as an important name in African American culture, with suggestions that Douglass's 'Bailey' is derived from Bilal. Also, the importance of the story of Bilal to the discussion lies in the idea that it can demonstrate

[45] Houssain Kettani, "Muslim Population in Africa: 1950-2020," *International Journal and Environmental Science and Development* v. 1, no. 2 (June 2010): 136.

the treatment of slaves and black people in Islam. Richard Brent Turner states in *Islam in the African-American Experience* (2003),

> From the beginning of the religion, slavery was a central issue for black people in the Islamic world. […] Muhammad encouraged the emancipation of slaves and accepted black people as equals in his new religion and community. Bilal, a recently freed Abyssinian slave, became part of the inner circle of Islam and the first muezzin – the person who called Muslims to prayer in Median, In 614 C. E., Muhammed had sent a group of his followers across the Red Sea to the black kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) to escape persecution. This development undoubtedly contributed to his positive attitudes and actions towards black people, for there was not a hint of anti-black prejudice in the Quran.[46]

In fact, some slave descendants assumed very influential positions in Islam; Turner adds, "For some of the sons of African slaves became prominent leaders in North Africa, the Middle East, Spain, and Portugal. Typical of this trend were Yaqub al-Mansur, black ruler of Morocco and parts of Portugal and Spain in the twelfth century; Abu Hassan Ali, "the Black Sultan," who captured Castille and Gibraltar for Morocco in 1330; and Ibrahim al-Mahdi, ruler of Syria and caliph of Baghdad in the ninth century."[47]

Additionally, the chapter investigates the complex concept of the slave *call* or *shout* in connection to Islamic acts of worship, including the call for prayer. During slave religious meetings at night in the woods, slaves developed a form of powerful shout and spiritual singing accompanied with specific physical postures. All of these are interpreted from an Islamic perspective.

The second chapter mainly attempts to answer the question of why slaves used to sing; what music, mainly vocal in the case of slaves, does to human beings' social, physical and emotional wellbeing. The chapter opens by surveying accounts on music as a distinctive art form throughout history. Then, the discussion of psychology and music is introduced. The purpose of such discussion is to understand the effect of music on the mental wellbeing of people, especially people in unusual circumstances, such as slavery.

[46] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*,13.
[47] Ibid., 14.

The link between psychology and music helps, in turn, in linking music and religion through psychological investigations.

The discussions covered in Chapter I and Chapter II pave the way to the main focus of Chapter III, in which religious slave songs, spirituals, are examined. The chapter makes two main claims; first, that in spite of the general tendency that spirituals are Christian, there are Islamic elements in their structure, content and performance. Second, spirituals are songs that are about life and death. In this chapter, there is investigation of the highly religious meanings of life and death. During their lives, God was very important to many slaves. They made every effort to connect with Him everywhere, all the time. Death and dying were celebrated as positive occasions, when slaves finally attain their ultimate 'golden prize,'[48] that of freedom. This view on death struck the African American theologian, Howard Thurman, as a powerful "option which can never be taken from man'; he says,

> A radical conception of the immortality of man is apparent because the human spirit has a final word over the effect of circumstances. It is the guarantee of the sense of alternative in human experience, upon which […] all notions of freedom finally rest. Here is a recognition of death as the one fixed option which can never be taken from man by any power, however great, or by any circumstances, however fateful.[49]

Also, Chapter III employs some illustrations to examine some of the physical aspect of worship and slave song performances. The aim behind this is to identify Islamic features in them. The chapter stresses the importance of physical involvement coupled with spiritual singing during much slave worship. Lawrence Levine writes in his "Slave Spirituals" (1993),

> A white visitor observing a slave religious gathering on a Georgia plantation noted that they sang "with all their souls and with all their bodies in unison; for their bodies rocked, their heads nodded, their feet stamped, their knees shook, their elbows and their hands

[48] From "The Dying Fugitive," Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1997), 23-24.
[49] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*, 16.

> beat time to the tune and the words which they sang with evident delight. One must see these people singing if one is rightly to understand their life ...".[50]

The last chapter of this thesis presents the question of literacy and orality in West Africa and in America. When oral literature is discussed, the main problem imposed, Robert Nixon contends, is that "Non-Western oral literatures are still sometimes roundly dismissed on the grounds that they are more 'primitive' and ritualistic than their Western, written counterparts." [51] After challenging a common tendency to undermine oral literature, the chapter focuses on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and introduces the Gullah dialect[52] as an example of AAVE. The Gullah dialect presents a good example, because of the fact that its speakers were socially isolated, compared to other slaves. This, states Turner, "made easier the retention of Africanisms in that area than in places where Negroes had less direct contact with Africa and lived less isolated lives. One should not be surprised, therefore, to find among the Gullahs today numerous African customs and speech habits."[53] This, indeed, makes identifying West African features a more straightforward process.

Before the interest in AAVE started to grow in the 1960s, AAVE was often described with crude language, such as 'baby-talk,'[54] 'jungle-tongue,'[55] 'a debased form of Elizabethan English,'[56] 'the worst English in the world,'[57] etc. Interestingly enough,

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[50] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals" in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 113.
[51] Robert Nixon, "Reception Theory and African Oral Literature: The Question of Performance," *English in Africa* v. 12, no. 2 (Oct. 1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40238572>
[52] It is important to note that Turner's study was conducted in the 1930s, a time when people living in the Sea Islands were living in social isolation, which, according to Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery's Introduction (2002), "has eroded significantly since Turner's day, and the language has changed in many respects." Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery's introduction to Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1949, 2002), xxix.
[53] Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, 5.
[54] Ibid., 6.
[55] Ibid., 8.
[56] Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery, Introduction to Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1949, 2002), xii.
[57] Ibid., xxiii.

the term 'vernacular' itself has a deep connection with slavery; in her introduction to *The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry* (1999), Joanne V. Gabbin explains that "The very term *vernacular* has a complex and haunted resonance in African American culture; […] the term derives from the Latin word for 'slave.' Thus, the cultural forms deriving from slavery, most obviously musical styles such as spirituals, are most of the earliest historical examples of the vernacular."[58] The chapter examines a slave poem, "Corn-Shucking" found in Joel Harris Chandler's *Uncle Remus* (1880) as an example of difficulty on behalf of many white people during slavery in appreciating slave 'coded-language.'

The chapter, additionally, aims to shed a light on the importance of seeking knowledge as a tool to fight slavery and gain freedom through education. It, respectively, explores some stories of Muslim slaves and how their education in Africa facilitated, in many cases, the successful return to Africa.

To conclude, in "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" (2009), Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable write a brief list of some slave practices in America that, the authors conclude, are 'Islamic traits.' They write,

> the Christian congregation on Sapelo Island prays towards the east and the church itself is built facing that direction. Worshippers are taught to pray facing east because "the devil is in the other corner"; and in this congregation, even the dead are buried facing east. While "the east" in this case might simply mean Africa and not necessarily Mecca, historians continue to ponder if this peculiarity – along with other Shouter's praying rituals – including being barefoot at church, kneeling on a piece of fabric, performing a ritual handshake followed by the touching of the left breast by the right hand – are "Islamic traits."[59]

These traits in addition to the ones this thesis identifies are suggestive that there was a strong Islamic presence in America. Nevertheless, the role of Islam is still generally

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[58] Joanne V. Gabbin, Introduction to *The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 11.
[59] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable, "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" in *Black Roots to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 4.

overlooked and has not yet received proper investigation. This, as mentioned earlier, hinders the uncovering of valuable socio-cultural and historical facts.

CHAPTER ONE

Islamic Encounters in African American Song

Despite the general understanding that the number of enslaved Muslims taken to the New World is not substantial, there is a growing belief among scholars that the case is otherwise. Researchers, such Caesar Farah (1994), suggest that the presence of Muslim slaves was of little importance as it "was quickly absorbed in their new Christian milieu and disappeared."[60] This sweeping view underestimating the influence and presence of Muslim slaves has been challenged by historian Anthony B. Pinn (2013) who confirms the long presence of Islam from the Slave Trade and that the religion was, in fact, practised on many slave trading-ships. Pinn holds an opposing view to Farah's as he contends that some African Muslims were taken to North America, and that "there is evidence that […] they maintained as best they could the elements of their faith."[61] French Historian Sylviane A. Diouf agrees (1998), "They [Muslims] were among the very first Africans to be shipped, and among the very last." [62] It is important, though, to acknowledge the fact that Islam was present in the Americas long before the Slave Trade; Muslim travellers reached the Americas, Brazil specifically, in the twelfth century.[63] Furthermore, due to the religious and linguistic links between Arabs and West Africans,

[60] Caesar Farah, *Islam: beliefs and observances* (New York: Barron's, Woodbury, 1970, 1994), 307.
[61] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Talyor and Francis Group, 2013), 26.
[62] Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the* Americas (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1.
[63] Abdo A. Elkholy, "The Arab Americans: Nationalism and Traditional Preservations," in Elaine Hagopian and Ann Paden, ed., *The Arab Americans: Studies in Assimilation* (Wilmette, Illinois: The Medina University Press International, 1969), 3-4.

there is evidence that Arabic was spoken by some African traders discovered by Columbus mainly in Central and South America.[64]

Likewise, research conducted at the International Museum of Muslim Cultures in Mississippi suggests that the number of Muslims is much greater than previously thought. The research states that one-third of enslaved West Africans brought to America were in fact Muslims.[65] This is not a surprising piece of information; Islam has been a long-practised religion in West Africa ever since it was introduced by Arab Muslim traders in the ninth century, and the followers of the religion are estimated to make over half of the West African population. A statistical study published in 2010 provides detailed data on exact religious affiliation in eleven West African countries. The study states that despite the increase of the general population, the percentage of the Muslim population does not register considerable change throughout the covered period of the study (1870-2020). It was 57% in 1870, 58% in 1950, and will be 55% by 2020.[66] According to this data, therefore, since most, if not all, slaves were captured from the western part of the continent, it is highly likely that a good number of African Muslims were taken into slavery.[67]

Scholars and historians such as Allan D. Austin, Sylviane A. Diouf, and Richard Brent Turner, among others, contend that there is no way to ignore the powerful presence of Islam in America as early as the beginning of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Turner writes in his introduction to the second edition of his work *Islam in the African-American*

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[64] Clyde Ahmad Winters, "A Survey of Islam and the African Diaspora," *Pan-African Journal* v. 8, no. 4 (1975): 429.
[65]Okolo, "Islam and Blues," International Museum of Muslim Cultures, http://www.muslimmuseum.org/?page_id=2850 (accessed 16 April 16, 2017).
[66] Houssain Kettani, "Muslim Population in Africa: 1950-2020," *International Journal and Environmental Science and Development* v. 1, no. 2 (June 2010): 137.
[67] Although the study does not cover the whole percentage of Muslim population throughout the Slave Trade which started about two centuries before the starting date that the study covers, the data quoted provides a statistical example of the religious affiliation of West Africa people for over a century.

Experience (2003), "Muslim slaves[']religious and ethnic roots could be traced to ancient black Islamic kingdoms in Ghana, Mali, and Songhay. Some of these West African Muslim slaves brought the first mainstream Islamic beliefs and practices to America by keeping Islamic names, writing in Arabic, fasting during the month of Ramadan, praying five times a day, wearing modest clothing, and writing and reciting the Quran."[68] Turner also notes that Muslim slaves make up about fifteen percent of the total slave population in North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[69] Regardless of the exact number of Muslim slaves, there appears to be a consensus among the researched scholarship of their significant influence.

In *Slave Songs of the Georgia Islands* (1942), Lydia Parish examines how one Muslim, nicknamed 'African Tom,' was so looked up to and respected by other slaves that they trusted him and acted upon his word to decide their own destiny. He was, also, entrusted by white masters and overseers to be in positions of charge. The reasons for this can be clarified by quoting an observation made by Sir Charles Lyell (1849). He said,

> Under the white overseer, the principal charge … is given to 'Old Tom,' [i.e. African Tom] the head driver, a man of superior intelligence and higher cast of feature. He was the son of a prince of the Foulah tribe [West Sudan], and was taken prisoner, at the age of fourteen, near Timbuctoo. The accounts he gave of what he remembered of the plants and geography of Africa have been taken down in writing by Mr. Couper, [who was Old Tom's master] and confirms many of the narratives of modern travelers. He remained a strict Mahometan, but his numerous progeny of jet-black children and grandchildren, all of them marked by countenances of a more European cast than those of ordinary negros, have exchanged the Koran for the Bible.[70]

Lyell's account is interesting on multiple levels. African Tom is presented as a clever, educated, religious man who demonstrates great religious devotion for someone who was imprisoned to be enslaved when he was quite young—only fourteen—and who, despite

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[68] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Blooming: Indiana University Press, 1997), xvii.
[69] Ibid., xvii.
[70] Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* (London: J. Murray, 1849), 266.

his royal background in Africa, was not spoilt; he had good geographical knowledge and unique wisdom. Lyell, interestingly, did something that rarely, if ever, white researchers/scholars in the nineteenth century did; he thought that Old Tom and his family shared countenances similar to Europeans—as if 'humanizing' them and distinguishing them from 'ordinary negroes'. Lyell, also, presented Old Tom as an influential person (i.e. for someone who is enslaved); Lyell added,

> During the last war [1812] when Admiral Cockburn was off this coast with his fleet, he made an offer of freedom to all the slaves belonging to the father [John Couper…] and a safe convoy to Canada. Nearly all would have gone, had not African Tom, to whom they looked up with great respect, declined the proposal. He told them he had first known what slavery was in the West Indies, and had made up his mind that the English were worst masters than the Americans. About half of them, therefore, determined to stay on St. Simon's Island, and a few of the others who accepted the offer and emigrated had their lives shortened by the severity of the climate in Canada.[71]

This story also appears in Zephaniah Kingsley's *Treatise on the Patriarchal Form of Society* (1833). He noted that there were "gangs of negroes [who] were prevented from deserting to the enemy by drivers, or influential negroes, whose integrity to their masters, and influence over the slaver, prevented it; and what is still more remarkable, in both instances the influential negroes were Africans, and professors of the Mohammedan religion."[72] In light of Lyell's observation and according to Parish, the two African Muslims Kingsley was talking about were Couper's Old Tom and Bilali,[73] whose manuscript is discussed later for its special value and importance. The fact that these Muslims appear to be helping their enslavers may suggest that they were somehow complicit; yet, as discussed in Chapter IV, many of these Muslims did that to gain their freedom. Richard Brent Turner (1997) states,

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[71] Ibid., 267.
[72] Zephaniah Kingsley, *A treatise on the patriarchal system of society, as it exists in some governments and colonies in America, and in the United States, under the name of slavery: with its necessity and advantages*, (1833), 19.
[73] Lydia Parish, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (Hatboro: Folklore Associates INC., 1942), 25.

> In the United States, however, African Muslims practiced more subtle forms of resistance to slavery—some of them kept their African names, wrote in Arabic, and continued to practice their religion; some of them used the American Colonization Society to gain their freedom and return to Africa. All of this constituted intellectual resistance to slavery, as African Muslims, who had been members of the ruling elite in West Africa, used their literacy and professional skills to manipulate white Americans. This peculiar form of resistance accounts in part for the compelling and provocative nature of the life stories of the known African Muslim slaves in America.[74]

It is clear, then, that Muslim slaves were quite influential; their activities ranged from promoting, organizing and leading major slave revolts[75] to individual efforts to preserve Islamic values and practices of worship when living under harsh and unusual circumstances. Muslim slaves, like most devoted Muslims elsewhere in the world, drew strength from their religion and its teachings that structure every aspect of life. They, for example, knew that Muslims are not to be submissive and subjected to any act of aggression or humiliation. In fact, in the Islamic faith, there are numerous Qur'anic verses and Prophetic Hadiths (i.e. sayings) that teach Muslims what to do in case of oppression by unbelievers. It is a sin not to act upon these teachings and commands when the conditions described by God and his Prophet ﷺ are met. The Holy Qur'an mentions examples of horrific devastation of places were oppression was practised, by individuals or groups of people.

One of the Prophetic Hadiths, narrated by Al-Bukhari, is Allah's Messenger ﷺ who said, "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one." People asked, "O Allah's Messenger ﷺ! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "By preventing him from oppressing others."[76] The Hadith clearly tells Muslims to stand by those who are being

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[74] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 24.
[75] As discussed in Chapter IV, one of the largest slave revolts were mostly lead by enslaved Muslims. For example, they planned and led a major slave revolt in Bahia in 1835. This is according to Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 153-157.
[76] *Sahih al-Bukhari*, in-book reference: Book 89, Hadith 13; USC-MSA web (English) reference: Vol. 9, Book 85, Hadith 84. Retrieved from sunnah.com <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/89/13>

oppressed and standing up to oppressors. It is agreed by Muslim scholars that helping the oppressed who are being subjected to slandering, humiliation, beating or torture, or killing is obligatory; otherwise, failing to help will result in them being put in a similar situation when they need aid but no one will aid them. Some scholars—such as the followers of Maliki Madhhub (i.e. school of Fiqh, Islamic religious law) which is the predominant Madhhub in West Africa[77]—went on to suggest that a person/group of individuals who fail to help prevent an act of oppression while being able to are liable for providing compensation for the affected party in the case of materialistic damage or loss of life.

In the Holy Qur'an, there are clear stories of the destruction of groups of people who were oppressors and transgressors: "And those cities - We destroyed them when they wronged, and We made for their destruction an appointed time."[78] Even those who do not receive their punishment in the worldly life are promised by God to await great punishment.

> Do not think Allah is heedless of the evil deeds in which the evil-doers are engaged. He is merely granting them respite until a Day when their eyes shall continue to stare in horror,
>
> when they shall keep pressing ahead in haste, their heads lifted up, their gaze directed forward, unable to look away from what they behold, their hearts utterly void.
>
> (O Muhammad), warn mankind of the Day when a severe chastisement shall overtake them, and the wrong-doers will say: "Our Lord, grant us respite for a short while; we shall respond to Your call and will follow Your Messengers." (But they will be clearly told): "Are you not the same who swore earlier that they shall never suffer decline?"
>
> You said so even though you had lived in the dwellings of those who had wronged themselves (by sinning), and you were aware how We dealt with them, and We had even explained to you all this by giving examples.
>
> Indeed, the unbelievers contrived their plan, but it is in Allah's power to nullify their plan, even though their plans were such that would move even mountains.

[77] Maliki madhhub was founded by eight-century scholar Malik Ibn Anas. It draws its thought mainly from the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Hadiths. It is said to be the second largest followed madhhub in Sunni Islam.

[78] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al Kahf (The Cave), [18: 59].

> So never think that Allah will fail in His promise to His messengers. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Owner of Retribution.
>
> (Do warn them of the) Day when the heavens and the earth shall be altogether changed; when all will appear fully exposed before Allah, the One, the Prevailing!
>
> And you will see the criminals that Day bound together in shackles,
>
> Their garments of liquid pitch and their faces covered by the Fire.
>
> So that Allah will recompense every soul for what it earned. Indeed, Allah is swift in account.
>
> This [Qur'an] is notification for the people that they may be warned thereby and that they may know that He is but one God and that those of understanding will be reminded.[79]

These eleven verses from Surah Ibrahim depict graphic warning of the punishment of oppressors.[80] The divine promise is that Allah is not letting those who do wrong, including oppressive people, escape His punishment; that they may not be deluded that His punishment is delayed, regardless how big their cunning worldly schemes. This promise, in the case of being oppressed, provides solace and makes Muslim believers press on at a time when they are helpless to do anything against their oppressors.

This Qur'anic example is one of many in which there is mention of the destiny of those who do wrong/oppress. More than that, in Surah Hud, verse 113, believers are warned against being accepting or heedless of actions of those who do wrong; they may join them in the punishment, too: "And do not incline towards the wrong-doers lest the Fire might seize you and you will have none as your protector against Allah; and then you will not be helped from anywhere."[81] The point here is that oppression is a major sin in Islam, and that it is ill-fated, and most Muslims, if not all, recognize this aspect of the Islamic or divine law.

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[79] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ibrahim, [14:42-52].
[80] The interpretation of the verses does not use the word "oppression" or its derivations. The Qur'an—in Arabic—uses the word *aldhalimoon* الظالمون whose root is *dhlim* ظلم and one of its meaning, suggestively, is oppression.
[81] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Hud (Eber in Hebrew, but this is debated by Muslim scholars), [11:113].

To list all examples of how oppression is dealt with in Islam, books of Qur'anic interpretation and Hadith narration could be written. What is important is that it is evident that Muslim slaves were aware that they were being subjected to oppression and there was no way that they would be submissive. In 1352-1353, Muhammad Abu Abdullah Ibn Battuta, a well-travelled Berber scholar in the Middle Ages, observed during his eighteen-month visit to Mali in West Africa "the prevalence of peace in their country, the traveller is not afraid in it nor is he who lives there in fear of the thief or of the robber by violence. They do not interfere with the property of the white man who dies in their country even though it may consist of great wealth, but rather they entrust it to the hand of someone dependable among the white men until it is taken by the rightful claimant."[82] He particularly admired "the small number of acts of injustice that one finds there; for the Negroes are of all peoples those who most abhor injustice. The Sultan [Mansa] pardons no one who is guilty of it."[83] The prevalence of justice "could hardly have been passed on contemporary France or England" comments historian Thomas Hodgkin (1961).[84] This can be due to the strict punishments defined in the Holy Qur'an. In brief, injustice is very much feared by practicing Muslims, and it is generally especially observed among those in West Africa.[85]

Islamic researcher and scholar of African American history, Muhammed Abdullah Al-Ahari, was writing a paper that required him to look for a scholarly translation of a

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[82] Said Hamdun and Noel King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (Princeton: Markus-Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1994), 58.
[83] Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989), 162.
[84] Thomas Hodgkin, "Kingdoms of the Western Sudan," in *The Dawn of African History*, ed. Roland Oliver (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 41.
[85] Similar to Ibn Battuta's experience, anthropologist Leo Frobenius (1906) describes his journey to the Congo: "And on this flourishing material civilization there was a bloom, like a bloom on a ripe fruit, both tender and lustrous; the gestures, the manners and customs of a whole people from the youngest to the eldest, alike in the families of princes and well-to-do and of the slaves, so naturally dignified and refined to the last detail. I know of no northern race who can bear comparison with such a uniform level of education as is to be found among these natives." Quoted in Christopher Small, Music of the Common Tongue (London: John Calder, 1987), 19.

manuscript written from memory in Arabic by a former slave called Ayyub Bin Sulaiman (often transliterated into Job Ben Solomon/ Job, son of Solomon). Ayyub was originally from the Kingdom of Foota (today Senegal) and ran away from his slave-holder and made his way to England. The date of the manuscript is 1733 AD, written on its last page. After a brief introduction of two poetic verses praising God and showing obedience to Him, Bin Suleyman writes a question that addresses the plight of Muslim slaves. My translation of the question reads:

> May Allah be pleased with you and continue to bestow His grace onto you, what do you say of a place where oppression and evil have prevailed, where falsehood and vice are widespread, where Muslims are humiliated whereas the disbelievers are honored, where injustice and oppression increased, where people of knowledge are lost, where most of those who are sold are Muslims?[86]

Figure 1Second page of Bin Suleyman's manuscript, by courtesy of Muhammed Abdullah al-Ahari

[86] After an informal interaction with Mr. Al-Ahari, exchanging valuable information, he asked if I could help in translating the first two pages of the manuscript. This has provided a good opportunity to closely examine the text.

Clearly, Bin Suleyman's story is an example of a Muslim who not only did not accept being subjected to humiliation and oppression and made a successful escape from his enslavement; his writing about oppression demonstrates his resistance and defiance by addressing the topic and writing about it, so that it is read to teach his fellow slaves of his experience and what can be done. This can demonstrate another example of complying with another Prophetic Hadith that addresses the issue of oppression: Abu Saeed al-Khudree (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "Whoever among you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand [by taking action]; if he cannot, then with his tongue [by speaking out]; and if he cannot, then with his heart [by at least hating it and believing that it is wrong], and that is the weakest of faith."[87] Muslims who observe and act according to the teaching of the Hadith do not only aim at being obedient to the commandments of the Prophet ﷺ, they, also, aim at a greater spiritual goal, that of preserving their inner faith, *Iman*.

By attempting to preserve their Islamic faith, Muslim slaves created an observable impact on African American music. They *chanted*[88] Qur'anic verses and other Islamic melodious chants, such as the call for prayer (i.e. Azan), secretly to keep their spiritual connection with God. Investigations of blues music have led many researchers to believe in the Islamic connection of the music and the Islamic call for prayer. French historian and researcher at New York's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Sylviane A. Diouf, explains the Islamic roots of Blues music by playing two recordings to her audience at Harvard. The first recording was of the Muslim call for prayer, which is called from mosques' minarets five times daily around the world. The second recording

[87] *40 Hadith Nawawi,* 34, English translation: Hadith 34. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/nawawi40/34>

[88] I use the word 'chanted' here cautiously as the equivalent Arabic root word for chanted is *rattala*, which means to apply specific rules of reciting the Qur'an in a melodious manner. More on this is in Chapter II of this thesis.

was a slave blues song called "Levee Camp Holler", created in the Mississippi Delta in the nineteenth century. The connection between the two recordings is uncanny. The pitch, the nasal intonation and the repetitive religious content are very similar.[89]

This interesting connection between Islam and the Blues might have surprised Diouf's audience during her talk, but it is the very same connection that has been leading many African American musicians to convert to Sunni Islam. For example, after World War II, the flourishing of jazz culture helped some of Dizzy Gillespie's band members to convert to Islam and change their names to Arabic and Islamic ones, some of whom are Liaqat Ali Salaam (Kenneth Spearman Clarke), Yusef Abdul Lateef (William Emanuel Huddleston), Mustafa Dalil (Oliver Mesheux), and others.[90] Their conversion was after they encountered musical cultures of many Islamic countries, including Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and others, which the orchestra visited in 1965 and where they had performed during the special Islamic month of Ramadan.[91] The trumpeter, Gillespie, himself was contemplating converting to Islam, he says,

> A large number of modern jazz musicians did begin to turn toward Islam during the forties […]. As time went on, I kept considering converting to Islam. […] I didn't know very much about the religion, but I could dig the idea that Muhammad was a prophet. I believed that […] It says in the Bible to love thy brother, but people don't practice what the Bible preaches. In Islam there is no color line. Everybody is treated as equals.[92]

"Everybody is treated as equals" is the very same reason that appealed to many black slaves in the Arabian Peninsula to embrace Islam more than fourteen hundred years ago. Black people, men and women, who were enslaved by Arabs before the divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ became prominent, respected and looked up to by Muslims

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[89] Jonathan Curiel, "Muslim Roots, U. S. Blues," *Saudi Aramco World* v. 57, no. 4 (July/August 2006), <http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200604/muslim.roots.u.s.blues.htm>.
[90] Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 58.
[91] Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To Be or Not ... To Bop: Memoirs* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1979), 413-421.
[92] Ibid., 291-293.

around the world. Bilal Ibn Rabah was the first slave to accept Islam.[93] His decision to convert was by no means an easy one; it entailed extremely bad treatment at the hand of his owner, who already considered Bilal property rather than a human being and who was one of the worst antagonists of Islam.

Bilal Ibn Rabah (may Allah be pleased with him) is a very important figure in Islamic history. After migrating with the Prophet ﷺ, he was asked to call to prayer and, hence, was the first person to do so. He was, also, the first person to call for prayer in Kabba after the victorious Islamic entry into Makkah. Bilal was born to two black slaves and was owned by Umayyah Ibn Khalaf who was not on good terms with the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ. Bilal's embracing Islam, unsurprisingly, was not received well by his master. Bilal was, in fact, the seventh person to embrace the religion. However, he, being a slave rather than a free man like the other six, was not spared from harm by Quraysh, the most powerful and dominant tribe in Makkah at that time. His owner, Umayyah, was very creative in coming up with methods of torturing Bilal. He, for example, would make him wear a heavy suit and force him to lay face down on the sand to bake under the heat of the desert sun. Umayyah would only return to tell him to lay on his back and warn him that he was either to die where he was, under the hot sun of the desert, or deny his new religion and worship al-Lat and al-Uzzah, two pre-Islamic idol gods worshiped by Arabs before Islam. Bilal's reply to his owner's demands was by repeating one word, "One, one", meaning that God is one. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), the first man to accept Islam, once passed by the scene of Umayyah torturing Bilal, and addressed Umayyah, "Have you no fear of Allah that you treat this poor man like this? Umayyah

[93] Information here on Bilal Ibn Rabah is not referenced, because it is popular Islamic knowledge. Most Muslims children learn his story by heart. It is said that 7 out of 10 Muslims know/heard of his story. There are, however, books that can be looked at for his story. For example, Sara Saleem, trans. *Bilal Ibn Rabah* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, 1984), and Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, *Bilal Ibn Rahah* (Amer Trust Pubns, 1977).

bluntly replied, “You are the one who corrupted him; you save him from his plight!” So, Abu Bakr offered to buy Bilal, and the offer was happily accepted by Umayyah who did not sell Bilal cheaply but wanted to get rid of him. Abu Bakr, who shared with Bilal and other first Muslims the companionship of the Prophet ﷺ, set Bilal free. This pleased the Prophet ﷺ, because in Islam the act of freeing slaves is very pleasing to God that it is considered one way of expiating many sins. In the Qur’anic chapter Al-Ballad (The Town), those who free slaves are called “the companions of the right.”

> We have certainly created man into hardship.
>
> […]
>
> But he has not broken through the difficult pass.
>
> And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass?
>
> It is the freeing of a slave
>
> […]
>
> And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion.
>
> Those are the companions of the right.[94]

This summary of Bilal’s story of becoming free after enduring enslavement and torture is not only inspirational as an example of a black slave getting his humanity recognized but also makes Islam appealing to people who are discriminated against, especially black people, because of the colour of their skin. In fact, in Islam there are important examples of the equality of human beings regardless of their colour and ethnicity. For example, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said on the middle day of the days of at-Tashreeq: “O people, verily your Lord is one and your father is one.[95] Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a red man

[94] *The Holy Qur’an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Ballad (The Town), [90: 4, 11-13, 17-18].

[95] “Father is one” refers to Adam ﷺ.

over a black man, or of a black man over a red man, except in terms of piety. Have I conveyed the message?" They said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has conveyed the message."[96] Scholar Phil K. Hitti (1967) comments, "Of all world religions Islam seems to have attained the largest measure of success in demolishing the barrier of race, colour and nationality—at least within the confines of its own community."[97]

Slaves and non-Arabs who accepted the message of Islam helped in making the religion more appealing and universal. The Islamic descriptions of the physical traits of prophets from Adam to Muhammed ﷺ further strengthen the concept of equality among Muslims. Adam, whose name is thought to be derived from the root word *adeem* meaning soil, is predominantly believed by Muslims to be black; Yusuf (i.e. Joseph), regardless of his skin colour, was extremely handsome; Musa (i.e. Moses) was a strong-built, brown Egyptian, Issa (i.e. Jesus) was fair-skinned ﷺ.[98] This diversity among the Prophets ﷺ is yet another example of the strong importance of concepts of equality and diversity among Muslims. The message is again emphasized in the word of Allah: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."[99] It is this reality that altered Malcolm X's racial views after his spiritual experience in Makkah where he met white, blue-eyed Muslims worshiping alongside black people.[100] It was the "*color-blindness* of the Muslim's world's religious society", Malcolm states in his autobiography (1965), that had affected his "previous way of thinking" that which he held when he was a follower of

[96] Al-Albaani, *Sahih Al-Albaani*, Hadith No. 2700.
[97] Phil K. Hitti, *The Arabs* (Chicago: Regnery, 1967), 54.
[98] *Sahih Muslim*, https://www.islamweb.net/ar/fatwa/113969/
[99] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah l-hujurat (The Dwellings), [49:13].
[100] Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 436.

the Nation of Islam.[101] What Malcolm X experienced during his pilgrimage to Makkah was not only religious, he keeps stressing on many occasions in his *Autobiography* the coming-together of people of all races and how he "was looked upon as a Muslim and not as a Negro".[102] He comments, "People seeing you as a Muslim saw you as a human being and they had a different look, different talk, everything."[103]

Like Gillespie's band members and Malcolm X, the co-founder of Philadelphia International Records, Kenneth Gamble explains why he converted from Christianity to Islam, he says,

> Islam is a way of life. It allows me to respect Christianity because as a Muslim, we respect all the prophets. It gave me a universal approach to spirituality. […] this America is afraid of Islam because Islam is close to our nature. Islam teaches us about the universality of man and these things must be practiced in our everyday life.[104]

This fundamental belief in Islam, that all Prophets ﷺ are respected and honoured, can help in demonstrating that religious songs created by African slaves in America can be interpreted from an Islamic perspective. The point is not to make any conclusive or definitive interpretations, because there no way one can prove the intended meaning of a piece of human creativity, and because the religious orientations of a slave were of little interest to slave owners whose main interest in slaves was an economic one, it is also difficult to assume that slaves who sang of Moses ﷺ were definitely Christians.[105] There are exceptions to this statement, of course. Additionally, there is hardly a reason for Muslim slaves to reject Islam to believe in Christianity, simply because believing in the message of Christianity is an important part of the Islamic faith. In fact, "African

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[101] Ibid., 453.
[102] Ibid., 433.
[103] Ibid., 433.
[104] "Forum of African-American Issues since September 11: Where Do We Go from Here Chaos or Community?" Philadelphia Sharon Baptist Church, Sept. 23, 2001, C-Span, "American Perspectives."
[105] There are scholars and historians, such as Lawrence Levine and Albert J. Raboteau, whose works do investigate slaves' religious orientation, but their efforts mostly neglect Islam.

Muslims were noted for their bold efforts both to resist conversion to Christianity and to convert other Africans to Islam. […] Even the slave community noted the compelling presence of African American Muslims in its midst. Ex-slave Charles Ball, one of the first African Americans to publish an autobiography, was struck by the religious discipline and resistance to Christianity of a nineteenth-century African Muslim slave on a plantation in North Carolina."[106] Charles Ball (1854) commented,

> At the time I first went to Carolina, there were a great many African slaves in the country. […] I became intimately acquainted with some of these men. […] I knew several, who must have been, from what I have since learned, Mohamedans;[107] though at that time, I had never heard of the religion of Mohammed.
>
> There was one man on this plantation, who prayed five times every day always turning his face to the East, when in the performance of his devotions.[108]

There are many documentations reporting slaves facing east when worshiping in churches or elsewhere. This is further discussed later in this chapter. There are a few examples of Muslim slaves resisting converting to Christianity and maintaining their religious observation with ultimate sincerity and devotion, among whom are Bilali and Salih of the Georgia Sea Islands.[109] Additionally, there is the story of Yarrow Mamout, a Muslim slave who is said to have resisted leaving Islam and managed to maintain his name and Muslim identity, writing in Arabic, observing Islamic dress code, dietary obligations, more than any slave of his time.[110] The important point here is that Islam did not melt into the Christian-dominant environment. Diouf says,

> That Islam as brought by the African slave has not survived does not mean that the Muslim faith did not flourish during slavery on a fairly large scale. On the contrary, systematic research throughout the Americas shows that, indeed, the Muslims were not absorbed into the cultural-religious Christian world. They chose to remain Muslims, and even enslaved, they succeeded in following most of the precepts of their religion. With remarkable

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[106] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 24.
[107] 'Mohamedans' is an incorrect term for Muslims. Muslims never refer to themselves using such word.
[108] Charles Ball, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man*, 3rd ed. (Pittsburgh: John T. Skyrock, 1854), 143.
[109] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 386.
[110] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 26-27.

> determination they maintained an intellectual life in mentally sterile surroundings. Through hard work and communality they improved their situation while building a tradition of resistance and revolt. Despite being far outnumbered by Christians, polytheists, and animists, they preserved a distinctive lifestyle built on religious cohesiveness, cultural self-confidence, and discipline.[111]

Muslims share many—if not most—Christian beliefs and an example of this is that prophet Moses ﷺ is an important figure in all so-called Abrahamic religions, including Islam.[112] Many slave songs employ his story as a symbol of suffering and seeking freedom from oppression and enslavement. In this discussion, Moses ﷺ is presented as an important figure on many levels. His importance to slaves emerges from the fact that he was African; he was part of a slave community; and, he was everything that the white slaveholders were not. In the Islamic faith, Muslims show respect and honor the Prophet Musa ﷺ by naming their children after him, studying his biography in as much detail as possible, and following his example as a role model. In fact, in Islam's Holy Scripture, the Qur'an, he is the most mentioned individual and his life is narrated in more details than that of any other Prophet and Messenger ﷺ. His name is mentioned 136 times; whereas, Muhammed ﷺ was mentioned only four times. This clearly indicates the importance of Moses ﷺ to Muslims. There are details of his life from infancy to childhood and adulthood. Additionally, he is believed by Muslims to have directly spoken to God; hence, his unique title in Islam is *Kalimullah* (i.e. the one who talked to God), and this is the greatest honor. Allah says, "And [We sent] messengers about whom We have related [their stories] to you before and messengers about whom We have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech."[113] For Muslims, his story provides an example of persistence, and being steadfast in the face of hardship. One of the most prominent Muslim scholars, Ibn Qayyim Aljawziyya (1292-1349), discusses in

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[111] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 2.
[112] I have chosen to add 'so-called', because I do not completely agree with the term 'Abrahamic religions.' In fact, it is a relatively new term that is contested by many scholars, including Alan L. Berger (2012) and Aaron W. Hughes (2012).
[113] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah An-Nisa (The Women), [4:164].

his book *Jala al-afham* the purpose of the recurrence of Musa's ﷺ story in the Qur'an. He stated that the reason God keeps repeating and clarifying the story of Moses to Muhammed ﷺ is to demonstrate to the latter how much Musa endured and was harmed even at the hands of his own people in order to give him a sense of consolation.[114] Ibn Qayyim might have gotten this interpretation based on the opening verses of Surah Taha, Chapter 20, in which God addresses his messenger, Muhammed ﷺ, "We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you be distressed […]And has the story of Moses reached you?"[115] After these verses, God recounts the story of Moses ﷺ whose life is marked with immense difficulties and tests. One important aspect of Moses' ﷺ story is that of endurance, which starts from his first days being born to an enslaved minority of people in Egypt to the time of his adulthood when he was running from Pharaoh and heading to enter Canaan.

Likewise, in African American literature, Moses ﷺ is an important figure. His name is frequently found in both slave song and in African American poetry. From the well-known slave spiritual "Go Down, Moses" to the dialect novels of twentieth-century novelist Zora Neale Hurston, Moses's story remains a significant representative of black people's history in America. In *Jump at the Sun* (1994), John Lowe emphasizes the importance of Moses to many black writers and public figures. He says,

> Mirroring the oral tradition, virtually all black writers and leaders have found the Moses story important, and most have been shaped by the Bible's importance to black culture. The repeated use of Moses/Exodus/Egypt/Promised Land typology in both slave narratives and black fictionalizations of slavery hardly needs annotation here; Martin Luther King Jr., made the most unforgettable use of this typology in his "I have been to the mountaintop" speech. Alice Walker has recalled growing up "in the Methodist Church, which taught me […] that Moses—that beloved man—went through so many changes […]. She indicates as well that this pattern of *expected* change in the Bible shaped her method of dealing with key fictional characters. Even more recently, Bryant Gumbel used the metaphor in a looser, more

[114] Ibn Qayyim Aljawziyya, *Jala al-afham* جلاء الأفهام, 1/152.
[115] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Taha, [20: 2, 9].

> universal way, speaking of his controversial leadership of the "Today" show: "And what if you're not the prophet? What if you don't lead them to the Promised Land? That's O.K. too".[116]

This part of the chapter explores the importance of Moses ﷺ as a religious African figure in black song in America.

Many writers recognize the importance of Moses ﷺ for a considerable number of slaves. Miles Mark Fisher (1981) writes about slave activities that are rooted in African traditions. He says that slaves held secret meetings that provided them with a kind of "sacred ministries" which supplied slaves with group support to aid them with coping with the conditions of slavery. These 'Camp meetings' are very similar, if not the same, to ring shouts; they were both mainly held during the night, away from the slaveholder or overseer's sight, and both involved spiritual singing and social bonding. What is interesting about these Camp meetings is that that slaves would wear their 'finest' outfits when they held these meetings, because in "Africa they wore cotton, silk, and velvet beautifully ornamented with embroidery and jewelry of gold and silver."[117] Fisher quotes this description from Maurice Delafosse's translation of the Muslim Berber traveler Ibn Battutah's experience of the people of Mali during his eight-month stay in Mali during the reign of Sultan Mansa Sulaiman. Ibn Battuta's description was made after he admired how African Muslims of Mali observed Friday prayers by wearing clean, white clothes. The quote provided by Fisher, however, does not state that Ibn Battuta was describing African Muslims. Fisher finds slaves' attention to the way they dress while holding their meetings in the nineteenth century comparable to that of people in Africa. To illustrate this, he quotes an observation made by Frances Trollope, who is an important commentator on nineteenth-century America. She says, "They [slaves] were all full-

[116] John Lowe, *Jump at the Sun* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1994), 209.
[117] Maurice Delafosse, *The Negroes of Africa* (1931), quoted in Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 33.

dressed and looked exactly as if they were performing a scene on the stage."[118] Clothes, then, were of special importance. During Camp meetings in South Carolina, one slave song required the presence of a person dressed in a distinguished manner to represent Moses. The person dressed in a way that he would "look so different from his workaday appearance [and] that a singer was not at all certain that he was the same person."[119] Songs, explains Fisher, had native African tunes and the "pseudonymous Moses was indispensable."[120]

> I see brudder Moses yonder,
> And I think I *ought to* know him,
> *For* I know him by [his clothes] *his garment*,
> *He's a blessing* [Dere's a meeting] here to-night.
> *He's a blessing* [Dere's a meeting] here to-night,
> And I think I *ought to* know him
> *He's a blessing* [Dere's a meeting] here to-night.[121]

The song, "I See Brudder Moses Yonder," characterizes the black religious song, claims Fisher. Despite the additions and deletions that were made to the song as it was being orally transmitted from one generation to another, he adds, it "never ceased saying that the dress of Negros determined their preparation for religious devotion."[122] It is relevant to note in connection to the religious aspect of paying attention to what people wear when congregating to perform a religious duty, in Islam, Muslims are encouraged to dress as elegantly as possible when they congregate for the Friday prayer, during whose *khutbah* (i.e. preaching) the *khateeb* (i.e. preacher) may mention stories and /or verses about

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[118] Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1901), quoted in in Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 33.
[119] Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 33-34.
[120] Ibid., 34.
[121] William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim, *Slave Songs* (1929), quoted in Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 34.
[122] Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States*, 34.

Moses ﷺ. In the song quoted above, the first line addresses Moses as a 'brudder', brother, which is the same word Muslims use to address one another.

Additionally, a longer and later version of the song was included in the collection *Slave Songs*, which, interestingly, resembles that Islamic call for prayer, the *Azan*, to some extent. "[Dere's a meeting] here to-night" was sung and repeated by a 'chorus.' The Islamic caller for prayer, the *muezzin*, repeats "Come/Hasten to prayer" and people listening to the call repeat after him. The Azan is to inform believers that it is time to pray and to call them to meet to perform prayer, *salah*, that include a type of melodious chanting of Qur'anic verses, called *tajweed*,[123] which, again, may mention the story of Moses ﷺ. The resemblance between the slave song and the Islamic call for prayer can be summarized in the following aspects: both are religious meetings, have some sort of chanting, require preparation (both physically, partly in terms of paying attention to what people wear, and spiritually, in anticipating the meeting, both with God and with other brothers and sisters), and both contain repetition and a chorus.

To many slaves, Moses ﷺ represented freedom and going back to "de promised land," i.e. Africa. In the 1820s, two ships sailed to Liberia.[124] This unsurprisingly resonated well among slaves. A slave who was to be taken to Africa was called 'Moses'.[125] This seemingly happy occasion was rejoiced by praising the Lord, 'Hallelu, hallelujah.' Even though this religious expression is widely believed to be of Hebrew origin, Muslim scholars such as Ahmad Deedat hold the view that it can be of Arabic

[123] *Tajweed* is discussed in Chapter II of this thesis.
[124] This is a quite complex story; for the sake of brevity and relevance it is not discussed in detail. The news of ships sailing to Africa was propagandised among slaves. The purpose of such propaganda, explains Fisher, was to make slaves "attracted to their African "home" to do God's will, to carry the Gospel, and to follow Jesus." Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 48. However, there seems to be a connection between American Colonization Society which arranged to return some African slaves to Africa, including some enslaved African Muslims, whose stories are discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis.
[125] Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States*, 48-49.

origin, too, because both languages, at the end of the day, are Semitic. Deedat explains that 'hallelujah' resembles the Arabic utterance 'yaAllahu,' and the variation 'alleluia' is even closer in terms of pronunciation, and the end result is very similar meaning.[126] This can illustrate the possibility of interpreting spirituals from an Islamic perspective.

> Brudder Moses gone to de promised land,
> Hallelu, hallelujah.[127]

The promised land, in the context of the nineteenth-century historical facts, may be Africa. Yet, since the song is a religious one, in other words, it is a spiritual, the promised land may mean heaven as it is, to believers, the place where "Moses gone." Chapter III of this thesis investigates the connection between life and death and spirituals, following Howard Thurman's view of spirituals being songs on life and death, and discuss songs/spirituals that are about going back home, to the Lord in heaven. The latter interpretation of the above two-line spiritual is more plausible, because slaves knew that not many of them were being taken back to Africa.

> From 1823 to 1827 only one ship a year took colonists to Liberia, except in 1826 when two ships sailed, one of these vessels going from Boston with Rhode Island Negros. Southern Negroes felt a severe spiritual strain. They had begged Moses to "come across" and perform another one of his miracles, but it had been all to no avail.[128]

Many slaves were left heartbroken and frustrated by the poor prospect of returning to Africa. "Some slaves were versatile enough to adapt their colonization songs to their unfulfilled hopes, while others still hoped that their dream of being transported to Africa would come true."[129] Of those who kept their dream of going back to Africa kindled at least in songs was a black Baptist preacher who sang his own version of "Go Down,

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[126] Ahmad Deedat, "The name of God is Allah even in the Bible", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vGQa-35Xok>.
[127] William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim, *Slave Songs* (1929), quoted in Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 49.
[128] Miles Mark Fisher's *Negro Slave Songs in the United States*, 59.
[129] Ibid., 130.

Moses," expressing his great disappointment and trying to find strength in the story of Moses when he communicated with God who ordered Moses to go and talk to Pharaoh to "let his people go."[130]

When discussing Moses and slave song it is inescapable that a good discussion on one of the most known spirituals "Go Down, Moses" should be included. Its popularity in mainstream culture continues to grow far and beyond other spirituals. It can, undoubtedly, score highly if tested to Terry Eagleton's measure of value of literary works, which include "Depth of insight, truth-to-life, formal unity, universal appeal, moral complexity, verbal inventiveness, imaginative vision" all of which, states Eagleton, are "marks of literary greatness"[131] and all of which are present in the song. Furthermore, Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology that he applied to literature in his *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* explains how an artist drives inspiration from his surroundings to create a 'great' work of art that resembles a 'dream' that despite its apparent simplicity and forwardness, requires an sophisticated interpretation; he states,

> the work of the artist meets the psychic needs of the society in which he lives, and therefore means more than his personal fate, whether he is aware of it or not. […] A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is always ambiguous. A dream never says "you ought" or "this is the truth."[132]

In addition to its continuous inspirational aspects, both religious and secular, this spiritual is important for many reasons: for its religious content, its cultural setting, its repetitive structure, and its impact on slaves. For the sake of sticking to the main focus of this chapter, the spiritual is investigated only in terms of to what extent it can be interpreted from an 'Islamic' point of view. The story that the spiritual tells of the flight of Moses ﷺ and his people from Egypt after enduring various kinds of oppression and

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Terry Eagleton, *How to Read Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 175.
[132] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 82.

enslavement that matches to a great extent with the Islamic story of the Prophet ﷺ. In the spiritual, Egypt is a land of oppression for the people of Moses ﷺ; whereas, for many slaves it is America.

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go;
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*) Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land,
Tell ole Pharaoh, Let my people go.[133]

The spiritual follows closely the Qur'anic story of Moses ﷺ. Muslims believe that very few of the prophets ﷺ spoke directly to God. Moses ﷺ is the only one that the Holy Qur'an states has been directly spoken to by God: "Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech."[134] God even called him by name many times and instructed him to go and speak to Pharaoh, who was not only claiming to be a god but also was oppressing the people of Israel. Moses ﷺ implores God to aid him with his brother, Aaron ﷺ.

'Twas good old Moses and Aaron, too.
Let my people go;
'Twas they that led the armies through,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)
The Lord told Moses what to do,
Let my people;
To lead the children of Israel through,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)

[133] Patricia Liggins Hill, ed., *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 42.
[134] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah An-Nisa (The Women), [4:164].

O come along Moses, you'll not get lost,
Let my people go;
Stretch out your rod and come across,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)
As Israel stood by the water side,
Let my people go;
At the command of God it did divide,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)
[…]
We need not always weep and moan,
Let my people go;
And wear these slavery chains forlorn,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)
[…]
O take yer shoes from off yer feet,
Let my people go;
And walk into the golden street,
Let my people go.
(*Chorus*)[135]

The Qur'an does tell us what "The Lord told Moses what to do." In Surah Taha, a lengthy 'conversation' between God and Moses ﷺ is found. The following few Qur'anic verses are clearly telling very similar, if not identical, stories of that of the spiritual. The Qur'anic verses read,

he was called, "O Moses,

[135] Patricia Liggings Hill, ed., *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition*, 42-44.

> Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.
>
> […]
>
> Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed."
>
> [Moses] said, "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance]
>
> […]
>
> And appoint for me a minister from my family –
>
> Aaron, my brother.
>
> […]
>
> [Allah] said, "You have been granted your request, O Moses.
>
> […]
>
> Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed.
>
> And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]."
>
> […]
>
> So go to him and say, "Indeed, we are messengers of your Lord, so send with us the Children of Israel and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace will be upon he who follows the guidance."
>
> […]
>
> And We had inspired to Moses, "Travel by night with My servants and strike for them a dry path through the sea; you will not fear being overtaken [by Pharaoh] nor be afraid [of drowning]."
>
> So Pharaoh pursued them with his soldiers, and there covered them from the sea that which covered them,
>
> And Pharaoh led his people astray and did not guide [them].[136]

The popularity of the spiritual does not simply emerge from the story it tells and the relevant comparisons it contains; its importance also stems from its form, because, obviously, the story is already known in Scriptures, what is creative about it is how the story is told; in other words, its form. Form is important because of its contribution to how a creative piece is perceived and received. In fact some scholars take the view that form is even more important than content. For example, in Pinchas Noy's "Form Creation in Art: An Ego Psychological Approach to Creativity" (1979), there is an argument that

[136] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Taha, [20:11, 12, 24, 25, 29, 30, 36, 43, 47, 77-79].

human creativity presents itself in the way a piece of art is presented rather than what it contains; he contends,

> every art is merely a sublimated expression of the same limited number of basic human themes, and the difference between the thousands and thousands of works of art is to be found only in the way these themes are handled by the artist. Therefore, there is nothing creative in the content of art, but only in the form, in the endless ways that these redundant themes are elaborated and represented in the various artistic media.[137]

The purpose of introducing Noy's quote is to show the link between form, psychology and religious content in a creative piece of art/literature. Noy holds the view that there is psychological significance in the way a creative work is presented. Furthermore, the well-known Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung believes that there is a close link between psychology and religion.[138] For example, in the Terry Lectures of 1937 delivered to Yale University, Jung explains that 'religion has a very important psychological aspect'. [139] In another lecture titled "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" delivered to the Society for German Language and Literature in Zurich in 1922, Jung states that there are "close connections" between psychology and art; he says, "These connections arise from the fact that the practice of art is a physiological activity and, as such, can be approached from a psychological angle."[140] Interestingly, Jung continues his lecture to draw attention to the importance of religion in the same regard. "A similar distinction must be made in the realm of religion." He adds, "If the essence of religion and art could be explained, then both of them would become mere subdivisions of psychology." This link is important in clarifying the psychological impact of spirituality and musicality on the human psyche; in other words, the idea here is that the combination of religion and musicality exemplified by creative form produce greater psychological impact.

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[137] Pinchas Noy, "Form Creation in Art: An Ego Psychological Approach to Creativity" in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music,* Stuart Freder, ed. (Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1990), 211.
[138] Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 1, 10.
[139] Ibid., 2.
[140] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 53.

After establishing the similarity in content between the spiritual and the Qur'anic story, the focus now is on the repetitive form of the spiritual which resembles both the Islamic caller for prayer and a Chapter in the Holy Qur'an. In the spiritual, the singer keeps imploring and repeating 'Let my people go' with other slaves chanting along 'Let my people go.' The repetition is a recurring characteristic in Black song, both in Africa and America. What is interesting is that the repetition pattern of the spiritual is not unfamiliar to a Muslim reader. A chapter in the Qur'an called 'Arrahman' (The most Merciful) contains a verse that is repeated 31 times, with the exact same wording. Muslim scholars interested in investigating the significance of repetition in the Qur'an attempt to assess whether it is only a coincidence with no underlying significance to it. Very interesting interpretations of this religious phenomenon have been offered. Self-defined researcher in the scientific miracles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, Abduldaem Al-Kaheel, states in his lecture "Brightening of Number Seven in the Holy Qur'an" (2006) that he has conducted mathematical operations to assess why one verse, "So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?"[141] is repeated thirty one times in Surah 'Arrahman'. Al-Kaheel explains that number seven, which is a significant number in Islam, is the answer of all the operations he created.[142] Many Muslim scholars who focus their study of the Qur'an mainly on scientific rather than linguistic features, including Al-Kaheel, believe that repetition in the Holy Qur'an is not coincidental, as believed by people who claim that the Book is written by Man who, unlike a supernatural power—in other words God—cannot produce a book that is 'perfect'[143] or 'precise,'[144] two characteristics that God uses to describe the Qur'an. This means that the Book contains different levels of

[141] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Arrahman (The Most Merciful), [55: 13, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77].
[142] Abduldaem Al-Kaheel, "Brightening of Number Seven in the Holy Qur'an" (paper presented at the Dubai International Holy Qur'an Award, Dubai, 2006.
[143] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Hud, [11:1].
[144] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ali 'Imran, [3:7].

miraculous ingenuity. For example, there are scientific descriptions of creation, strong use of language that has complicated linguistic features, etc.[145]

Additionally, Muslims, including those in West Africa, consider the Holy Book as having the most sublime linguistic features, and, therefore, they attempt to 'imitate' this feature in their religious songs/poems. They, additionally, might be seeking a miracle to happen by following the repetitive pattern. For example, there is a belief among Muslims that when praying to God, with a sound heart, imitating the repetition of 'our Lord' found in the last verses of the second chapter of the Qur'an, 'Ali-Imran,' their prayers are answered.

Likewise, some historians, such as Sylviane Diouf, believe that blues has links with the Islamic call for prayer whose basic form is characteristically based on repetitive musical notes and call-and-response pattern which is similar to that of blues. The Islamic call for prayer is fundamentally recited/chanted by repeating its sentences by the *muezzin*, a person who calls for prayer. Believers who hear the call are recommended to repeat after the muezzin wherever they may be. There are a few prophetic sayings that address the reward of believers responding to the call.

> Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest. (*repetition*)
> Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest. (*repetition*)
> I acknowledge that there is no god but Allah. (*repetition*)
> I acknowledge that there is no god but Allah. (*repetition*)
> I acknowledge that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. (*repetition*)

[145] The Holy Qur'an contains precise information on creation of man and his development 1400 years before scientists discovered them. For example, God speaks about the stages of man's embryonic development in Surah Al-Mu'minun (The Believers) [23:12-14]. The description in the verses is confirmed by anatomy and embryology scientists in the 1990s, such as Professor Keith L. Moore, to be scientifically accurate.
The Qur'an contains 114 surahs (i.e. chapters). Each surah contains a number of vocabulary that are exclusive to the surah and is not repeated in the other surahs. For example, the shorts surah in the Qur'an is Alkawthar contains only 10 words, six of which do not appear elsewhere in the Qur'an.
The above two examples are among many in the Qur'an.

I acknowledge that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. (*repetition*)

Hasten to prayer. (*repetition*)

Hasten to prayer. (*repetition*)

Hasten to success. (*repetition*)

Hasten to success. (*repetition*)

Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest. (*repetition*)

There is no god but Allah. (*repetition*)

This 'chorus-like' characteristic of the call resembles to a great extent slave hollers and spirituals that were performed by a main caller and a responding crowd. It is appropriate here to reintroduce to the discussion Diouf's experiment of playing "Levee Camp Holler" and the call for prayer to people listening to her lecture at Harvard University. The two recordings were similar in religious, repetitive, and tonal and melodious features. Jonathan Curiel (2006), who comments on this experiment, explains how hollers and blues may have evolved over time from Muslims practicing the religion by reciting melodiously Qur'anic verses and calling for prayer. He says,

> Forced to do menial, backbreaking work on plantations, for example, they still managed, throughout their days, to voice a belief in God and the revelation of the Qur'an. These slaves' practices eventually evolved—decades and decades later, parallel with different singing traditions from Africa—into the shouts and hollers that begat blues music, Diouf and other historians believe.[146]

There is, in short, a special connection, according to Diouf, between the Islamic call for prayer and many slave-related practices. Part of a prophetic saying states that "the muezzin is forgiven as far as his voice reaches, and whatever hears him, animate or inanimate, confirms what he says".[147] That is why muezzins are recommended to raise and beautify their voices when calling for prayer. The prophetic saying agrees to a certain extent with a statement made by the editors of *Call and Response* (1998) in their

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[146] Jonathan Curiel, "Muslim Roots, U. S. Blues."

[147] Narrated by al-Nasaa'i, *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, The Book of the Adhan (The Call to Prayer) - كتاب الأذان, Hadith English reference: Vol. 1, Book 7, Hadith 646, Arabic reference: Book 7, Hadith 652. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/1006490>.

commentary "Call for Deliverance". They write, "Most Africans believed that spirits lived in all things—in plants, in trees, in animals, and even in stones, as well as in people. All things on earth were connected by a life force that tied people to people and people to things."[148] This quote does not specify if Muslim slaves are included in 'most Africans,' but there is a common belief among Muslims that inanimate objects are not as receptive as human beings and indeed animals, but we, humans, cannot measure that. This belief is explained in the Qur'an: "The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving."[149] The *call* as a concept is of special significance, because it "is an instant reminder of the primitive. It is the oldest form of vocal expression. From it arises all of the things associated with speech and musical tone concepts. When the newly born babe utters its cry, it gives therewith the true indication of life itself. […] There is a certain something in it which says more than mere words may express." [150] This insight is made by musicologist Willis Laurence James in his frequently quoted article "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America" (1955). The *call* is 'primitive' if it is considered from a Jungian projection of some literary works; it is unexplainable and its origin comes deep from the human psyche. It contains conflicting experiences that appear to be a 'disturbing spectacle'; Jung says in *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature,*

> The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehumen ages, or from superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it

[148] Patricia Liggins Hill, et al, eds. *Call and Response*, 10.
[149] *The Holy Qur'an*, Interpretation of Surah Al-Isra' (The Night Journey), [17:44].
[150] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," *Phylon* v. 16, no. 1 (1st Qtr. 1955), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/272616>, 15.

> bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form […]. On the other hand, it can be a revelation whose heights and depths are beyond our fathoming, or a vision of beauty which we can never put into words. This disturbing spectacle of some tremendous process that in every way transcends our human feeling and understanding makes quite other demands upon the powers of the artist than do the experiences of the foreground of life.[151]

James categorizes the 'Negro cry' into seven categories, commonest among which is the 'call'[152], and he argues that "the cry is more reliable in its general inarticulateness than when it is used as a purveyor of a definite idea, as in connection with speech." This is because, he says, "Speech may be false, but a spontaneous cry is never false."[153] For James, the cry is a natural sound; its different manifestations can guide us to how ancient music sounded. This can conform to another quote of Jung's: "psychic products come to the surface […] show[ing] all the traits of primitive levels of development, not only in their form but also in their content and meaning."[154] Indeed, the call that is communicated with God has been there since the dawn of humanity, for humans were/are constantly seeking a supernatural, metaphysical, divine power to worship.

James believes that sounds of calls are connected to emotional experiences, of which he counts 'joy, sorrow, love, hate, pain, pleasure, comfort, and distress.' The occurrence of these emotions accompanied by different variations of sounds reflect life itself; in other words, life is experienced with emotions which are ever-present in a 'healthy' human being who uses and indeed is motivated by emotions that make us act and react in accordance with our emotions. When we experience emotions, we produce sounds that help us cope with an emotional experience. For example, a human experiencing sorrow may sigh and when experiencing joy and pleasure, they may laugh or chuckle. These sounds are reactions to life experiences.

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[151] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 71.
[152] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," 17.
[153] Ibid., 15.
[154] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 77.

More than fourteen hundred years ago, when Bilal Ibn Rabah, the black slave who was among the first to embrace Islam, was the first to be chosen to call to prayer, he was renowned for his beautiful voice. This may be because "The Negro has a warmth which causes him to be one of the world's greatest 'callers.'"[155] Although this view of James's is problematic and totalizing, to say the least, it is relevant to the discussion of the beautiful black voices; i.e. during enslavement, slaves owned no means of recreation apart from employing their God-given singing abilities to lift some of the bleak off their souls. Bilal is believed by Muslims to be one of the world's greatest callers. He was the first to call to prayer, which for more than fourteen hundred years has been called five times daily throughout the world, and Muslims who respond to the call pray at each time to hear his voice in the Hereafter.

Because of Bilal Ibn Rabah, the name 'Bilal' is popular in Africa. In his article "Muslim Roots, U. S. Blues" (2006), Jonathan Curiel introduces the experience of Cornelia Bailey who chronicled the history of Sapelo Island in her memoir *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man* (2001). In Georgia's Sapelo Island, some black people were able to learn that they are decedents of a Muslim slave who was born in Africa in the late 1770s, and his name was Bilali Mohammed. Also, Bailey and people who visit Sapelo Island are always baffled by the direction that churches there face. Bailey, when she was a child, was always told to pray facing the same direction that the churches face, the east. It was the same direction her great-great-great-great-grandfather used to face when praying. He was praying toward Makkah. Bilali was a devout Muslim and although his "descendants adopted Christianity, they incorporated Muslim traditions that are still evident today."[156] Bilali Mohammed left many documents written in Arabic, including a

[155] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," 15.
[156] Jonathan Curiel, "Muslim Roots, U. S. Blues".

thirteen-page manuscript that details some Islamic acts of worship, such as the call to prayer in pages 9 and 10 of the document.[157]

Bilal Ibn Rabah's influence can be attributed to his phenomenal vocal ability. He had such a beautiful voice that the Prophet ﷺ used to tell him "Call to prayer, o Bilal! Give us rest with it!"[158] Seeking rest, physical and emotional, is an essential human need, and it was especially important to physically and emotionally exhausted slaves who lacked most means of resting. Willis Laurence James contends that cries are "wrapped up with deep human feelings." He adds that some cries that are musical or songlike in nature are common in 'Negro folk music expression', including work songs, blues and spirituals. He calls these musical cries 'song cries' and states that they are the key component 'in all Negro folk music.'[159] Musical cries, according to James, are not as spontaneous as those that arise from sudden crises. This means that "they cling to definite pitch movement."[160] This is also applicable to the call for prayer which can be included in James's description of 'religious cries' which he defines as "subtle, musical use of the voice which defies description." Religious cries defy adequate description[161] because they are charged with emotions and because they "baffled the white man. Because of their wordless nature, they sounded savage, wild, depraved and unworthy of civilized attention."[162]

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[157] Muhammed Abdullah Al-Ahari, *Muslim Jurisprudist in Antebellum Georgia* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2010), 20-21

[158] Narrated by Abu Dawwd, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Book of General Behavior (Kitab Al-Adab), 4985, in-book reference: Book 43, Hadith 213. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/abudawud/43/213>. English translation: Book 42, Hadith 4967

[159] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," 22-23.

[160] Ibid., 23.

[161] Charlotte Forten describe her experience listening to slave shouts in her article "Life on the Sea Islands," published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1864. She wrote, "In the evening, the children frequently came in to sing and shout for us. These "shouts" are very strange, -- in truth, almost indescribable. It is necessary to hear and see in order to have any clear idea of them." Charlotte L. Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands*," Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864), 594.

[162] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," 16.

Although religious cries respond to unique and particular circumstances and time, place and context change their nature, religious cries are, predominantly, a communal activity. They are a combination of social, musical, emotional, and religious factors, all of which are present at slave gatherings called 'ring shouts.' Briefly exploring the above-mentioned factors can help in understanding the nature of these ring shouts.

The social factor is reflected in the fact that "humans have a 'need to belong' and a strong motivation to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments".[163] This fact illustrates the basic human urge to socialize and demonstrates how slaves challenged the systematic separation practices and formed spiritual circles to feed not only their spirits but their social needs. The musical factor emerges from the fact that slaves who endured centuries-long torment and captivity self-prescribed music and song to find solace. This aspect is the focus of the second chapter of this thesis.

The emotional aspect of religious cries can occur on a physical level; in other words, worshipers experiencing an overflow of emotions due to a religious experience may show uncontrolled physical reactions to their religious experience. Their reactions may be 'mild' such as crying, 'moderate' such as producing a loud shout or shrill, or powerful when they may faint. In *Voices from Slavery* (2000), there are slave recollections. They provide authentic testimonies of the significance and nature of slave religious gatherings (i.e. ring shouts). What slaves did during their meetings was very powerful; some slaves lost consciousness and others would produce very loud shouts that his/her fellow slaves had to come up with methods to avoid attracting the attention of the slaveholder or overseer. Clara Young, who lived in Alabama and Mississippi, remembers how pots were used to absorb the high sounds of excitement of slaves, she says, 'De most fun we had was at our meetin's. We had dem most every Sunday and dey lasted way into de night ….

[163] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 211.

De meetin's last from early in de morning' till late at night. When dark come, de men folks would hand up a wash pot, bottom upwards, in de little brush church house us had, so's it would catch de noise and de overseer wouldn't hear us singin' and shoutin'.''[164] In *Remembering Slavery* (1998), a similar recollection of how slave worshipers used to get too excited that other slave had to do keep the call or shout down; a former slave recalls,

> Us […] used to have a prayin' ground down in the hollow and sometimes we come out of the field, between 11 and 12 at night, scorchin' and burnin' up with nothin' to eat, and wants to ask the Lawd to have mercy. He puts grease in a snuff pan or bottle and make a lamp. We takes a pine torch, too, and goes down in the hollow to pray. Some gits so joyous they starts to holler loud and we has to stop up they mouth.[165]

In many instances, in many areas, singing in plantation fields and other places later developed to private meetings out in secluded places where singing and worship gatherings took place. This strengthened the effect of singing spirituals. These secret meetings worked on two levels for the performing slaves; one is spiritual and the other is worldly – historian Anthony B. Pinn (2013) explains in his *African American Religion*, "Those involved in the "ring shout" would gather […and] form a circle. They would begin moving in that circle consistent with the music, and they would continue to speed up the movement of the circle of people until Christians in the circle began to feel the spirit of God."[166] This divine feeling is what in Islam is known as *Khushu'* which is reached when a Muslim is completely focused on their act of worship and sensing the presence of the Creator and submitting to Him.[167] The spiritual impact of connecting with God, especially at night, is so powerful that one prominent Muslim figure, Abu Sulayman, once declared that "Were it not for the night, I would not have liked to

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[164] Norman R. Yetman, From *Life Under the 'Peculiar Institution'*, 335, quoting *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, (New York: Dover Publications, INC., 2000), 372.
[165] Ira Berlin et al., *Remembering Slavery* (New York: New York Press, 1998), 197-198.
[166] Anthony B. Pinn, *African American Religion*, 38.
[167] *Khushu'* is a very complicated concept. For the sake of brevity, it is only very briefly explained.

continue living in this world."[168] There is also the worldly or physical reward to slave night meetings which, according to Pinn, "gave enslaved and free Africans opportunity to connect their religious practices to a desire for physical freedom."[169]

Furthermore, the timing of slave meetings has a special significance. They used to take place "for the better part of the night and early mornings."[170] Night provided slaves shelter from slaveholders and overseers. It is also a time of serenity and quietness.[171] Interestingly enough, ring shouts rituals truly corresponds with many Islamic practices even in the point that slaves "who participated believed that it was only through the ring shout that people could fully praise God, and it was only through the energy of the ring shout that sinners could be called to salvation."[172] Likewise, in Islam, worshiping God during the night is of special significance to Muslims. Night worship has two types in Islam, *Qyyammu alyall* and *tahajjud*. The former is night prayer and other forms of worship; whereas, the latter is forsaking sleep to engage in night prayer, or waking up at night to pray. The Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Hadiths emphasize its importance and immense reward. Surah Al-Muzzammil begins and concludes with night worship. God expounds upon the virtues of night prayer and instructs believers to perform it. It is of special importance because it is performed during the night so that believers focus during their worship with minimal distractions.

> O you who wraps himself [in clothing],
> Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little -
> Half of it - or subtract from it a little
> Or add to it, and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation.
> Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word.
> Indeed, the hours of the night are more effective for concurrence [of heart and tongue] and more suitable for words.

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[168] Ahmad Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, trans. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jaivziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (London: Al-Firrdous Ltd., 1993), 70.
[169] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 38.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Conditions that are required to reach the stage of *Khushu'.*
[172] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 38.

> Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation.
> And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with [complete] devotion.
> [...]
> Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'an. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give *zakah* and loan Allah a goodly loan. And whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.[173]

Muslims believe in the merits of night worship, especially of that performed during the last third of the night. They believe, for example, that engaging in night worship is one way of avoiding the torment of Hell and entering Paradise. They also believe that during the last third of the night is a time when God 'descends' to the lowest heaven and answers believers' prayers; that the Prophet ﷺ said: "The Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the night remains and says: 'Who will call upon Me, that I may answer Him? Who will ask of Me, that I may give him? Who will seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?'"[174] For Muslims, the importance of the call is mainly based on a Qur'anic verse in Surah Ghafir: "And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you.""[175] Moreover, worshiping under the veil of night shows powerful devotion in the act of worship, especially for slaves who sacrificed their rest time to connect with God.[176]

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[173] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Muzzammil (The Enshrouded One/Bundled Up/Enfolded), [1-8, 20].

[174] This hadeeth was narrated from the Prophet ﷺ by approximately twenty-eight of the Companions. It was narrated by al-Bukhaari in his *Saheeh* (1145) and by Muslim (1261) from Abu Hurayrah. Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*,758 b, in-book reference: Book 6, Hadith 202, English reference: Book 4, Hadith 1657. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/muslim/6/202>.

[175] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Ghafir, 40:60.

[176] There are a few Qur'anic verses that mention the merits of night prayer and worship. For the sake of brevity, only one example is given in the main discussion. However, there are quite a few verses that are significant when night worship is in question. Verses and Hadiths about night worship include but not limited to: "And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station." [Qur'an, 17: 79]; "And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer]" [Qur'an, 25:64]; "Be vigilant in standing up [in prayer] at night, for it was the practice of the pious before you. It is a means of gaining proximity to Allah Ta'ala, expiation for transgressions and a barrier from sins." (*Tirmidhi*).

The task of describing the nature of communicating with God is not an easy one. It could be, for example, a spiritual catharsis of therapeutic effects.[177] On the other hand, there is an impressionistic view of such religious practices. It is made by Willis Laurence James who describes the emotional aspect about religious cries that occur during prayers; he says, "Prayers which use cries are hauntingly beautiful. They seem to come more from the heart than from mere formal supplications. The prayer maker is too full for any utterance which is not colored tonally by his emotions."[178] Emotions constitute a strong drive, and, when combined with music, their effect becomes especially powerful. The combination of the strong release of emotions through religious music can be an indication of a unique human experience that religious people would call 'spirituality.' In Islam, this involvement of emotions when communicating with God is believed to be heard by Him and this is especially so during the last third of the night. God promises assistance even if after a while. In the Hadith narrated by al-Tirmidhi, it is reported that invocation of the oppressed is answered. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Three people will not be rejected their invocations: The one who fasts, at the time he takes iftar [i.e. breaks his fasting], the imam who is just and the oppressed, when he prays, Allah raises his prayer above the clouds and gates of heaven are opened for him and the Lord says: "By My Honor, I will surely help you though after sometime.""[179]

Ring shouts are essentially a spiritual activity, and although their development contributed to the formation of many African American churches from which political activities would emerge during the twentieth century, they are not characteristically Christian. Historians interested in examining African roots of African American practices

[177] A form of psychotherapy that work on releasing ignored or repressed emotions. This is explained in Carl Gustav Jung's *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*. It is also discussed in the concluding part of Chapter III of this thesis.
[178] Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," 19.
[179] Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*, 3598, in-book reference: Book 48, Hadith 229, English translation: Vol. 6, Book 46, Hadith 3598. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/48/229>.

and activities, such as Sylviane Diouf, state that there is a huge resemblance between ring shouts and some Islamic acts of worship. Diouf (1998) compares ring shouts to the fifth pillar of Islam, Hajj (i.e. pilgrimage to Makkah), an act of worship that West Africans have performed for centuries along with Muslims from all over the world. Diouf explains how West Africans used to travel on foot across the African continent to reach the Arabian Peninsula to perform hajj. There is evident in slave narratives of enslaved Africans of their families and relatives performing this pillar of Islam.[180]

With the direction of Dr. Lorenzo Turner, Lydia Parish, in her book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (1942), presents what seems to be a reasonable investigation of the meaning of shout, which was previously thought of as a word used by black people who believed that dancing was a sinful act and therefore avoided using its name – "To dance, from the perspective of many Christians [and indeed Muslims] would have involved sin."[181] Parish states that Dr. Turner found a phonetic resemblance between shout /ʃɑʊt/ and the Arabic word saut /ʃɑʊt/ (شَوط) which is in use among West African Muslims. One of meanings of the Arabic word refers to a part of acts of worship of Muslims when they visit the Kaaba in Makkah. Parish contends that this explanation of why the word shout is used among slaves performing the slave ritual of the ring shout is very plausible because she says that she saw "Negros do the holy dance around the pulpit in their churches in such a manner."[182] However, being a native speaker of Arabic language myself, I disagree with Turner's view that there is resemblance between the Arabic word *shawt* representing the Islamic act of worship is relevant in terms of the physical activity itself of moving around in rings as well as the direction of movement, counter-clockwise; however, his addition to this explanation in his linguistic study

[180] Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 67-68.
[181] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 38.
[182] Lydia Parish, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*, 54.

Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (1949) that the Arabic word means "a religious ring dance in which the participants continue to perform until they become exhausted" [183] is flawed for two reasons; *shawat* (meaning one circuit round the Kaaba) is by no means a 'dance'; in other words, dancing by definition is moving our bodies rhythmically to music. During *tawaf*, which performed with seven *shawts*, there is no music, whether vocal or instrumental, involved. *Tawaf* is also by no means exhausting, as suggested by Turner, not the act of worship nor the word itself has the implication of exhaustion. It is important to also point here that Parrish's transcription of the Arabic word is not correct. *Saut* resembles the Arabic pronunciation of the noun form of the root word for sound (صَوْت) or the verb form for utter *sauuət* (صَوَّت) which, although not introduced by either Parrish or Turner, are closer to the meaning of shout. In fact, according to Arabic-Arabic dictionaries, [184] there are a number of meanings of the Arabic word *saut* that if discussed in the context of the activities that took place during ring shouts can clearly be explanations of the word *shout* used by slaves in America.

One of the suggested explanations of the word *saut* is the meaning of the Arabic verb *saut*, meaning to produce very loud sound. This is evident in ex-slave Clara Young who is quoted above explaining how pots were used to lessen the loudness of some of the shouting slaves. Also, Arabic linguists contend that the noun *al-souti* (الصوتِ) means any utterance of invocation, supplication, aching, and lamentation, which are evident in slave songs. For example, Susan Snow, an eighty-seven-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Meridian, Mississippi by William B. Allison, recalls how slaves used to come up with "a heap o' songs". Snow remembers a song that used to be sung during burials and that made everyone cry, including their white masters.

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[183] Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1949), 202.

[184] Muujaam Almaany Aljame *معجم المعاني الجامع* (Comprehensive Dictionary of Meanings) <http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%AA/>

My mother prayed in de wilderness,
In de wilderness,
In de wilderness,
My mother prayed in de wilderness,
And den I'm a-goin' home.

Chorus

Den I'm a-goin' home,
Den I'm a-goin' home,
We'll all make ready, Lord,
And den I'm a-goin' home.

She plead her cause in de wilderness,
In the wilderness,
In the wilderness.
She plead her cause in de wilderness,
And den I'm a-goin' home.[185]

Although the wilderness refers to a non-specific place, the song, if interpreted *literally*, clearly states that the act of worship took place, in out-of-sight places, "in de wilderness" where ring gatherings used to take place. The characteristics that are identified by Arabic syntax and morphology of the word *al-souti* (الصوتِ) are present; i.e. there is invocation and supplication, "We'll all make ready, Lord," "She plead her cause in de wilderness"; and the overall effect of the song is that of lamentation during a sad occasion, that of burial.

Another meaning to the Arabic word *saut*, which is also present in the above song, is *al-sautu* (الصَّوْتُ). It refers to another act of worship called *dhikr* (ذِكر) which is present during the Islamic tawaf as well as during ring shout performances. Islamic dhikr and slave shouts and spiritual singing involve rhythmical utterances of remembering of God, acts of worship that are/were often performed with extreme devotion that occasionally result in extreme physical reactions to some worshipers, such as fainting or producing very loud forceful shouts, or even supernatural occurrences that amount to communicating with God, similar to what has been reported of Harriet Tubman's supernatural powers. Tubman was, in fact, called Black Moses, because of her persistent

[185] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 292

efforts to save her people, and because she claimed to have communicated with God, just like Moses ﷺ. Tubman was not the only African American woman who claimed to have communicated with God. A biographical source that traces Julia A. J. Foote's life, titled *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (1886), details the 'Heavenly Visitations' she apparently had with supernatural beings. The first paragraph of the eighteenth chapter of the biography reads,

> Nearly two months from the time I first saw the angel, I said that I would do anything or go anywhere for God, if it were made plain to me. He took me at my word, and sent the angel again with this message: "You have I chosen to go in my name and warn the people of their sins." I bowed my head and said, "I will go, Lord."[186]

Likewise, Mrs. Jarena Lee (1783) gives an account of her religious experience, and how, she too, spoke to God; she says, "the Spirit of God moved in power through my conscience, and told me I was a wretched sinner. […] I promised in my heart that I would not tell another lie." Despite feeling resistant to what God has communicated with her that she thought the voice telling her to "Go preach the Gospel!" was Satan's voice, she eventually was "fully persuaded that the Lord called me to labor according to what I have received," she says.[187]

Supernatural occurrences are not strange phenomena in religions generally, including Islam. In the Qur'an, there are many examples of how God communicates with normal people; in other words, God does not communicate with prophets exclusively. Two examples can be introduced here to illustrate this point. Both examples are about people related to the story of the prophet Musa ﷺ. The first example is when God communicated with Musa's ﷺ mother when Pharaoh was slaughtering the male newborns of Jews in Egypt. Musa's ﷺ mother feared that Pharaoh would kill him, and, therefore,

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[186] Patricia Liggins Hill, et al., ed., *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition*, 693.
[187] Ibid., 509-512.

God "inspired to the mother of Moses, '"Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.'"[188] Musa's ﷺ mother acted according to what God inspired her to do despite it being something against motherly nature to do, to cast her baby in the river.

The second example is found in Chapter 18 of the Qur'an, Surah Alkahf (The Cave); there is the story of Prophet Musa ﷺ with a righteous and knowledgeable man called Al-Khadr whose story with the Prophet ﷺ is unusual and indeed supernatural.[189] Musa ﷺ was asked who was the most knowledgeable of people; he, being a Messenger of God, thought it was himself, so he answered, "I am." Because Prophets are humans and their knowledge cannot encompass everything in the universe, Musa ﷺ should have said "God knows best" instead. God wanted to show Musa that there is in fact a person who has more knowledge than he does, so God instructs him to go to a certain place to meet a man at the junction of two seas. This part of the story is not found in the Qur'an but was narrated from Ubayy ibn Ka'b. He said that he heard the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad ﷺ say, "Musa stood up to address the Children of Israel, and he was asked: Which of the people is most knowledgeable? He said: I am. Allah rebuked him because he did not refer knowledge to Him. So Allah revealed to him: "There is a slave of Mine at the junction of the two seas who is more knowledgeable than you." The Qur'an tells us of the strange story of Musa ﷺ and his young servant who he orders to bring them their food, a fish, which, when they reached the junction of the two seas, "took its course into the sea amazingly". [190] This means that they have already passed the junction where God instructed him to get to, so they went back there where they meet Al-Khadr, who God

[188] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Qasas (The Stories), [28: 7].
[189] It is not established by Muslim scholars whether Al-Khadr was a prophet or a man of wisdom.
[190] *The Noble Qur'an*, Interpretation of Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave), [18:63].

describes as “one of Our slaves, unto whom We had bestowed mercy from Us, and whom We had taught knowledge from Us.”[191]

Knowing that Al-Khadr has greater knowledge, Musa ﷺ asks him “May I follow you so that you teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)?”[192] And then the Qur’an unfolds to us the strange and wondrous story of the Prophet ﷺ and Khadr:

> He [Khadr] said, “Verily! You will not be able to have patience with me!”
>
> “And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?”
>
> Musa said, “If Allah will, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught.”
>
> He (Khadr) said, “Then, if you follow me, ask me not about anything till I myself mention it to you.”
>
> So they both proceeded, till, when they embarked the ship, he (Khadr) scuttled it. Musa (Moses) said, “Have you scuttled it in order to drown its people? Verily, you have committed a thing “Imra” (a Munkar - evil, bad, dreadful thing).”
>
> [Al-Khadr] said, “Did I not say that with me you would never be able to have patience?”
>
> Then they both proceeded, till they met a boy; he (Khadr) killed him. Musa said, “Have you killed an innocent person who had killed none? Verily, you have committed a thing “Nukra” (a great Munkar - prohibited, evil, dreadful thing)!”
>
> (Khadr) said: “Did I not tell you that you can have no patience with me?”
>
> [Musa] said, “Do not blame me for what I forgot and do not cover me in my matter with difficulty.”
>
> Musa said, “If I ask you anything after this, keep me not in your company, you have received an excuse from me.”
>
> Then they both proceeded, till, when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to entertain them. Then they found therein a wall about to collapse and he (Khadr) set it up straight. Musa said, “If you had wished, surely, you could have taken wages for it!”
>
> (Khadr) said, “This is the parting between me and you, I will tell you the interpretation of (those) things over which you were unable to hold patience”[193]

Before they parted, Al-Khadr, then, explains why he committed these actions:

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[191] Ibid., [18:65].
[192] Ibid., [18:66].
[193] Ibid., [18:67-78].

> As for the ship, it belonged to Masakeen (poor people) working in the sea. So I wished to make a defective damage in it, as there was a king after them who seized every ship by force.
>
> And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief.
>
> So we intended that their Lord should change him for them for one better in righteousness and near to mercy.
>
> And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town; and there was under it a treasure belonging to them; and their father was a righteous man, and your Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of those (things) over which you could not hold patience.[194]

This story is about a man who was of deep faith and inherited devotion to the Lord. God communicated with him and bestowed on him a knowledge that is not known to ordinary people, including the Prophet Moses ﷺ himself in this context. What Harriet Tubman experienced in her spirituality and what ring shout worship experienced of excitement may not be explained by science, but questioning the possibility of supernatural phenomena taking place on physical levels is challenged by science; however, science does not answer many questions that there are today. Professor of neuroscience and novelist, Michael Graziano created the "attention schema" theory to examine how the brain achieves the property of awareness. In his short book *God, Soul, Mind, Brain: A Neuroscientist's Reflections on the Spirit World* (2010), Graziano contends that believing in "disembodied minds" – i.e. God, angels, etc. – is a "perceptual illusion". He contends that "Science is now widely accepted to be a useful tool for studying the physical domain, but the spiritual domain is almost universally assumed to be outside the limits of physicality, of science, of any mechanistic understanding."[195] He, nevertheless, claims that neuroscience can offer answers in regards to the world of spirit; yet, he readily admits that there is "little work on the brain basis of spiritual beliefs."[196] This is because

[194] Ibid., [18:79-82].
[195] Michael S. A. Graziano, *God Soul Mind Brain: A Neuroscientist's Reflections on the Spirit World* (New York: Leapfrog Press, 2010), 9.
[196] Ibid., 10.

"Most science, unable to make head or tail of human spirituality, has ignored or dismissed it."[197] What is interesting is that Graziano, who freely identifies himself as an atheist, does not find 'reverence'—in believers' words, spirituality— as something that he does not experience; he states that his experience of music has an effect on his brain that can be compared to religious experience of people of spirituality and faith.

There should be no conflict between the religious experience and science; i.e. a non-religious person can experience spirituality. It is merely a difference in words that describe the experience. What is important is "No matter what the world thinks about religious experience, the one who has it possesses the great treasure of a thing that has provided him with a source of life, meaning and beauty and that has given a new splendour to the world and to mankind. He has pistis and peace."[198] This is the Jungian view on psychology and religion. This view agrees with Howard Thurman's perception of slaves' spirituals singing; it is about life and death, which is the main focus of the third chapter of this thesis. Jung, who insists in his introduction to his Terry lectures (1939) that his approach to psychology is purely scientific and never philosophical, concludes, "Nobody can know what the ultimate things are. We must, therefore, take them as we experience them. And if such experience helps to make your life healthier, more beautiful, more complete and more satisfactory to yourself and to those you love, you may safely say: "This was the grace of God.""[199] In light of Jung's quote, it is no wonder many slaves used to sing:

> Oh religion is a fortune,
> I really do believe.
> Oh religion is a fortune,

[197] Ibid., 11.
[198] Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 113.
[199] Ibid., 114.

I really do believe![200]

Both Jung's quote and the song provide a proper conclusion that paves the way to the following chapter that links the topic of religion to music through the intermediary medium of psychology.

[200] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 41.

CHAPTER TWO

The Psychological and Spiritual Power of Music

Because 'music is embedded in the fabric of everyday lives',[201] it influences how people act and react to their surroundings. In Africa generally, and in West Africa particularly, music plays an important role in people's lives; the majority of West African Muslims, for example, use vocal musicality in daily religious acts of worship, including prayer, during which they melodically recite Qur'anic verses and *dhikr*.[202] An English sea captain, Richard Jobson, remarked when he was on a journey to Africa in 1620s, "There is without doubt, no people on the earth more naturally affected to the sound of musicke than these people: which the principal persons do hold as an ornament of their state, so as when wee come to see them their musicke will seldom be wanting."[203] Additionally, speech sound patterns of many West African languages are recognised for their rhythmic and musical characteristics. In "African Music in the New World" (1974), Nigerian musicologist and scholar Lazarus Ekwueme identified a linguistic feature that he termed as 'toneme' which is "the rising and falling in pitch and inflection".[204]

Music, as an art form, has often been distinguished from other art forms for its particular psychological and emotional qualities. It is, hence, important to survey what

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[201] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 179.
[202] A form of worship which means remembering God by repeating certain phrases, words and/or prayers silently or aloud.
[203] Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade or a Discovery of the River Gambra and the Golden Trade of the Aethiopians* (London, 1623), 105.
[204] Lazarus Ekwueme, "African-Music Retentions in the New World," *The Black Perspective in Music* v. 2, no. 2 (Autumn, 1974), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214230>

science has arrived at in terms of the therapeutic effects that music has on human beings. This should clarify as to why African slaves resorted to vocal music (i.e. singing) during slavery. South African scholar Ronald Segal (1995) comments on the commonality of singing among many slaves doing different tasks; he says,

> More important still to the endurance of the slaves was music, and especially song. Slaves sang at work in the fields and in the factories and on the riverboats, in the houses of the whites and in their own quarters. They sang while picking cotton and hewing wood, while rocking babies and cooking meals. They sang for every occasion and songs for every mood.[205]

Religion, too, had been acknowledged by ex-slaves for its powerful role in helping them survive during their enslavement and assist them in doing things that could amount to supernatural powers. An example of such powers can be found in Harriet Tubman's stories of communicating with God. The conclusion is that both music and religion, with the aid of memory, had great impact on how many slaves coped with exceptional circumstances. American historian Lawrence W. Levine states in his *Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977) that slave music "was a distinctive cultural form, and it was created or constantly recreated through a communal process. [They] created a new world by transcending the narrow confines of the one in which they were forced to live."[206] They somehow managed to prevent "legal slavery from becoming spiritual slavery."[207] Professor of African American religion Anthony B. Pinn holds a similar view, suggesting that many slaves did not lose their African heritage, nor was it wiped out as soon as they were transported to the Americas. Many held on to their cultural and religious practices; he states,

> [T]here is no reason to believe that the trauma of being transported to a new land, where the language is unknown and the social arrangement are foreign, was enough to wipe out all practices and beliefs associated with their homes in Africa. Certain things were

[205] Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 66-67.
[206] Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 30, 32, 80.
[207] Ibid.

> maintained – words from their languages, artistic practices, social norms, and some elements of their religious traditions. Some religious practices and beliefs were maintained during the period of slavery because they continue to be useful and the elements necessary to keep them in place were available around plantations.[208]

For centuries, philosophers and intellectuals have been continuously pondering the meaning of music and its function. In *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (1957) Austrian psychoanalyst and art historian Ernst Kris says, "the study of art is part of the study of communication. There is a sender, there is a receiver, and there is a message".[209] Therefore, music, in addition to being an art form, is a way of communication. Characteristically, it differs from regular speech, because the composer, the performer and the listener are all involved in complex processes of encoding and decoding the message of music. These processes involve both physical and emotional reactions on the part of all three parties; i.e. the composer, the performer, and the listener. This, however, should not suggest that regular speech is not powerful and it should not be confused with casual speech which includes everyday conversations, such as chit-chatting and giving orders/instructions. There are, in fact, many examples of great speeches in the history. One example is Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. It is emotionally stirring and powerfully enthusiastic. It is also charged with religiously-toned rhetoric which further strengthen its perceptual impact. The point to be emphasized here is that the difference between other forms of human utterance and music is that music tends to have a greater impact on the people involved in the musical experience; whereas, there are fewer regular speeches, compared to musical productions, that can be said to have achieved the same impact. Science clarifies this: "although music seems semantically less specific than language […] music can be more specific when it conveys information

[208] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Talyor and Francis Group, 2013), 24.
[209] Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), 16.

about feeling sensations that are problematic to express with words because music can operate *prior* to the reconfiguration of feeling sensations into words."[210]

In their "On the Enjoyment of Listening to Music" (1950), Heinz Kohut and Siegmund Levarie surveyed the position that music has among the arts by consulting the work of prominent intellectuals throughout history. According to Aristotle, the art of music holds a special status among other art forms, because other art forms are primarily imitations of objects; whereas, music, he believed, "imitates not the external aspects of objects, but character—in his language, the passions and virtues."[211] Schopenhauer (1877) agreed with Aristotle's view; he claimed that other arts "are only indirect objectifications of the will, while 'music is the copy of the will itself.'"[212] These two congruent views are related "to that part of the anatomy of the mental apparatus which Freud called the id."[213] Music has a cathartic effect on the id, explains Heinz Kohut (1957). He states that the cathartic experience emerges from the tensions that occur because of "repressed wishes". Without emotions evoked by music, these tensions would remain "pent up, threatening the ego with unmodified forms of discharge."[214] This means that an individual with repressed emotions is prone to both emotional and physical deterioration. This is because the emotional wellbeing of people greatly affects the immune system, certain functions of the brain and heart, in addition to disturbing the digestive system. In short, vital organs of the body are affected by repressed emotions, and music is one way of relieving the repression. The effect and practice of catharsis is further discussed in the concluding part of chapter III of this thesis.

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[210] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 180.
[211] Stuart Freder, et al., eds., *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music* (Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1990), 1.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid., 23.

Kant (1790), on the other hand, saw music positioning itself on the lowest rank among other art forms, because it appeals to emotional power rather than reason and intellect. Plato took an intermediate position; his evaluation of the function of music considers only the final result of a musical experience; whether the experience's result "is in the service of moral or immoral tendencies."[215] This suggests that music has an ethical aspect to its composition and reception. Jean-Claude Risset explains in an interview on "Composing the Expressive Qualities of Music" (2013) that "music can induce dependency (in French "*aussétude*") just as a drug." He continues, "The emotional power of music can indeed be used to manipulate people toward certain goals. Strong music can alter the faculty of judgement or criticism. It can even be intoxicating. [… For example,] Military music is aimed at favouring subordination and weakening the fear of killing or being killed."[216]

Heinz Kohut and Siegmund Levarie also include other scientists and philosophers' conceptions of how music works psychologically. Darwin (1872), Spencer (1902), and Whitehead (1927) believed that it is a means of communication that serves social and biological purposes, including the communication of emotions, which is important for the survival for the human race, as seen by Darwin. In other words, there is evidence that there is "occurrence of sexual-kinaesthetic discharge through musical activity, as alluded to by Sterba (1939).[217] Likewise, K. P. E. Bach (1753), Rousseau (1781), Kierkegaard (1843), Riemann (1900), and Groce (1902) held the view that music is "a special means of communicating the emotions of the composer through the

[215] Ibid., 2.
[216] Tom Cochrane, "Composing the Expressive Qualities of Music," in *The Emotional Power of Music: Multidisciplinary perspectives on Musical Arousal, Expression, and Social Control*, ed. Tom Cochrane, et al., ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.
[217] Stuart Freder, et al., eds., *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music*, 23.

performer to the listener."[218] There is, in short, a consensus that music works as a conveyer and stirrer of emotions.

Music, by nature, does not only include sounds produced by instruments; singing, too, is a way of communicating words—and emotions—musically. Likewise, poetry might be defined as a musical and rhythmical compositions of words. This is especially the case with African American music and poetry; Fahamisha Patricia Brown (1999) states,

> The language of African American music informs the language of African American poetry. "When musicians say cookin/ it is food for the soul/ that is being prepared…" (Baraka/Jones, "I Am Speaking of Future Good-ness and Social Philosophy," in *Black Magic*). Song functions in African American vernacular culture as primary recorder, the means of documentation of life and experience. Making music, then, continuing the song/talk that records and passes on the story, documents the events, celebrates the heroes, exposes the evils, and exhorts the people to keep on keeping on is the mission of the poet as well. The contemporary African American poet sings to a community and from a vibrant oral tradition by making song/talk.[219]

Similarly, Harold Courlander (1963) believes that African American music, namely blues and spirituals, was not created in the first place as an art form; rather, it is the articulation of deep emotions. He says,

> We are accustomed to thinking of blues as a *musical* form, and because this form seems so self-evident, and because the music is often haunting and moving, it is easy to overlook the reality that a genuine blues in its natural setting is not primarily conceived as "music" but as a verbalization of deeply felt personal meanings. It is a convention that this verbalization is sung. […] Music is the vehicle which carries the statement, but it is not the statement itself, and this applies to spirituals and anthems as well as to blues.[220]

Likewise, Aldon Nielsen agrees, saying that African American poetry is a form of "musicked speech".[221] Depending on this view, henceforth, what is to be discussed about music is also applicable to song/singing and poetry. This part of the thesis is concerned with exploring what science and analytical psychology say about music; what makes

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[218] Ibid., 2.
[219] Fahamisha Patricia Brown, *Performing the Word: African American Poetry as Vernacular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 82.
[220] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 145.
[221] Aldon Nielsen, *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127.

singing an intrinsic part of slave and African-American culture; why singing is important to religion (examples of spirituals are employed as representative of the combination of both music and religion); and how 'vocal music' is an essential part of the practices of worship of the Islamic faith.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung believes that "art, like any other human activity deriving from psychic motives, is a proper subject for psychology."[222] Music is no exception. Jung's early contributions in the field of psychotherapies has influenced art therapies.[223] Jung only mentions music therapy a few times in his works, but he did have a direct experiment on how music functions for therapeutic purposes. In 1956, he had a meeting with music therapist Margret Tilly, who described what happened during their meeting; she wrote,

> [Jung said,] "I want you to treat me exactly as though I were one of your patients." I began to play. When I turned round, he was obviously very moved ... saying, "I don't know what is happening to me—what are you doing?" And we started to talk. He fired question after question at me. "In such and such a case what would you try to accomplish—where would you expect to get—what would you do? Don't just tell me, show me"; and gradually as we worked he said, "I begin to see what you are doing—show me more." I told him many case histories ... He was very excited and as easy and naive as a child to work with. Finally he burst out with "This opens up whole new avenues of research I'd never even dreamed of. Because of what you've shown me this afternoon—not just what you've said, but what I have actually felt and experienced—I feel that from now on music should be an essential part of every analysis. This reaches the deep archetypal material that we can only sometimes reach in our analytical work with patients. This is most remarkable."[224]

This experiment demonstrates that Jung showed interest in the healing effects of music. This came after he had expressed his doubts about music working for psychotherapeutic purposes, informing Tilly, he says, "I have read and heard a great deal about music therapy ... but I never listen to music any more ... because music is dealing with such

[222] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 53.
[223] J. Chodorow, ed., *Jung on Active Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[224] M. Tilly, *The therapy of music*. In Joel Kroeler, "Jungian Music Therapy: A Method for Exploring the Psyche through Musical Symbol," *Canadian journal of Music Therapy* v. 20, no. 2 (July 1, 2014): 182.

deep archetypal material, and those who play don't realize this".[225] Deborah Salmon contends in her article "Bridging Music and Psychoanalytic Therapy" (2008) that music to the Jungian thought has healing powers that lie in the unconscious and that are activated by creativity.[226]

The healing power of producing and listening to music was recognised by many enslaved and free Africans, one of whom is poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) whose poem "Song for the People" provides an excellent example of what music can do to people, 'old and young'. The poet/ singer believes that songs are so powerful that they can 'thrill the heart of men'; relax hearts of 'their tension'; make 'careworn brows forget', etc. The poet/singer wants to sing because he/she believes that "Our world, so worn and weary, / Needs music, pure and strong".

Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;
Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Whenever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.

Let me make songs for the weary,
Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,
Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
Where there shall be no light.

Our world, so worn and weary,

[225] Ibid.
[226] D. Salmon, "Bridging Music and Psychoanalytic Therapy," *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* v. 8, no. 1 (March 2008), <doi:10.15845/voices.v8i1.450>.

Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.[227]

Words of musical composition that are received orally rather than visually (that is, being read) have psychological and physiological effects on the receiver. In other words, music, both vocal and instrumental, "evoke[s] meaningful associations in a receiver although this specific meaning was not intended to be conveyed by the producer."[228] This is attributed to the neurobiological fact that music is a system that "convey[s] meaning information, and [that] the psychological reality that musical information means something for an individual."[229] These interpretations are important because they can help understanding the complexity of musical experiences.

Self-defined 'singer and clinical psychologist' Arthur C. Jones (2004) underwent a "lecture-concert program" in 1991 that helped him experience the emotional effects of singing spirituals. The result was that he felt "emotions that would seem to be impossible to experience simultaneously: joy and sadness, rage and love, tranquillity and anxiety."[230] Jones was surprised with himself that he experienced such complex emotions. Spirituals, then, hold multiple levels of musical meaning. An experiment conducted by Steinbeis and Koelsch (2008) reveals that "a single musical stimulus […] can influence the semantic processing of a word".[231] Koelsch comments on the results of the study saying that "for

[227] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water: 250 Years of African-American Poetry* (New York: Mentor, 1997), 49-50
[228] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 156.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Arthur Jones, "The Foundational Influence of Spirituals in African-American Culture: A Psychological Perspective," *Black Music Research Journal*, v. 24, no. 2 (Autumn, 2004) <http:/www.jstor.org/stable/4145493> 253.
[231] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 168-169.

both musicians and non-musicians a single chord is sufficient to communicate affective meaning".[232]

This is known as musical semantics which, according to Stefan Koelsch in his *Brain and Music* (2012), is divided into three classes: extra-musical, intra-musical and musicogentic. The first involves assigning a reference to a musical sign, and the third involves 'physical processes' which include actions and emotions.[233] Koelsch's study investigates the scientific aspects of producing and listening to music and indicates that music does not merely mean sounds that affect one of the five senses, hearing. Musical meaning, in fact, "extends beyond musical sign qualities."[234] In other words, both singer and listeners are engaging in linguistic, emotional, physical and neurological processes throughout the activity of listening and producing music. All of these processes require a certain level of intelligence that, according to recent studies,[235] only humans are capable of engaging in. Animals may show engagement with music but it does not match the complexity of that of humans, because humans' music-processing involves more levels of interpretation of musical information. Koelsch explains, "humans are unique in that they can understand other individuals as intentional agents […] share their intentionality, and act jointly to achieve a shared goal. In this regard, communicating and understanding intentions, as well as inter-individual coordination of movements is a pre-requisite for cooperation".[236] This means that musical meaning requires a sort of communication and socializing between individuals involved in making music and listening to it. This social aspect is intricate; in the sense that the linguistic part of processing music is uniquely human. In other words, humans usually produce music during social occasions; this

[232] Ibid., 169.
[233] Ibid., 157. Whereas intra-musical class is 'the act of referencing a structural musical element to another structural musical element.'
[234] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 157.
[235] Stefan Koelsch's *Brain and Music* presents experiments conducted to show results of such studies.
[236] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 178.

combination of using language to communicate and listening and producing music has been scientifically proven to affect the quality and people's life span. Koelsch contends,

> Music making is an activity involving several social functions. The ability, and the need, to engage in these social functions is part of what makes us human, and emotional effects of engaging in these functions include experiences of reward, fun, joy and happiness. Exclusion from engaging in these functions represents an emotional stressor, leads to depression, and has deleterious effects on health and life expectancy. Therefore, engaging in such social functions is important for the survival of the individual and the species. […] Being in contact with other individuals is a basic need of humans (as well as of numerous other species), and social isolation is a major risk factor for morbidity as well as mortality.[237]

During slavery, it was a common practice to separate slave families as they were subject to selling, physical punishment, or even ocasionally being killed for disobedience. Undoubtedly, this had adverse consequences on the physical and psychological wellbeing of slaves. Leading white physicians diagnosed – or rather misdiagnosed – the mental illnesses and disorders that occurred among slaves in a 'pro-slavery' manner. For example, Dr. Samuel Cartwright (1793-1863), a prominent physician who was appointed to provide medical care for slaves, identified mental conditions belonging exclusively to slaves. *Drapetomania*, a disease that causes slaves to run away, was described by Dr Cartwright as "unknown to our medical authorities, although its diagnostic symptom, the absconding from service, is well known to our planters and overseers."[238] To cure this 'dangerous disease', Dr Cartwright suggests, "slaves showing incipient drapetomania, reflected in sulky and dissatisfied behaviour should be whipped strictly as a therapeutic early intervention."[239] Admittedly, Dr Cartwright's view does not reflect the view of all white physicians at that time. He recognised the anti-slavery stance of the "northern physicians" whose judgement he criticised, because

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[237] Ibid., 208.
[238] Samuel Catwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race." In DeBow's Review, Southern and Western States, v. xi, New Orleans: AMS Press, Inc.1851. *Africans in America*, retrieved 21/06/2016. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3106t.html
[239] Ibid.

> They "noticed the symptoms, but not the disease from which they spring. They ignorantly attribute the symptoms to the debasing influence of slavery on the mind without considering that those who have never been in slavery, or their fathers before them, are the most afflicted, and the latest from the slave-holding south the least. The disease is the natural offspring of Negro liberty –the liberty to be idle, to wallow in filth, and to indulge in improper food and drinks. [sic]"[240]

Obviously, Dr Cartwright's diagnosis and view of black people is extremely racist and dehumanising. In fact, the last sentence of the last quote implies equating black people with filthy animals, like pigs which, unlike most animals, distinctively do exactly what that sentence implies. Although this note taken by Dr Cartwright is racist and dehumanising, there is, in fact, recorded evidence in Harriet Tubman's biography that she hid in a pigpen "where she had to compete with the swine for food"[241] when seven-year-old Harriet had ran away "to escape punishment after taking a lump of sugar."[242] What happened with Tubman might have happened to a slave in the presence of Dr Cartwright or be reported to him and then to be made into outrageous and unscientific diagnoses.

Interestingly enough, there is a slave song that portrays a detested practice of eating leftover food called 'juba' (or Jibba, jiba) from containers designed for animal feeding.

> Juba this and Juba that
> Juba killed a yella' cat
> Get over double trouble, Juba …
> Juba up, Juba down,
>
> Juba all around the town.
> Juba for Ma, Juba for Pa.
> Juba for your brother-in-law.

This song was sung as a complaint against this humiliating practice; Megan Sullivan comments on the song, "In protest and for mental fortification, African-Americas made

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[240] Ibid.
[241] Milton C. Sernett, *Harriet Tubman: Myth, Memory, and History* (Durham:Duke University Press, 2007), 17, 19.
[242] Ibid.

songs to steel themselves against the debasement of eating Juba".[243] The song makes it clear that being fed juba was a common practice. It is important to note that such songs contain the African-American concept of racial unity, that all slaves were in this 'trouble' together. There is, also, a coded message here; that slaves need to 'get over double trouble, Juba', meaning that they need to gain their freedom and in order to never be forced to eat juba. Sullivan explains,

> By mentioning the pervasiveness of the problem, the song elicits a sense of common experience among slaves, that nobody was alone in their humiliation. Evoking a sense of unity among oppressed people is perhaps the most important way music was used by African-Americans to resist their abhorrent treatment and bolster the strength to continue fighting against those conditions.[244]

Introducing this song, 'Juba', is important to the discussion on multiple levels. It reflects the treatment that many slaves received in light of the likes of Dr Cartwright's 'medical' diagnosis and advice and Tubman's story; it demonstrates how slaves reacted to their mistreatment, singing songs that rarely contain words of negativity or hatred. Commenting on 'Juba' Sullivan explains,

> Slave owners in the United States sought to completely subjugate their slaves physically, mentally and spiritually through brutality and demeaning acts. African-Americans frequently used music to counter this dehumanization – to boost morale and toughen themselves psychologically.[245]

The song also helps in clarifying how the racial 'I' in many African American poems started and preserved. The concluding paragraphs of Chapter III of this thesis discuss this feature by analysing Claude McKay's poem 'If We must Die'. Finally, later in this chapter this song is presented as an example of the origin of hip-hop songs.

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[243] Megan Sullivan, "African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop" (2001). Retrieved from <http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/publicationsprizes/discoveries/discoveriesspring2001/03sullivan.pdf.>
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.

The purpose of introducing Dr Cartwright's view is to reflect how many slaves were treated and 'managed'. It is also noteworthy that he recommended treating slaves with "care, kindness, attention and humanity"[246] in order to keep slaves obedient and prevent them from attempting to escape. The two extreme treatments recommended by Dr Cartwright have been implemented by planters in the American South. In fact, this can be verified by analysing ex-slave interviews such as Norman R. Yetman's *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives* (2000)[247] in which the testimonies of ex-slaves interviewed between 1936 and 1938 provide a range of treatments that differ considerably from benevolent and familiar to brutal and inhuman.[248]

Methods of managing slaves were constantly being proposed to strengthen slaveholders' control over slaves. Anthony B. Pinn (2013) states that treatment of slaves indeed varied from plantations and other places yet, he adds, "what remained constant was the fact that enslaved Africans were not free like European colonists. The labor they provided was too important to have slaves questioning the justification of their enslavement, and planters certainly couldn't afford to have slaves seeking freedom."[249] Interestingly, some ex-slaves speculate the use of song by slaveholders to control slave. Three of the interviewees in *Voices from Slavery* recall a song their parents used to sing.[250] One of them is Anthony Dawson, a 105-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Tulsa, Oklahoma. He says that the song that "de slaves all knowd, and de children down on de 'twenty acres' used to sing". He comments, "Sometimes I wonder iffen de white folks

[246] Samuel Catwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race."
[247] Examples from the *Narratives* are introduced because they, though not definitive representative of all slaves' experiences throughout slavery which lasted approximately, they are most reliable as the come from ex-slaves rather than reported from them.
[248] Norman R. Yetman, From *Life Under the 'Peculiar Institution'*, 335, quoting *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, (New York: Dover Publications, INC., 2000), 2.
[249] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 19.
[250] The third ex-slave interviewee is Julia Brown whose account is on page 47 of Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 47.

didn't make dat song up so us niggers would keep in line."[251] Ferebe Rogers, an over-100-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Milledgeville, Georgia by Ruth Chitty, thinks this song is about a group of about twelve 'patterrollers' whose job is to catch any run-away slave.[252] Both interpretations can be said to be in line with the two techniques of slave management recommended by Dr Cartwright.

> Run nigger, run,
> De Patteroll get you!
> Run nigger, run,
> De Patteroll come!
> Watch nigger, watch,
> De Patteroll trick you!
> Watch nigger, watch,
> He got a big gun![253]

If the speculated purpose of the song is correct, this means that slaveholders noticed that singing appealed to slaves who used to sing while were hard at work, and they cunningly created a song whose words promise punishment to the one who considers fleeing from his owner. What makes the interpretations of the interviewed ex-slaves plausible is the frequent use of 'nigger' and the last warning line of the 'big gun' that 'Patterrollers' would use against run-away slaves who had no pass on them.[254] Interestingly enough, the warning comes at the end of the song so that it resonates with slaves singing and listening to the song. It is also noteworthy that the song imitates the structure and dialect of songs typically created by slaves themselves in that there is repetition of words and complete verses. The song may be intentionally made up like that so as to confuse slaves as to the true authors of the song; whether those who made the song up were fellow slaves or slave owners, consequently, planting in them a sense of fear of acting out of disobedience.

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[251] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 93.
[252] Ibid., 258.
[253] Ibid., 93.
[254] This should not imply that 'nigger' was not used by black people, too. The suggestion here is derived from its frequent use in the song, which may function as a means to demean black people and belittling them to further weaken them and control them mentally to plant fear in them so that they dread running away, because the song tells them the consequence of running away in the last line.

The interpretation of the ex-slaves that some songs/poems were recommended to be used by all masters and mistresses is also to be found in a poem found in a collection of sermons by Rev. William Meade called "The Sorrows of Yamba" (1813?)

> At the savage Captain's beck
> Now like brutes they make us prance;
> Smack the cat about the deck,
> And in scorn they bid us dance.[255]

Dena J. Epstein (1977) finds this sermon 'strange' and sympathetic with the slave and suggests that it was written "probably in England, when the Enlightenment was in full sway, and the stereotype of the brutish, happy slave had not yet been standardized."[256] Epstein introduces this verse after outlining the method of treatment of slaves on slave-trading ships; slaves, for example, were forced, sometimes beaten, to dance to keep them healthy and fit to survive the brutal journey across the Atlantic.

By examining the 'concept of power', Orlando Patterson attempts to define how obedience is enforced. He states that there are three ways in which people exercise domination over other people. The first category is social which implies intimidating other people to dominate them. The second is implementing psychological control, which involves altering the perception of the targeted people. The last form of power is a cultural one; it is "the means of transforming force into right, and obedience into duty".[257] Then Patterson proceeds to explain that power correlates highly with honour: "To obey is to Honour…. And consequently to disobey, is to Dishonour."[258] Because the slave had no power, Patterson explains, he had no honour.

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[255] "Sorrows of Yamba," quoted in *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* by Dena J. Epstein (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1977), 11.
[256] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1977), 11.
[257] Orlando Patterson, "Slavery and Social Death" in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, ed. Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al. (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), 4.
[258] Ibid.

Patterson concludes his article by quoting Frederick Douglass's words which explain that a powerless man does not feel his humanity, because to be human is to be honoured.

> Frederick Douglass, undoubtedly the most articulate former slave who ever lived, repeatedly emphasized as the central feature of slavery the loss of honour and its relation to the loss of power. After physically resisting a brutal white who had been hired by his exasperated master to break him, Douglass, whose spirit had nearly broken and who had run the risk of being executed for his resistance, recalls that he felt "a sense of my own manhood…. I was nothing before, I was a man now." And he adds in the passage for which this chapter may be read as an extended exegesis: "A man without force is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot honor a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even that it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise."[259]

Douglass believes that humanity is about *living* with dignity; i.e., a person has no sense of living if they are denied their humanity. In his insightful book *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (1947), philosopher and theologian Howard Thurman reflects on how the human spirit is always consumed with the meaning of existence. The way people view death is, to a great extent, affected by the way they live their lives. Many slaves were made to feel that their lives were worthless; losing one's children and siblings at auction blocks, says Catherine Clinton (2004), "sharpened [slave children's] sense of the fragility of their existence."[260] This happens early in slaves' lives. Thurman says, "The slave was a tool, a thing, a utility, a commodity, but he was not a *person*."[261] Thurman explains, "He was faced constantly with the imminent threat of death […] and the awareness that he (the slave) was only chattel property […]. The situation itself stripped death of its dignity, making it stark and nasty".[262] Honour, as Douglass sees it, is connected to recognising one's humanity which, in turn, is about being powerful—this statement also agrees with Orlando Patterson's definition of the 'concept of power'.

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[259] Ibid., 12.
[260] Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004), 15-16.
[261] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 13.
[262] Ibid., 13-14.

Thurman believes that 'the Negro spirituals' provide "a rich testimony concerning life and death, because in many ways they are the voice, sometimes strident, sometimes muted and weary, of a people for whom the cup of suffering overflowed in haunting overtones of majesty, beauty and power!"[263] The 'power' that Thurman alludes to is found in spirituality which was manifested in many spiritual slave songs "where the elemental and the formless struggle to a vast consciousness of the mind and spirit of the individual' is revealed."[264] In spirituals, Thurman finds a consolatory answer to how his ancestors kept hope alive at a time when everything only promises death and how any human spirit could accommodate such terrible pain. In the preface he addresses them,

> O my Fathers, what was it like to be stripped of all supports of life save the beating of the heart and the ebb and flow of fetid air in the lungs? […] did some intimation from the future give to your spirits a hint of promise? In the darkness did you hear the silent feet of your children beating a melody of freedom to words which you would never know, in a land in which your bones would be warmed again in the depths of the cold earth in which you will sleep unknown, unrealized, and alone?[265]

By applying the mathematical theory of transitive relation, Thurman's reflective questions can be addressed. If honour relates to humanity which in turn is related to being powerful, then honour and power are related transitively. This logic can be considered as a driving force of not accepting to succumb to the humiliation of slavery nor to death. Slaves *honoured* their children's lives. They heard words singing of freedom and they sang "even without highly specialized tools or skills, [and] the universe responded to them with overwhelming power."[266]

Thurman says that he "located three major sources of raw materials over which the slave placed the alchemy of his desiring and aspiring: the world of nature, the stuff of

[263] Ibid., 12.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid. 6.
[266] Ibid., 13.

experience, and the Bible, the sacred book of the Christians who had enslaved them. It was from the latter two that the songs of life and death originate."[267] In the "world of nature," slaves found a place to meet and gather to sing their spirituals and reach for the Lord from whom they sought more power—such gatherings were later called ring shouts (discussed later in more detail).

Heinz Kohut (1957) investigates the effects that music has on structuralized psyche by adopting a "structural point of view."[268] He states that musical activity has important effects on the ego, because it helps in dealing with the threat of a traumatic experience. He explains, "Repetition of passages that have already occurred, the familiarity of form and style of compositions, and the use of familiar instruments aid the ego in its task of mastery."[269] On the other hand, music as related to the superego is concerned with moral and aesthetic codes. This means, according to Kohut, that by surrendering to "a set of aesthetic rules" a musician[270] achieves "a feeling of satisfaction and security which is akin to the moral satisfaction of having done right."[271]

For slaves, evocative spiritual singing could provide a therapeutic effect which contributes to effective treatment of mental and emotional disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and pathological anxiety, "because these disorders are partly related to dysfunction of limbic/paralimbic structures such as amygdala, hippocampus, and orbitofrontal cortex."[272] Stefan Koelsch in *Brain and Music* explains, "music-evoked emotions can modulate activity within all limbic- and paralimbic brain

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[267] Ibid., 13.
[268] Heinz Kohut, "Psychological Functions of Music," in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music*, ed. Stuart Freder, et al (Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1990), 24.
[269] Ibid., 24-25.
[270] By "musician", Kohut alludes to composers, performers and listeners. (Stuart Freder, et al., eds., *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music* (Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1990), 22).
[271] Ibid., 25.
[272] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 239.

structures.''[273] Arthur Jones (2004) agrees with this finding, quoting a slave song that can serve as an example of how the use of spirituals, from a psychological point of view, helped in "coping with and transcending emotional and physical trauma."[274] The song he quotes is "Sometimes I feel Like a Motherless Child." In the song, despair comes up as the immediate issue; the pain of a child when losing their mother is overwhelming. Nevertheless, the key word here is "sometimes"; there is an implication that this feeling of hopelessness is not constant. There are times when the child is not feeling like a "motherless child." There is also the repetition of the melody line, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child," which, again, despite the apparent sadness, that 'sometimes' the child does not feel that way emerges as a hopeful note. The overall repetition gives a sense of a soothing rhythm that creates, ultimately, a feeling that the song is comforting a chant. Additionally, the last stanza reinforces the implicit meaning of strength and hope to break free of all the sadness that the song opens with.

> Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
> Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
> Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
> A long ways from home,
> A long ways from home.
> Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
> Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
> Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
> A long ways from home,
> A long ways from home.
> Sometimes I feel like a feather in the air,
> Sometimes I feel like a feather in the air,
> Sometimes I feel like a feather in the air,
> And I spread my wings and fly,
> I spread my wings and fly.[275]

Beyond the syntactic, repetitive structure of the song, there is 'extra-musical' meaning which Jones interprets as: "I feel like a child of God, empowered to reject the notions of

[273] Ibid., 239.
[274] Arthur C. Jones, "The Foundational Influence of Spirituals in African-American Culture: A Psychological Perspective," 257.
[275] Patricia Liggings Hill, ed., *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 51.

inferiority and dehumanization imposed on me in these circumstances."[276] He adds, "the repetitive, ultimately soothing power of the melody, sung over and over, asserts a calming effect that nearly approaches a hypnotic trance."[277] The soothing effect Jones points out to informed the basic structure of the well-known lullaby "Summertime," which forms the opening for George Gershwin's the opera *Porgy and Bess*. Samuel Floyd in his valuable book *The Power of the Black Music: Interpreting its history from Africa to the United States* (1995) says,

> The first extended troping of the tune of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" was George Gershwin's repetition of it in Porgy and Bess […] Rhythmically, in other words, "Summertime" is a kind of augmentation of the "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" melody […] Harmonically, the two tunes follow basically the same harmonic scheme.[278]

"Sometimes I feel Like a Motherless Child" is a very famous song which is interesting in many ways one of which is revealed when a group of people practised singing its repetitive melody and reported their "internal experiences". The result was that although participants were affected by the sad tunes, they felt, simultaneously, a paradoxical effect of "inner calm."[279] This result demonstrates the powerful effect that spirituals have on those who produced them and sang them. It also shows that this powerful effect is not lessened by different circumstances of the singers of "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" and *Porgy and Bess,* because both works offer complex emotional experiences notwithstanding of the background and personal experiences of singers and listeners in the time and place in which the works were performed. In brief, the reason of emotional complexity is not bound to time or place nor to personal experiences. The idea is that "the

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[276] Arthur C. Jones, "The Foundational Influence of Spirituals in African-American Culture: A Psychological Perspective," 257.
[277] Ibid., 257.
[278] Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United* States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 218.
[279] Arthur C. Jones, "The Foundational Influence of Spirituals in African-American Culture: A Psychological Perspective," 257.

gift of music [… is] for everyone, as natural and universal a part of human endowment as the gift of speech".[280] Music production and appreciation and the complex reaction, whether emotional or physical, to music require a level of intelligence that is unique to humans.

There is a plethora of examples of the affective manifestations of singing. Susan Merritt, an eighty-seven year-old ex-slave interviewed near Marshall, Texas, remembers, "Sometimes at night us gather round the fireplace and pray and sing and cry, but us daren't allow our white folks know it."[281] She remembers this song:

> I come to Jesus as I was,
> Weary and lone and tired and sad,
> I finds in him a restin' place,
> And he has made me glad. [282]

Unsurprisingly, music played an integral role during funeral services among slaves. Singing and dancing were customary and were viewed by white observers as 'barbaric', 'benighted' and uncivilized'.[283] However, the abolitionist view differs in interpreting these practices by suggesting that they are "evidence of the joy with which the slaves greeted the end of suffering and servitude for one of their numbers. It was widely explained that the Africans believed they would return to Africa after death."[284] Vincent Brown states in his *The Reaper's Garden* (2008), "many Africans […] believed thy would return home to their ancestral lands after death, there to be reunited as spirits and ancestors with lost kin and friends."[285] Brown quotes Mark Cook, who was a clerk who owned a small planter in Jamaica. Cook claimed that African funerals were "great rejoicings […] occasions, because […] they thought their country men were gone back to

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[280] Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (London: John Calder, 1987), 1-2.
[281] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 225.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, 63.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Vincent Brown, The Reaper's Garden (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 132-133.

their own country again."[286] Both interpretations can be inferred from descriptions of slave burials found in reports made by white observers. Regardless of the place where a slave burial was taking place, white observers' accounts agree on the presence of elements of joys which was manifested in singing and dancing, instead of crying or wailing.

Slaves, who self-prescribed singing to ease their pain, found in religion solace for their suffering. In religion, they found "a restin' place," a place where they feel "glad." Death is now "extremely compelling because of the cheapness with which his [i.e. slaves'] life […is] regarded."[287] For the creators of spirituals, death is viewed as personal and intimate. It is a "restin' place;" it is home; it is where freedom is found. But, how can a man attain freedom if he is, in Thurman's own words, "space binder and time binder"?[288] A question raised and answered by Thurman who explains what he means by this rather sophisticated statement; he provides a profoundly reflective and insightful passage on the nature of death and its significance as an experience that affects the 'human spirit … upon which all notions of freedom finally rest."[289] He says, "death, as an event, is spatial, time encompassed, if not actually time bound, and therefore partakes of the character of the episodic. Death not only affects man by involving him concretely in its fulfilment, but man seems to be aware that he is being affected by death in the experience itself." He adds, "Death is an experience in life, and a man, under some circumstances, may be regarded as a spectator *of*, as well as a participant *in*, the moment of his own death."[290] Life, on the other hand, is a series of events. Because it is so,

[286] Ibid., 133.
[287] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Speaks of Life and Death*, 13.
[288] Ibid., 17.
[289] Ibid., 16.
[290] Ibid., 17.

"Freedom can only mean, in this sense, the possibility of release from the tyranny of succeeding intervals of events."[291]

> Oh Freedom! Oh Freedom!
> O Freedom, I love thee!
> And before I'll be a slave,
> I'll be buried in my grave,
> And go home to my Lord and be free.[292]

"Religion makes you forget a heap of things," says Lucretia Alexander, an eighty-nine ex-slave.[293] It is, therefore, the combination of therapeutic effects of singing and religion that kept Howard Thurman's ancestors going. For them, "life is regarded as a pilgrimage, a sojourn, while the true home of the spirit is beyond the vicissitudes of life with God!"[294] The destination of the pilgrims is always anticipated. The destination or goal of a pilgrimage is largely a spiritual one.

> Done made my vow to the Lord,
> And I never will turn back,
> I will go, I shall go,
> To see what the end will be.
>
> My strength, Good Lord, is almost gone,
> I will go, I shall go,
> To see what the end will be.
> But you have told me to press on,
> I will go, I shall go,
> To see what the end will be.[295]

There is little sense of attachment to the worldly life in the song: "I never will turn back"; in fact, there is a sense of urgency with the repetition of "I will go, I shall go." There is a strong belief in the hereafter; there is a sense of hope in impatiently waiting for death to come. In the song, there is a realization that a believer needs to be steadfast so that he gets the reward he is anticipating, which is suggested in "you have told me to press on". The

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[291] Ibid., 32.
[292] Ibid., 15.
[293] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 13.
[294] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Speaks of Life and Death*, 32.
[295] Ibid., 35.

interpretation of life as pilgrimage is evident in many spirituals and is drawn from the New Testament, states Thurman.[296]

In general, slaves were not allowed to practise religion freely, to sing and praise. Henry Lewis, a hundred-and-two-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Beaumont, Texas, remembers in his account in *Voices from Slavery* that "lots of massas didn't allow dem [the slaves] to get on dey knees."[297] He remembers going to church after dinner and singing:

> My knee-bones achin',
> My body's rackin' with pain,
> I calls myself de child of God,
> Heaven am my aim.[298]

Despite the physical impact of slavery on slaves' toil-worn bodies, they watched God and hoped to go to heaven. Their relationship with God is so strong that they would do things regardless of the consequences. Harriet Tubman (c.1822-1913), for example, once told Thomas Garrett that "she felt no more fear of being arrested by her former master, or any other person, when in his immediate neighbourhood […] for she never ventured only where God sent her, and her faith in a Supreme Power truly was great."[299]

Another ex-slave, Lorenzo Ezell, an eighty-seven-year old ex-slave interviewed at Beaumont, recalls how slaves used to "make up" songs when the white preacher did not address them with a speech. One of the songs that was made up and he remembered:

> De rough, rocky road what Moses done travel,
> I'se bound to carry my soul to de Lord;
> It's a mighty rocky road but I must done travel,
> And I'se bound to carry my soul to de Lord.[300]

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[296] Ibid., 34.
[297] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 205.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn, New York: W. J. Moses, 1869), 48-49.
[300] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 112.

This song, he says, was created because they did not write or read. They would sing "Sweet Chariot" which they, he comments, "didn't sing it like dese days."

> Swing low, sweet chariot,
> Freely let me into rest,
> I don't want to stay here no longer;
> Swing low, sweet chariot,
> When Gabriel make he last alarm
> I want to be rollin' in Jesus arm,
> 'Cause I don't want to stay here no longer.[301]

Lorenzo Ezell remembers that slaves would readily create a song for any matter. He remembers the flight of his master to the woods when Sherman's men arrived. A humorous song was created by Ezell's uncle and other slaves.

> Old massa run away
> […]
> It must be now dat Kingdom's comin'
> And de year of Jubilee.[302]

In fact, after examining a large number of the accounts of the ex-slaves interviewed in Yetman's collection, it is evident that religion was of special importance to many slaves. W. L. Bost, an eighty-eight-year-old ex-slave was interviewed at Asheville, North Carolina by Marjorie Jones, says,

> Us niggers never have chance to go to Sunday school and church. The white folks feared for niggers to get any religion and education, but I reckon somethin' inside just told us about God and that there was a better place hereafter. We would sneak off and have prayer meetin'. Sometimes the 'patterrollers' catch us and beat us good but that didn't stop us from tryin'. I remember one old song we used to sing when we meet down in the woods back of the barn. My mother she sing and pray to the Lord to deliver us out o' slavery.[…] the old song it went something like this:
>
> > Oh, Mother lets go down, let go down, let go down, let go down.
> > Oh, Mother lets go down, down in the valley to pray.
> > As I went down in the valley to pray,
> > Studyin' about that good ole way,
> > Who shall wear that starry crown?
> > Good Lord, show me the way.
>
> Then the other part was just like that except it said ''Father'' instead of ''Mother,'' and then "Sister" and then ''Brother.'' Then they sing sometimes:

[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid., 113

> We camp awhile in the wilderness, in the wilderness, in the wilderness.
> We camp awhile in the wilderness, in the wilderness, where the Lord makes me happy,
> And then I'm a-goin' home.'"[303]

The majority of the songs quoted so far in this chapter demonstrate two things for slaves: the harsh reality of living as a slave and the aspiration of going back 'home' where happiness and freedom are abundant. Religion, for many of them, is important and powerful. It is powerful, because to some it can take a psychic form. Harriet Tubman, for example, believed that she was receiving messages from God in her dreams and through visions. Sarah Bradford's two biographies *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (1869) and *Harriet Tubman, Moses of Her People* (1886) describe Tubman's powerful reaction after listening to descriptions of Jerusalem; Bradford reports,

> When the reading was finished, Harriet burst into a rhapsody which perfectly amazed her hearer—telling of what she had seen in one of these visions, sights which no one could doubt had been real to her, and which no human imagination could have conceived, it would seem, unless in dream or vision. There was wild poetry in these descriptions which seemed to border almost on inspiration, but by many they might be characterized as the ravings of insanity.[304]

In her second biography of Tubman's, Bradford presents an explanation of what seems to be supernatural about Tubman religiosity. She says that despite the criticism and ridicule that surrounded the heroine's stories by "advocates of human slavery," it was Bradford's private acquaintance with Tubman that made her "risk" her—Bradford's—reputation by making such information about Tubman public.[305] In *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman,* Bradford quotes a letter by Thomas Garrett to further emphasise Tubman's powerful spirituality as witnessed by himself; he says, "In truth I never met

[303] Ibid., 37.
[304] Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 56.
[305] Sarah Bradford, *Harriet, the Moses of Her People* (New York: G. R. Lockwood, 1886), 75-76.

with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul."[306]

Religious acts of worship in the most followed religions in the world, namely Christianity and Islam, are often accompanied with some sort of rhythm and musicality. Islam, the focus religion of this research, involves daily acts of worship that require a certain way of pronouncing words, especially when reciting the Qur'an which is essential when performing *salat* (i.e. prayer) which is performed five times daily. When reciting the Qur'an, worshipers need to adhere to one of the seven modes of recitation. The prominent Muslim jurist and Hadith scholar Imam An-Nawawi (1234–1277) said,

> Our companions and others said, 'It is permissible to recite, in prayer and otherwise, according to any of the seven modes of recitation, but it is not permissible to recite, in prayer or otherwise, according to an odd mode of recitation, because that is not Qur'an. Qur'an can only be proven by means of mutawaatir reports, and each of the seven modes of recitation is mutawaatir. This is the correct view which one must accept, and whoever says otherwise is wrong or ignorant.'[307]

This means that there is important emphasis on not only the pronunciation of words but also their rhythm and tonality. This is important because meaning depends, to a great extent, on pronunciation. Egyptian scholar in the phonetics, stylistics, semantics and pragmatics of the Qur'an, Muhammed Shamlul, investigates sound-meaning relationship in the Qur'an. In his study *Lettering and Recitation Miracles of the Qur'an* (2006), Shamlul states that the way a word is spelled and pronounced is very important in defining the overall meaning. Shamlul contends that "applying recitation rules when reading the Qur'an demonstrates the miraculous effects by revealing meanings that may not be clear when the Holy Qur'an is read like any other book."[308] According to Shamlul,

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[306] Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 48-49.

[307] An-Nawawi, *Al-Majmoo'* (3/392). Retrieved from Islamqa.info < https://islamqa.info/en/answers/178120/the-seven-modes-of-recitation-are-mutawaatir-and-it-is-not-permissible-to-cast-aspersions-on-them>.

[308] Muhammed Shamlul, *Lettering and Recitation Miracles of the Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar Assalam, 2006), 10-11.

recitation rules of the Qur'an are very important in understanding the true meaning of verses. This is, perhaps, what Imam An-Nawawi intended to mean by saying that not reading the Qur'an by adhering to a set of rules.[309]

Applying recitation rules when reading the Qur'an is believed by many Muslim scholars to have a powerful effect on the human spirit. In other words, they believe that it has healing powers. This is especially the case for people who suffer from powerful emotional and mental states such as depression, bereavement, persecution, sadness, etc. There are several verses in the Qur'an that state that there are trials in the worldly life and those who are patient shall be rewarded in the Hereafter. For example, in Surah Al-Mu'minun (i.e. The Believers) patience is encouraged and those who are patient when a calamity strikes are described as successful; "Indeed, I have rewarded them this Day for their patient endurance – they are indeed the ones that are successful".[310] Those who have this highly rewarded virtue are loved by God; "And Allah loves As-Saabiroon (the patient)"[311] Muslims take solace when they go through hardship as they know that they are all trials to test the endurance and patience of believers and that these trials are only temporary.

> And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient,
> Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."[312]

Many Muslim slaves, especially those who had memorized the Qur'an, would have been likely to have believed that those who persecuted them, although had not been prosecuted during their lifetimes, a great punishment is awaiting them.

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[309] There is also another source that make similar argument, i.e. that following recitation rules when reading the Qur'an is important to understand its meaning; Alsaid, Basem Bin Hamdi Bin Hamed. *The Effect of Tajweed [recitation with rules] in Understanding the Holy Qur'an*. Riyadh : Dar Alhaddara, 2014.
[310] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al- Mu'minun (The Believers), [23:111].
[311] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ali 'Imran (The Family of Imran), [3:146].
[312] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), [2:155-156].

> Indeed, those who have persecuted the believing men and believing women and then have not repented will have the punishment of Hell, and they will have the punishment of the Burning Fire.
> Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great attainment.[313]

The powerful divine message combined with musical recitations create healing effects. This is similar to what brainwave therapy does to the brain by stimulating the brain to enter a particular state with sound waves that are sounded with specific lengths and/or loudness, i.e. frequencies. Electroencephalography (EEG) monitoring conducted on people listening to music showed speeding up in neural oscillations.[314] This means that the effect music has on the human brain has been proven to have therapeutic effects that, as explained earlier in this chapter, strengthen the immune system and, hence, the wellbeing of individuals. This means that when engaging in a musical experience, i.e. producing and/or listening to music, stress and other negative energies are relieved. This, in turn, strengthens the immune system.

The importance of introducing this pure scientific approach in a predominantly literary, historical, and theological study is an attempt to answer the main question of this chapter, why music? In other words, the prominence of music, both oral and instrumental, is very clear within the African American culture, and it must have a special significance. To answer this question from a historic point of view, it all started even before African slaves were transported to the Americas. It was brought from West Africa and with time different African American musical genres emerged, such as spirituals and the more recent blues and jazz. Harold Courlander (1963) contends that calls and cries, which were important during ring shouts and hush arbors and other slave worship gatherings, were

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[313] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Buruj (The Constellations), [85: 10-11].
[314] Yuan-Pin Lin, et al., "Fusion of electroencephalographic dynamics and musical contents for estimating emotional responses in music listening" *Frontiers in neuroscience* vol. 8 94. 1 May. 2014, doi:10.3389/fnins.2014.00094>.

African musical products that are found in blues and other African American music; he explains,

> calls and cries are a source, even a prime source, of blues and jazz. […] Before the first Negro call or cry was uttered in the New World, Negroes possessed a highly developed and sophisticated music. They were conspicuously knowledgeable in this field, and had well defined concepts of the uses to which the voice could be put. […] Although it is evident that some of the elements heard in the cry are also heard in the blues and other Negro songs, these elements are merely part of a general repertoire of musical effects upon which all Negro music draws.[315]

Interestingly enough, enslaved Africans were performing to themselves a form of brainwave therapy. Through their singing they let out negative emotions, whose repression would have had affected them both physically and mentally. Courlander adds,

> In substance, the blues is a genre utilized to express personal dissatisfaction, remorse, or regret; to tell the world about your misfortune and the way you feel about it; […] the blues is the everyday medium through which feelings of this kind ["Misery, hopelessness, weariness, ridicule, and personal allusions"] are aired. Anyone aware of the strong tradition in Africa for songs of recrimination, complaint, or abuse, and the survival of this tradition in other Negro communities in the Americas, will probably sense the special character of the blues.[316]

Monica Gordon Pershey (2000) agrees with Courlander; she says,

> Sometimes spirituals were called sorrow songs. Slaves played them to express deep suffering, endurance, and yearning for freedom in the peaceful kingdom of heaven. Spirituals offered emotional release, psychic relief, and helped some slaves keep morale. They sang to lighten their burdens, remind one another of hope, restore their spirits, increase their courage, and enjoy the little free time they had.[317]

Courlander's and Pershey's views are, also, in line with Frederick Douglass's reflective autobiographical note on slave singing. Douglass wrote,

> […] Slaves sing most when they most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. […] I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately

[315] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.*, 88.
[316] Ibid., 128.
[317] Monica Gordon Pershey, "African American Spiritual Music: A Historical Perspective," *The Dragon Lode* v. 18, no. 2 (Spring, 2000), 25.

> considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.[318]

It is the involvement of emotions that make such songs powerful; in other words, when many slave songs were sung, emotions were stirred even for those who gained their freedom, like Douglass, as remembering such songs brought back strong emotions. This recalls Douglass's own expression of tearing up while writing his autobiography, quoted at length in chapter III. He says,

> The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek.[319]

It is safe to say that slaves who were involved in a musical experience created an outlet for their repressed emotions. Sometimes the outlet was so strong that it took active physical form, like crying and fainting. Indeed, any slaves drew strength from singing and having faith.

In the Qur'an, there are a few verses that state that the Scripture has a healing effect on those who actively listen to it. The following are verses taken from different Chapters in the Qur'an.

> "O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers."[320]
> "And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss."[321]
> "Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."[322]

The importance of mental and psychological healing is frequently emphasised in the Islamic faith. With the divine order to believers to "seek help through patience and

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[318] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (New York: Random House, 1845, 1981), 27-28.
[319] Ibid., 27.
[320] *The Holy Qur'an,* interpretation of Surah Yunus (Jonah), [10: 57].
[321] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Isra (The Night Journey), [17: 82].
[322] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ar-Ra'd (The Thunder), [13: 28].

prayer",[323] prayer is not only a communication with God but also involves the recitation of Qur'anic verses while worshipers hold their hands upon their chests. The melodious recitation of the verses combined with the specific physical posture is believed to increase the peaceful effect of spirituality.

In 1745, William Smith made an interesting observation of a group of slaves singing in a call-and-response pattern while busy planting sugar canes. The one part of the 'song' that Smith reported is a short phrase, "La, Alla, La, La."

> The Negroes when at work in howing [sugar] canes, or digging round Holes to plant them in, (perhaps forty Persons in a row) sing very merrily, i.e. two or three Men with large Voices, and a sort of Base Tone, sing three or four short lines, and then all the rest join at once, in a sort of Chorus, which I have often heard, and seems to be, *La, Alla, La, La,* well enough, and indeed harmoniously turned.[324]

Smith did not provide a speculation on what the slave might have been singing, but judging from the setting and the few syllables he recorded, it is possible to make a couple of interpretations from an Islamic perspective. The fact that the slaves were singing while digging recalls the Battle of the Trench (627), during which Muslims dug a trench to protect Medina. The Muslims who were involved in the process suffered immensely, both physically and psychologically. To cope and alleviate pain and suffering, they chanted. Many Muslims, up until this day, still engage in similar practice of reciting Qur'anic verses or chanting while they are hard at physically demanding work. It is also noteworthy that the slaves who worked in rice fields in South Carolina sang worksongs to organise their work patterns which their ancestors had. Peter Hutchins Wood (1974) says,

> In summer, when Carolina blacks moved through the rice fields in a row, hoeing in unison to work songs, the pattern of cultivation was not one imposed by European owners but rather one retained from West African forebears. […] There was a strikingly close resemblance between the traditional West African means of pounding rice and the

[323] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), [2: 153].
[324] William Smith, *A Natural History of Nevis and the Rest of the English Leeward Charibee Islands in America : with many other Observations on Nature and Art, particularly an Introduction to the Art of Deciphering, in Eleven Letters from the Revd. Mr. Smith, Sometime Rector of St. John's at Nevis* (Cambridge: Printed by J. Bentham, 1745), 230-231, Letter IX.

> process used by slaves in South Carolina. […] Even the songs used by the slaves who threshed and pounded rice may have retained African elements.[325]

Additionally, the repeated phrase, "La, Alla, La, La," sounds like the most powerful statement in Islam, that of the declaration of faith: "La illaha ila Allah" (There is no God but Allah) which might be what the slaves were repeating after a prayer or praising God.

One of the most important notes this thesis aims to establish is that West African, including Islamic, influence did not vanish by the passing of time. In fact, Courlander contends that "Religious life [of black people in the New World …], is marked by retention of persistent concepts and attitudes that were originally developed in the West African cultures."[326] The religious aspect of African American music creates a unique experience in those who engage in the processes of making and listening to it. European classical music expert, Christopher Small (1987), describes his experience listening to African American music:

> I found increasingly that the music of this tradition fulfilled in me not only an emotional but also an intellectual and a social need which European classical music, however much I loved and admired much of it, did not, and if I was honest, never had fulfilled. I decided to try and investigate what it was in the music that could produce so many kinds of satisfaction and joy, while at the same time disturbing, if not disrupting, the comfortable ways in which I had been accustomed to listening to, performing and thinking about music.[327]

Small's experience of African American music is not a first. In 1847, the powerful singing of slaves impressed Reverend James Waddell Alexander who wrote,

> The fondness of the black race for the music is proverbial. It is rare to meet with a negro who does not sing. […] We have listened to a great variety of sacred music […] but if we were summoned to declare which of all seemed most like the praise of God, we should reply, the united voices of a thousand slaves. […] As the Southern servants can seldom read, and, therefore, have no use of hymn-books, the memory must be the sole depository of their sacred song. It is known that they largely frequent the assemblies of illiterate and

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[325] Peter Hutchins Wood, *Black Majority; Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 61-62.
[326] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 7.
[327] Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music*, 3.

> enthusiastic persons, and catch up snatches of hymns, which are full of error, if not of absurd irreverence […][328]

Although it is noticeable that African American music evolution has continued throughout the centuries, African elements have always remained present and clearly identified. For example, in hip-hop culture, rap contains similar features to those of spirituals, such as employing coded language to convey certain messages. Tricia Rose (1994) states, "Rap music is, in many ways, a hidden transcript. Among other things, it uses cloaked speech and cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities. […A] large and significant element in rap's discursive territory is engaged in symbolic and ideological warfare with institutions and groups that […] oppress African-Americans."[329] Richard Brent Turrner agrees, incorporating the Islamic influence;[330] he says,

> [M]uch of the poetry of hip hop culture contains […] complex "hidden transcripts." Rap presents serious social, political, and spiritual critiques of systematic racism and classism. Rather than highlighting its discontinuities with other parts of black culture, it is more useful to acknowledge the remarkable continuities of hip hop poetry with West African griot traditions and the protest themes of the blues, jazz, and black Arts musicians of the 1960s, represented by groups such as the Last Poets (among whose members are Sunni Muslims, such as Sulainman al-Hadi).
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> In the 1990s, numerous rappers with Islamic messages started important conversations about Islam in the hip hop community, which were influential in the conversion of African-American youth to Islam.[331]

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[328] Alexander, "Thoughts on Family Worship," in Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 222-223.

[329] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, N. H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 100-101.

[330] There is also Anthony B. Pinn's view: "Many of the artists who represent […] the style of rap today, artists such as Talib Kweli, Lupe Fiasco, Nas, and Common, draw much of their thinking from Sunni Islam, the social critique offered by Malcolm X […] For them, rap provides a means by which to communicate important life lessons, to expose the socio-political and economic problems of the United States, and offer solutions that maintain integrity and a balanced perspective on the nature and meaning of success. […] They, in large part, place success of the individual within the context of community. The achievements of the former should have positive consequences for the latter." Pinn adds, "There are still others like Mos Def who is a Sunni Muslim and who use the music to advance the teachings of that particular faith. (Mos Def recently changed his name to Yassin Bey). At times, this involves a critique of lax morality and ethics, and at times his songs are laced with references to the pillars of Islam – the key beliefs and practices of Islam."
[330] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 226, 228.

[331] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Blooming: Indiana University Press, 1997), XXVI-XXVII.

It is not only the content of the rap songs that is influenced by Islamic elemnts; there is also the modulation or inflection of the voice that is drawn from the African oral tradition which also is a major influence of slave spirituals. Megan Sullivan contends, "A strong link to the African oral tradition is readily apparent in hip-hop's rapid wordplay, complex rhyming, and storytelling, and in its sensitivity to aural patterns."[332] As discussed earlier, slave song "Juba this and Juba that" resembles the style of rap song. It also resembles some Qur'anic Surah recitations, such as Surah Alfajr (The Daybreak).

> By the dawn
> And [by] ten nights
> And [by] the even [number] and the odd
> And [by] the night when it passes,
> Is there [not] in [all] that an oath [sufficient] for one of perception?[333]

Obviously, English interpretation does not reproduce the same effect of the recited verses in Arabic. This requires active listening to the recitation of the Surah.

All in all, music created an outlet to the repressed slaves. It functioned as a healing power to many suffering slaves. Recent scientific research confirms the impact that music has on the brain and the human psyche. Music combined with spirituality, again as science confirms, has real physical effects. Many Muslim slaves adhered to practising their faith. This includes the call for prayer, reciting Qur'an and dhikr (remembering God, by praising and invoking Him). Yarrow Mamout, a Muslim slave, was reported to have "often [been] seen and heard in the streets singing praises to God – and conversing with him." Mamout believed that "man is no good unless his religion come from the heart."[334] The combination of religion, or spirituality, and song formed the basic formula of the most known form of slave song, spirituals, which is the topic of the following chapter.

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[332] Megan Sullivan, "African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop," 36.
[333] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Alfajr (The Daybreak), [89:1-5].
[334] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 69-70.

CHAPTER THREE

"Death is not the End"

Spirituals: Songs of Life and Death

The human spirit is endlessly involved in living and dying cycles. Yet, because each individual has their own experience and unique circumstances in birth, life, and death, the meaning of life and death varies. Also, the way individuals live life and form their attitudes towards death is significantly influenced by their communal and religious knowledge and experience. It is also greatly influenced by the living conditions of individuals. In light of this, slaves' religious songs, i.e. spirituals, are a rich source of insights to the complex meaning of life and death. The theologian Howard Thurman's *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (1949) provides the backbone to this chapter. It is, as the title suggests, an effort made by Thurman to understand, through spirituals, how slaves viewed life—and death—he says,

> When the external circumstances of life are dramatic or unusual, causing the human spirit to make demands upon all the reaches of its resourcefulness in order to keep from being engulfed, then the value of its findings made articulate, has more than passing significance. […] the Negro spirituals [are…] a source of rich testimony concerning life and death, because in many ways they are the voice, sometimes strident, sometimes muted and weary, of a people for whom the cup of suffering overflowed in haunting overtones of majesty, beauty and power! […] the clue to the meaning of the spirituals is to be found in religious experiences and spiritual discernment.[335]

Thurman believes that there is a very strong reliance on the religious view of life and death in spirituals. Preoccupations with the significance of life and death are not

[335] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 11.

unfamiliar. In other words, the way they are viewed is not exclusive to slaves. Indeed, many cultures and religions around the world have fundamental points of similarity. Slave songs, for example, view life as a journey and so does Islam. "Every man to his own land! If it is foretold that your destiny should be fulfilled in such and such land, men can do nothing against it", says a Muslim African griot in the Malian epic *Sundiata* (1960).[336] The griot summarises an important concept in Islam, that of 'destiny,' which, in the context of the griot's quote, means to Muslims the resting place that humans are in constant journey to reach. Life is a journey and we are but travellers; we should never settle in this world, because it is not a lasting dwelling. That is what life means to Muslims, a transitional stage. Because of this belief and the inevitability of death,[337] Muslims daily practise an act of worship, *du'a*, that is very similar to singing spirituals; it is tonal, religious, and is usually about life and death. Likewise, slave religious songs, spirituals, which are often described as *Christian* religious songs, sing of life and death. This chapter, hence, examines spirituals' key features in order to link them to Islamic beliefs for an Islamic interpretation to challenge the "common misconception of the nature of the evolution of the spirituals [which] is that enslaved Africans, once acculturated in the new land, abandoned their own traditions…and became "civilized" via the adoption of the Christian religion of their masters."[338]

One of the important features of spirituals is the inclusion of the concept that life is a journey that does not end with death. Life circumstances for most slaves were awful and they were reflected by a singer, whose creative productivity, to the Jungian thought, seems to fall into the 'psychological mode works'. Works of this category are reflections

[336] D. T. Niane, trans., *Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali* (Harlow: Longman, 1960), 47
[337] "Indeed, the death from which you flee - indeed, it will meet you", Interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Jumu'ah, [62: 8]. "Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you should be within towers of lofty construction." *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah An-Nisa, [4: 78].
[338] Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 6-7.

on poets' and singers' lives. In Carl Gustav Jung's words, they are made with "materials drawn from man's conscious life—with crucial experiences, powerful emotions, suffering, passion, the stuff of human fate in general."[339] In light of Jung's statement, the 'I' of an African American song is not one person speaking, it is communal and racial—in other words, it is a reflection of a community or a race— and it is especially so in spirituals. In fact Miles Mark Fisher (1953) states, "all except perhaps five slave songs refer to the singer, if no more than to his body, his clothing, his family relations, and his words to an audience. Ordinarily, they are in the first person, using "I", "my," "me," and "we."" [340] Their aim is "to find concrete expressions for the origin of a tribe or community", states William Robertson Smith who also finds it similar to what is done by the Semites in the Old Testament.[341] John S. Mbiti agrees with Smith; Mbiti states that keeping kinship bonds is considered a religious act of worship in West Africa, a place where, he believes, there exist basic religious tenets that African communities somehow share. He claims that although people of African ethnicities identify themselves with a specific ethnic group, the religious affiliation of African peoples seems to be very similar that a 'unified' group of people formed easily in the New World. Mbiti explains this by discussing the African belief in a Higher God who is all-powerful and distant from people and who is assisted by a spirit.[342] Interestingly enough, Mbiti's description of God is very similar to the Islamic concept of God who is Omnipotent and His Angels serving Him.

[339] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 70-71.
[340] Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1981), 180.
[341] William Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Cambridge, [Eng.], 1885), 20 f., quoted in William Rainey Harper, *The Priestly Element in the Old Testament* (Chicago, 1905), 240, and in Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1953), 181. This is discussed further in Chapter IV of this thesis.
[342] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1990), 200-201.

Because this aspect of 'African religion,' John Lovell declares, African slaves did not find it difficult to convert to Christianity.[343]

The possibility to interpret spirituals psychologically emerges from them being derived from "the sphere of conscious human experience—from the psychic foreground of life".[344] This means that they are familiar; they are derived from common human experiences, which include suffering. Jung explains,

> That is why I call this mode of creation "psychological"; it remains within the limits of the psychologically intelligible. Everything embraces—the experience as well as its artistic expression—belong to the realm of a clearly understandable psychology. Even the psychic raw material, the experiences themselves, have nothing strange about them; on the contrary, they have been known from the beginning of time—passion and its fated outcome, human destiny and its suffering, eternal nature with its beauty and horror.[345]

In light of Thurman's view that spirituals reflected the meaning of life to slaves, it is important to examine how slaves viewed them. The singer of most of the spirituals, if not all, that I have examined, seek deliverance in death. Life, unsurprisingly, is not pleasant and there is clear evidence that death is longed for and is considered a joyful occasion. In fact, in some songs, the singer beseeches the Lord that he finds a resting place that is peaceful for him to continue his journey, for in this life he is miserable and in continuous struggle and he is becoming impatient waiting for ease and peace. For example, Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr.'s "Supplication" is one example of hoping for death.

> I am so tired and weary,
> So tired of the endless fight,
> So weary of waiting the dawn
> And finding endless night.
>
> That I ask but rest and quiet—
> Rest for days that are gone,
> And quiet for the little space
> That I must journey on.[346]

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[343] John Lovell, Jr. *Black Song, The Forge and the Flame: The Story of how the Afro-American Spiritual was Hammered Out* (New York: Paragon House, 1972), 230-233.
[344] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 71.
[345] Ibid.
[346] James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, INC., 1958), 189.

The poem, at first sight, is bleak; its words are repeated to emphasise a higher level of sadness, 'tired,' 'weary,' 'endless fight' and 'endless night.' Nevertheless, it is only when death is mentioned, which is implicitly conveyed, that 'positive' words are used and repeated: 'rest,' and 'quiet'. Then, the poem concludes, yet again with an implicit note, death is not the end; it is when the journey continues.

The idea that death is part of a journey not its end is an essential one in Islam. Abdullah ibn Umar relates that the Prophet ﷺ once held his shoulders and said, "Live in this world as (if you are) a wayfarer or a stranger." And Abdullah ibn Umar used to say, "If you live till night, then do not wait for the next day (i.e. do not have hopes that you will live to the next day), and if you wake up in the morning do not have hope that you will live till the night. And take (advantage) from your health before your sickness and take advantage of your life before your death (i.e. do every possible obedience in your life before death comes to you for then no deeds can be performed.)"[347] Death, in Islam, is a transitional stage in life, with the separation of body and soul. According to the Islamic theology, a person lives a worldly life which ends with death, after which the life of Barzakh comes,[348] after barzakh the person—or their soul—goes to its final dwelling, Heaven or Hell.[349] There are numerous verses in the Qur'an that are about death and what happens after it. There are, also, many Hadiths and sayings by prominent Muslim scholars that confirm the concept that death is not the termination of life. For example, in the Qur'an God says about worldly life,

> Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you

[347] Bukhari, *Bulugh al-Maram*, The Comprehensive Book - كتاب الجامع, English reference: Book 16, Hadith 1513, Arabic reference: Book 16, Hadith 1470. Retrieved from Sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/2054320>.
[348] Barzakh refers to the period between a person's death and his/her resurrection on the Day of Judgement.
[349] Muslim scholars state that those who die for the sake of God skip the life of Barzakh and goes to Heaven straight away.

> see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris […] And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.[350]

Major Muslim interpretations (known as *tafsir*) of the Qur'an, such as that of Ibn Katheer's, explain this verse as an example of life being a cycle of birth, growing strong and then being weakened with age and after that the inevitable death. God tells his Messenger ﷺ, "Indeed, you are to die, and indeed, they are to die."[351] It is recommended that Muslims remember death frequently and as much as possible, "Remember the destroyer of worldly pleasures (death) frequently."[352] This means that when death is remembered a person may recognise that whatever their hardship may be, it would not outlast death. In fact, people in certain circumstances, such as those of slaves, may find in death hope or relief, and dying becomes a pleasant experience. A poem titled "The Dying Fugitive" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper describes death as freedom to a dying man. In the poem, death is a stage that the dying man must go through to get his long-awaited 'precious prize':

> Slowly o'er his darkened features,
> Stole the warning shades of death;
> And we knew the shadowing angel
> Waited for his parting breath.
>
> He had started for his freedom;
> And his heart beat firm and high—
> But before he won the guerdon,
> Came the message—he must die.
>
> He must die, when just before him,
> Lay the long'd for, precious prize—

Despite the gloomy start of the poem, depicting the dying process of passing away, the second stanza quickly shifts to a positive tone with words like 'freedom,' 'high,' and 'won.' This contradicts the conventional way of language use when describing death or dying. In the poem, dying is very much desired, meaning that any possibility of going

[350] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Hadid, [57: 20].
[351] Ibid, interpretation of Surah Az-Zumar (The Troops), [39:30].
[352] *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Zuhd - كتاب الزهد, English reference: Vol. 5, Book 37, Hadith 4258, Arabic reference: Book 37, Hadith 4399. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/1293610>.

back to suffering at the hands of the slave's tyrant master is feared. Anyhow, the inevitability of death cuts through the 'madness' and transports the dying man smoothly and peacefully back to his Lord, where he finally gains his freedom.

> For a while a fearful madness,
> Rested on his weary brain;
> And he thought the hateful tyrant,
> Had rebound his galling chain.
>
> […]
>
> But as sunshine gently stealing,
> O'er the storm-cloud's gloomy track—
> Through the tempest of his bosom,
> Came the light of reason back.
>
> And without a sigh or murmur
> For the home he'd left behind;
> Calmly yielded he his spirit,
> To the father of mankind.
>
> Thankful that so near to freedom,
> He with eager steps had trod—
> E're his ransomed spirit rested,
> On the bosom of his God.[353]

The psychological effects of suffering from enslavement are so powerful that even a dying person is consumed with fear that his slave master would interrupt this peaceful transition from worldly life to the afterlife, from slavery to freedom. After death, Howard Thurman explains, "There will be no proscription, no segregation, no separateness, no slave-row, but complete freedom of movement – the most psychologically dramatic of all manifestations of freedom."[354] For the dying slave, this is the ultimate, "long'd for, precious prize". The soul of the dying slave recalls the Islamic attribute of soul/self at peace of a dying person; "When the self can rest at peace in the Presence of Allah, and is made tranquil when His name is invoked, and always relates all matters to Him, and often

[353] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water: 250 Years of African-American Poetry* (New York: Mentor, 1997), 44.
[354] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*, 50.

turns to Him, and is impatient to meet Him, and experiences the intimacy of His nearness, then this is a soul at peace."[355] The righteous soul is addressed,

> O reassured soul,
> Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him],
> And enter among My [righteous] servants
> And enter My Paradise.[356]

Because of the exceptionality of life conditions of slaves, liberty is what is mostly sought for in death. This is despite the fact that many of them did not know what being free really means. James Lucas, a 104-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Natchez, Mississippi, recalls:

> Slaves didn't know what to 'spect from freedom, but a lot of dem hoped dey would be fed and kept by de government. Dey all had different ways o' thinkin' about it. Mostly, though, dey was just like me, dey didn't know just 'zackly what it meant. It was just somethin' dat de white folks and slaves all de time talk about. Dat's all. Folks dat ain't never been free don't rightly know de *feel* of bein' free. Dey don't know de meanin' of it. Slaves like us, what was owned by quality folks, was satisfied and didn't sing none of dem freedom songs.[357]

True, slaves did not know what it means to be free; they had never been free, in most cases. However, they knew that it is about being treated with dignity and to, at least, have simple and basic rights of being "fed and kept by de government." Lucas noticed how slaves who were particularly badly treated sang songs calling for freedom, which, in many cases, was death. For example, George Moses Horton's "On Liberty and Slavery" is about wishing for death, to be released from the suffering of terrible enslavement. Similar to Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr.'s "Supplication", the weary slave is asking God to grant him death so he can find 'relief' in his grave. Imploring God for freedom was important to worshiping slaves; W. E. B. Du Bois comments in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903),

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[355] Ahmad Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, trans. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jaivziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (London: Al-Firrdous Ltd., 1993), 80-81.
[356] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Fajr (The Dawn/Dybreak), [89: 27-30].
[357] Norman R. Yetman, From *Life Under the 'Peculiar Institution'*, 335, quoting *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, (New York: Dover Publications, INC., 2000), 219.

> they [slaves] thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; […to] the American Negro], so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain – Liberty […]. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences: —
>
> "Shout, O children!
> Shout, you're free![358]
> For God has bought your liberty!"[359]

Interestingly, the slave of "Supplication" conjures Africa as a place that he can visit when he is dead and free. The poem opens with a sad description of a person who is born into slavery and who is, consequently, 'deprived of liberty', has no relief and is in constant anguish, pain and grief. It is only in the peaceful 'silent grave' that the slave finds a place that would lift all the negativity in his/her life. Similar to the above quoted poem, in "The Dying Fugitive," death is viewed as the long awaited 'golden prize'. It is God's gift to the deprived that is 'So often sought [after] by blood.'

Alas! and am I born for this,
To wear this slavish chain?
Deprived of all created bliss,
Through hardship, toil and pain!

How long have I in bondage lain,
And languished to be free!
Alas! and must I still complain—
Deprived of liberty.

Oh, Heaven! and is there no relief
This side the silent grave—
To soothe the pain—to quell the grief
And anguish of a slave?

Come Liberty, thou cheerful sound,
Roll through my ravished ears!
Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,
And drive away my fears.

Say unto foul oppression, Cease:
Ye tyrants rage no more,
And let the joyful trump of peace,
Now bid the vassal soar.

Soar on the pinions of that dove

[358] The significance of slave shouts is discussed in Chapter I.
[359] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1903, 1994), 3-4.

Which long has cooed for thee,
And breathed her notes from Afric's grove,
The sound of Liberty.

Oh, Liberty! thou golden prize,
So often sought by blood—
We crave thy sacred sun to rise,
The gift of nature's God!

Bid Slavery hide her haggard face,
And barbarism fly:
I scorn to see the sad disgrace
In which enslaved I lie.

Dear Liberty! upon thy breast,
I languish to respire;
And like the Swan unto her nest,
I'd to thy smiles retire.

Oh, blest asylum—heavenly balm!
Unto thy boughs I flee—
And in thy shades the storm shall calm,
With songs of Liberty![360]

Again, when death is discussed, words of positive connotations occur frequently: 'cheerful,' 'joyful,' 'peace,' 'smiles,' 'calm,' etc. Death is very important to slaves who sang; death, for them, represented hope, peace and freedom, as some contemporary commentators noted. Reflecting on slave funeral songs, Bryan Edwards commented in 1793, "Their funeral songs too are all of the heroic or material cast; affording some colour to the prevalent notion that the Negroes consider death not only as a welcome and happy release from the calamities of their condition, but also as a passport to the place of their nativity".[361] Similar description of slave funeral songs is found in Barbados, made by George Pinckard in 1796; he said,

> Grief and lamentations were not among them [songs]: nor was even the semblance thereof assumed. No solemn dirge was heard; no deep-sounding bell was tolled: no fearful silence held. It seemed a period of mirth and joy! Instead of weeping and bewailing, the attendants jumped and sported, as they passed along, and talked and laughed, with each other, in high festivity. The procession was closed by five robust Negro fishermen, who came behind playing antic gambols, and dancing all the way to the grave. […] The body was committed to the grave […] without either prayer or ceremony;

[360] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water*, 23-24.
[361] Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1793-1801), II, 85.

> and the coffin, directly, covered with earth. […] During this process an old Negro woman chanted an African air, the multitude joining in chorus. It was not in the strain of a solemn requiem, but was loud and lively [… .][362]

Furthermore, the poem employs powerful religious images which create impressions that reflect strong faith and belief in God. One of these images is that of 'the joyful trump of peace'. The trump, or trumpet, is blown at the Day of Judgement. In the Islamic theology, the trumpet is blown twice; the first blow ends all life and only God remains, the second resurrects people to be judged. In the poem the qualifier 'joyful' makes it clear that, regardless of the numbers of blows, the sound of trumpet is positively anticipated.

In *Slave Songs of the Georgia Islands* (1942), Lydia Parish tells the story of a slave woman, called Laura, who lost a son during slavery. Reportedly, Laura held her arms up high and with a loud, commanding voice, "as though sure of a response", she repeatedly calls "Blow, Gabriel!".[363] Laura, then, reports Parish, was taken to jail, and "It's not for drinkin' or fightin' – it's a religious affair."[364] Laura informs Parish that she is "havin' a religious war, and […she is] puttin' up a dam' good fight".[365] After Parish describes this incident, she quotes a poem titled "Blow Gabriel", which contains a form of invocation and beseeching God to hasten the Day of Judgement with repeated phrases that suggests urgency and impatiently awaiting for this life to end, "Why don't you answer".

Blow Gabriel
At the Judgement
Blow Gabriel
At the Judgement Bar!
Blow 'um easy
At the Judgement
Blow 'um easy

[362] George Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies*, 2nd ed. (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1816), 130-132.
[363] Lydia Parish, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (Hatboro: Folklore Associates INC., 1942), 87.
[364] Ibid., 88.
[365] Ibid.

At the Judgement Bar!
My Lord call you
At the Judgement
My Lord call you
At the Judgement Bar!
Why don't you answer
At the Judgement
Why don't you answer
At the Judgement Bar!
Ha-Ha angel
At the Judgement
Ha-Ha angel
At the Judgement Bar![366]

In the story Parish relates and the poem she quotes, interesting Islamic interpretations can be made. Laura's call "Blow, Gabriel!" with her arms stretched towards the sky is very similar to the physical posture of Muslims when they supplicate (i.e. say dua'a). This is further discussed later in this chapter. Additionally, the structure of the poem, which is largely repetitious, is also similar to dua'a. The call itself "Blow, Gabriel!" functions as what is known by linguists as an action verb. This means Laura was not just venting; she was strongly anticipating response, an action, to her call. This is an important aspect of the Islamic supplication, in which there should be a strong belief that supplications are answered. Lastly, the poem demonstrates clear submission and trust in God that if the trumpet is blown, and, consequently, death takes every soul to the Day of Judgement, God shall set the matters straight. Such spirituals "express the conviction that God was not done with them, that God was not done with life."[367]

It is clear how strongly many slaves felt about death. Death is a time-bound occasion; in other words, it is an occurrence during the lifetime of people, and because it is when many slaves believed they would meet God, they "created sacred time and space [… to] perpetually live in the presence of [their God]",[368] states historian Lawrence

[366] Ibid.
[367] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*, 37.
[368] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals," in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, eds. Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al. (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), 100.

Levine, who also says that slaves did not confine remembering God to specific times and places; God, for them was everywhere and remembered in almost every occasion.[369] Additionally, Levine states that slave songs that express longing for death "do reflect a desire to release their hold upon the temporal present." [370] This is achieved by remembering God anywhere and at any time.

For many believing slaves, God is easily reached and communicated with. He is impersonal and is ever-present. Levine states, "The God the slave sang of was neither remote nor abstract, but as intimate, personal, and immediate".[371] Levine's description of God is very similar to the Islamic concept of God; in the Qur'an God describes Himself as being near, among his names are the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing. There are several verses that assure believers of his closeness; "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same)."[372] Another frequently quoted verse is found in Surah Ghafir: "And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." [373] Also, many Prophets ﷺ are said in the Qur'an to have communicated or 'called upon God'. For example, Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ says, "Praise to Allah, who has granted to me in old age Ishmael and Isaac. Indeed, my Lord is the Hearer of supplication."[374] Likewise, when "The people of Noah […] denied Our servant and said, "A madman," and he was repelled." Noah ﷺ "invoked his Lord, "Indeed, I am overpowered, so help."" [375] God's response to Noah's ﷺ Supplication was ever so powerful:

> Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down

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[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid., 101.
[371] Ibid., 105.
[372] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Isra (The Night Journey), [17: 110].
[373] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ghafir (The Forgiver), [40: 60].
[374] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ibrahim, [14:39].
[375] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Qamar (The Moon), [54:9-10].

> And caused the earth to burst with springs, and the waters met for a matter already predestined.
> And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails,
> Sailing under Our observation as reward for he who had been denied.[376]

Prophet Zechariah ﷺ also privately calls upon the Lord for help in the beginning of Chapter Maryam,

> [This is] a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zechariah
> When he called to his Lord a private supplication.
> He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white, and never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy.
> And indeed, I fear the successors after me, and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir".[377]

The divine response was [He was told], "O Zechariah, indeed We give you good tidings of a boy whose name will be John. We have not assigned to any before [this] name."[378] Even Moses ﷺ is mentioned in the Qur'an to have performed du'a and received divine assistance,

> And [finally] he called [d'aa] to his Lord that these were a criminal people.
> [Allah said], "Then set out with My servants by night. Indeed, you are to be pursued.
> And leave the sea in stillness. Indeed, they are an army to be drowned."
> […]
> And We certainly saved the Children of Israel from the humiliating torment—
> From Pharaoh. Indeed, he was a haughty one among the transgressors.[379]

This illustrates how important the worship of saying/chanting du'a for Muslims. In fact, there is a very powerful verse in the Qur'an in a Chapter called Al-Furqan, "Say, "What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?""[380] This is because throughout the Qur'an there is a strong emphasis that the purpose of God's creation is to worship Him.

The verbal act of communicating with God is called du'a. It is mentioned ninety times in the Qur'an, as a verb and a noun. Du'a is an act of worship that Muslims are

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[376] Ibid., [54: 11-14].
[377] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Maryam (Mary), [19: 2-5].
[378] Ibid., [19: 7].
[379] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Ad-Dukhan (The Smoke), [44:22-24, 30-31].
[380] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Furqan (The Criterion), [24: 77].

recommended to do daily; however, the sincerity of doing it, Muslim scholars agree, determines if it is accepted by God. The sincerity of the du'a means that it comes from the heart with strong belief, with no doubt whatsoever, that God is listening. Du'a should, also, be said with great humility to the Creator. Many du'as usually starts with praising God and contain a lot of repetition. One spiritual that is quoted in the *Call-and-Response* anthology is "Griot's Praise Poem of Allah from Seydou Camara's Kambili"

> Almighty Allah may refuse to do something.
> Allah is not powerless before anything
> Almighty Allah may refuse to do something.
> Allah is not powerless before anything[381]

The overall meaning of the spiritual is similar to some Qur'anic verses in Surah Al-Buruj, in which God describes Himself as "the Executor of what He wills."[382] It also appears to be a form of conforming to the conditions of sincerity of du'a, like showing humility by accepting that God is "not powerless" and that the believer accepts God's preordination that He "refuses to do something" —that something maybe freeing the da'ii (i.e. the person who is doing du'a).

The basic meaning of du'a is to call, which as demonstrated in many places in this thesis, is important and evident among many slave communities. It, furthermore, brings to mind the popular "call-and-response" tradition of African-American culture. There are countless examples of a main singer and responsive audience in slave songs, be it spirituals or otherwise, and African American poetry. They are very similar to Islamic du'a for three reasons: inclusion of repetition, similar topics, and the presence of a leader and an involving audience. One example is a song recalled by an ex-slave and sung in a Baptist Church in North Carolina. The song's lead singer repeats one line and *calls* his

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[381] Patricia Liggings Hill, ed., *Call & Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 46.
[382] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Buruj (The Constellations), [85: 16].

listeners/audience to repeat with him, and they all, both the leader and the listeners, do that twice.

> Leader: There's a union in the heaven where I belong.
> There's a union in the heaven where I belong.
> There's a union in the heaven where I belong.
> I belong to the Union band.
> O brother, didn't I tell you so?
> Congregation: I belong to the Union band.
> Leader: O brother, didn't I tell you so?
> Congregation: I belong to the Union band.[383]

The song meets all three reasons mentioned above, even the topic of belonging to heaven is a very important belief by Muslims who say one Qur'anic verse at times of distress or to the family of the deceased in a funeral: "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."[384] There is also the use of the word "brother" which is frequently used by Muslims when they call each other. This is, also, discussed in chapter I of this thesis.

In many ex-slave testimonies, there is a great deal about suffering and enduring terrible form of punishment and torture for the sake of keeping that very important relationship with God; historian Lawrence Levine elaborates on that, stating, "Slaves found many ways to continue to speak with their gods. Patsy Larkin recalled that on her plantation the slaves would steal away into the cane thickets and pray in a prostrate position with their faces close to the ground so that no sound would escape."[385] When examining the way many slaves tried to keep the presence of God by remembering Him and the act of communicating with Him, I have found many illustrations and photographs that are very similar to what Muslims do physically when they practise their faith. The illustrations and photographs are not annotated for this specific value, but I find the

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[383] Learned from an ex-slave and sung at the White Rock Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina, by Mrs. Zula Mae Priscilla Belle Taylor Floyd., quoted in Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1953), 182.
[384] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), [2:156].
[385] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals" in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 112.

postures of the pictured people and illustrated figures are strikingly familiar and their resemblance to Muslim worshipers practising their faith uncanny. Historian Anthony B. Pinn recognises the significance of the physical aspect of slave song; he states, "the blues and the spirituals are performed in ways that require the active use of body […] to accent the lyrics and music, or as the subject of the song – the enslaved African's body and its plight received attention in the music as it did in the slave preachers' secret sermons."[386] Additionally, the direction towards which many slave worshipers faced was almost always towards the east. In Chapter Sixteen, titled "God Resides in the East", of Cornelia Bailey's memoir *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man* (2001), Bailey tells of how her family made sure she knows the direction of the east, so that she faces it when she her prays. She recounts,

> Mama and Papa and all the old people always said, "God resides in the East […]." The first thing I learned when it came to directions, was East and West. Forget South and the North. I knew at an early age that the sun rose in the East […]. So I knew my directions and who U was supposed to be praying to and who I was supposed to be avoiding. It was God resides in the East. Pray to God, not the devil."[387]

In fact, there are a few ex-slave testimonies that state that many slaves used to face the east when praying. One example of such testimonies is found in Lawrence Levine's "Slave Spirituals"; he quotes a slave who believed he conversed with God, he says, "I saw the Lord in the east part of the world."[388]

One of the illustrations identified is the cover photograph of the album "Death is not the End" (Figure 2), the title that has inspired the title of this chapter, the photograph is of a man whose hands are held in front of him. His facial expression expresses strong emotion, of sorrow, perhaps. This hands-positioning is very similar to, indeed exactly the

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[386] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Talyor and Francis Group, 2013), 43.
[387] Cornelia Bailey, *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 157.
[388] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals" in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 106.

same as, the way Muslims hold their hands when saying du'a. This posture is taught by the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ and is still performed as a religious act of worship to this day. For the sake of comparison, I have added a photo (Figure 3, page 126) of the famous American boxer, Muhammad Ali while busy with his du'a. It is clear that both Ali and the man on the album cover hold their hands in similar posture, with their palms facing their face and their heads tilted or looking solemnly down towards the ground, which is, in Islam, is an act of humility and submission to the Creator.

Figure 2 "Death Is Not The End" album cover photo[389]

[389] Roosevelt Charles, "Let My People Go" from *Angola Prison Spirituals* by Various Artists, album photo <https://deathisnot.bandcamp.com/track/let-my-people-go>.

Figure *3* Muhammad Ali saying du'a[390]

Another illustration (Figure 4, page 127) that shows African slaves during an outdoor prayer meeting is found in Anthony B. Pinn's *African American Religion* (2013). Among the figures of the illustration, there are specifically two whose physical posture are of striking resemblance to Islamic physical postures when performing the prayer (i.e. salah) and du'a (i.e. supplication). In the bottom right corner of the illustration, the prostrating posture of the slave woman resembles the act of *sujud* (i.e. prostration) of the Islamic salah. Sujud is a very important part of the Islamic prayer; it shows humility and submission to the Creator, who says in the Qur'an "prostrate and draw near [to Allah]."[391] Muslims who perform obligatory prayer (i.e. salah, not du'a) prostrate at least thirty four times a day, with non-obligatory prayers the number of daily prostrations can reach over a hundred. It is not merely a physical posture; when believers prostrate they call upon the Lord and engage in supplication, which is usually repetitions of certain phrases. By prostrating to God, Muslims believe that they are not only obeying God and His Messenger ﷺ but also that they are near Him, for he says in the Qur'an, "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by

[390] Muhammad Ali, retrieved from http://www.applestory.biz/muhammad-ali-praying.html.
[391] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-'Alaq (The Clot), [96: 19].

obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided."[392] More than that, another confirmation comes from His messenger ﷺ who is reported to have said that "The servant is nearest to his Lord during prostration, so increase your supplications therein."[393]

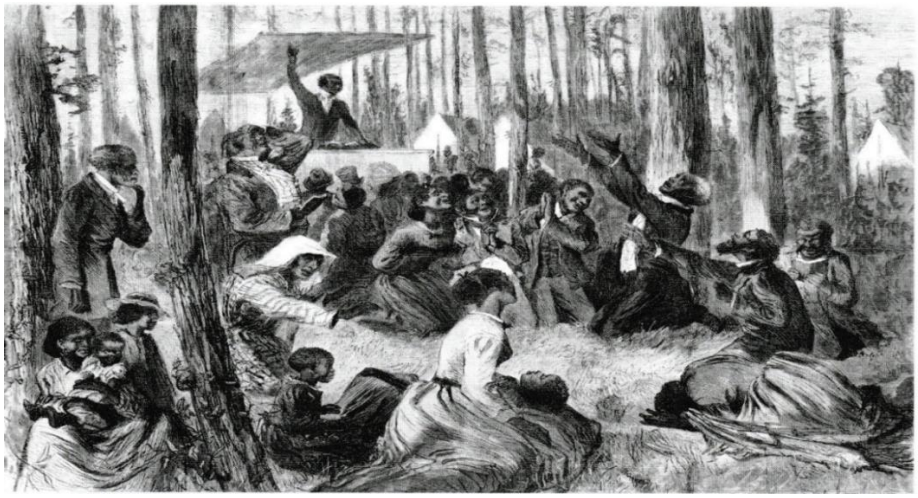

Figure 4 Outdoor prayer meeting in the South --1870s (woodcut nineteenth century). © North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy[394]

Figure 5 African American prayer meeting in a log cabin in the 1800s (Woodcut, nineteenth century). © North Wind Picture Archive / Alamy[395]

[392] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), [2:186].
[393] *Sahih Muslim*, 482, in-book reference: Book 4, Hadith 245, English reference: Book 4, Hadith 979. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/muslim/4/245>.
[394] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (2013), 59.
[395] Ibid., 36.

Furthermore, similar to the cover photo of the "Death is not the End" album provided above, the illustration, also, shows an old slave with both arms extended high, facing upwards, resembling the hand posture of Muslims while supplicating. Figure 5 also shows a person with similar posture of raising the hands. Notably, the level of raising the hands is different; the higher the hands, the more urgent the prayer, or du'a, is. The religious reference to this is a Hadith that encourages Muslims to raise their hands when supplicating, "Your Lord is Kind and Most Generous, and is too kind to let His servant, if he raises his hands to Him, bring them back empty," or the Prophet ﷺ said "frustrated"[396] Similar to this illustration is the illustration included in Harris's *Uncle Remus* accompanying the "Corn-Shucking" poem. The illustration shows slaves hard at work shucking corn and the singer in the centre standing on a heap of shucked corn with his arms extended to the sky which suggests flight movement, similar to what the African magician does with corn cobs to fly back to Africa.[397] This illustration (Figure 9, page 162) is discussed in Chapter IV.

An Islamic supplication is, to a good extent, comparable to spirituals. They are usually musical in style, repetitive in form, usually sad in tone—sometimes involve crying, often mention names of prophets ﷺ, and life and death are mentioned a good deal. Although du'as can be customised to one's needs and circumstances, there are sets of du'as that Muslims say daily during specific times. For example, there are set of du'as that Muslims say in the early morning and evening that are repeated twice everyday with minimal or no alteration in its words or content. The following is an example of part of a du'a said in the morning and evening.

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[396] Narrated by Salman Al-Farsy, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, 3865, in-book reference: Book 34, Hadith 39, English translation: Vol. 5, Book 34, Hadith 3865. Retrieved from sunnah.com <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/34/39>

[397] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter IV of this thesis.

> In the name of Allah, with His name nothing could bring harm, on earth or in the heavens. He is the All-seeing the All-knowing.
> In the name of Allah, with His name nothing could bring harm, on earth or in the heavens. He is the All-seeing the All-knowing.
> In the name of Allah, with His name nothing could bring harm, on earth or in the heavens. He is the All-seeing the All-knowing.[398]

> Allah is free from imperfection and I begin with His praise, as many times as the number of His creatures, in accordance with His Good Pleasure, equal to the weight of His Throne and equal to the ink that may be used in recording the words (for His Praise).[399]

The full du'a includes repeating certain phrases a number of times; it can be said or chanted once, three times, seven times, or a hundred times. The number of repetition is dependent on the number specified by the Prophet ﷺ. The Arabic du'a is composed mainly of short phrases and sentences that are usually, but not necessarily, chanted.

In a photographic essay titled "Images of slavery," there are an illustration and painting that interestingly show what can be seen as Islamic features. The first illustration (Figure 6, page 130) shows a group of slaves being 'displayed' to be sold at an auction. The caption of the illustration in the essay make a special note on the how the white bidders are dressed: "The bidders […] are shown as men of high social standing in their formal dress and top hats."[400] Many men of such social standing usually were able to afford the most expensive auctions, and it is often reported that Muslim slaves were desired and hence were generally more expensive compared to other slaves. They were also "elevated above other slaves and given less arduous work."[401]

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[398] Reported by 'Uthman bin 'Affan, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, 3869, in-book reference: Book 34, Hadith 43
English translation: Vol. 5, Book 34, Hadith 3869. Retrieved from sunnah.com <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/34/43>

[399] This is repeated three times. Although the English interpretation/translation seem a bit long, the Arabic dhikr is only short four, rhythmic phrases, transliteration of which is "Subhan-Allahi wa bihamdihi, `adada khalqihi, wa rida nafsihi, wa zinatah `arshihi, wa midada kalimatihi". This is a hadith reported by Juwairiyah bint Al-Harith, *Muslim*, Book 16, Hadith 1433.

[400] Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al., eds., "Images of Slavery: a Photographic essay*", Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society* (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), 117.

[401] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable, "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" in *Black Roots to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

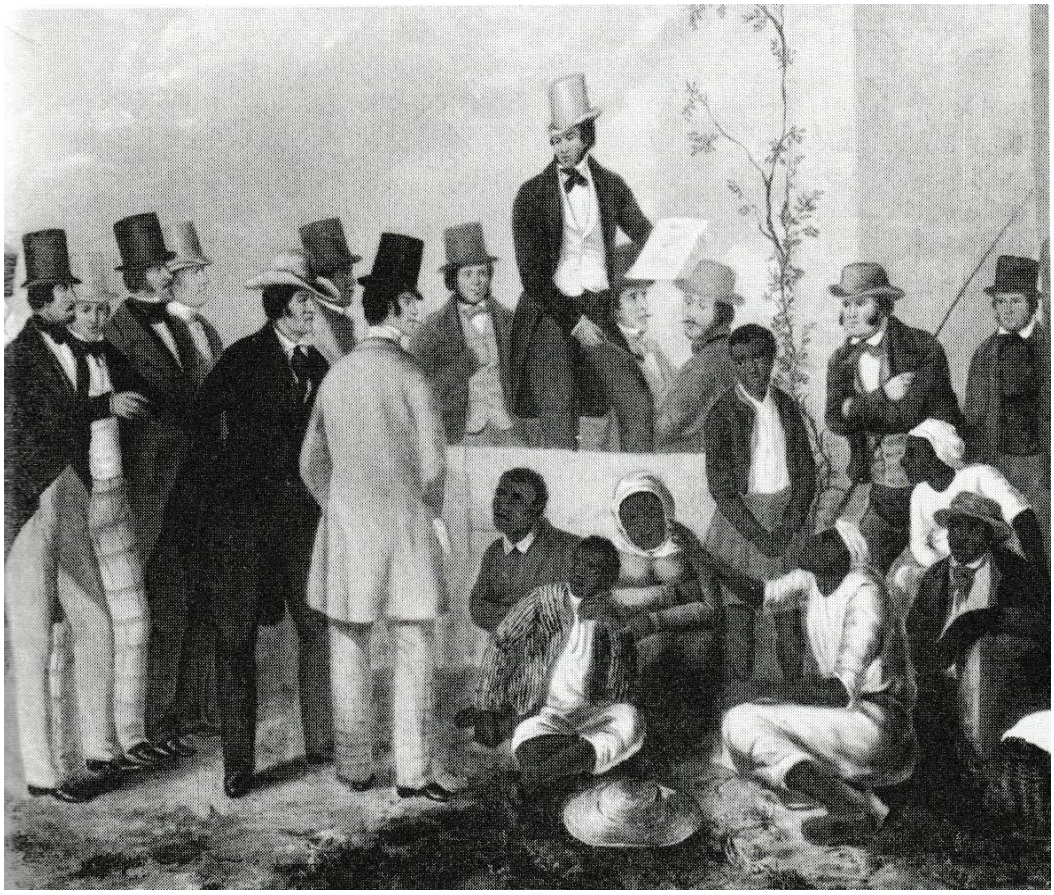

Figure 6 "On the auction block, slaves were displayed, examined, and sold to the highest bidder. The bidders in this illustration are shown as men of high social standing in their formal dress and top hats. (Chicago Historical Society)."[402]

There is no comment in the caption on slaves' dress code, which is particularly interesting; three of the slave men are in long white robes—known as thawb or khaftaan in West Africa—and head wraps and the only slave woman is wearing a headscarf. These are very typical of Muslim dress codes for men and women which are still visible in many Muslim countries, in Africa and elsewhere, to this day. As reported by Ibn Battuta, West Africans had/have a preference to wear white clothes when going to pray, *salah.*[403] This complies with a Prophetic command to "Wear white clothes, for they are the best of your clothes, and shroud your dead in them."[404] Simple, white clothes are also worn by

[402] Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al., eds., "Images of Slavery: a Photographic essay*", Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 117.
[403] This is discussed in Chapter I of this thesis.
[404] Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi, *Riyad as-Salihin,* Book 4, Hadith 1, Arabic/English book reference: Book 4, Hadith 779. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/4/1>

men performing *umrah* and *hajj*, which are religious journeys. The purpose of wearing such clothes is symbolic; it is often associated with the white coffin that deceased Muslims are wrapped with before their bodies are buried. There is constant reminder that people are sooner or later to wear them, so they are never heedless. What is, also, very interesting is the length of the men's' robes. According to Sunnah, Muslim men are recommended to wear clothes whose length reach the middle of the leg, specifically between the knee and just above the ankle. This is also to comply with another Prophetic hadith; the Prophet ﷺ repeated three times, "There are three to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection and will not look at them or praise them […]". They are "The one who lets his garment hang beneath his ankles, the one who reminds others of favours he has done, and the one who sells his product by means of false oaths."[405] In general, wearing white clothes of this specific length for men symbolises simplicity, humility and purity.

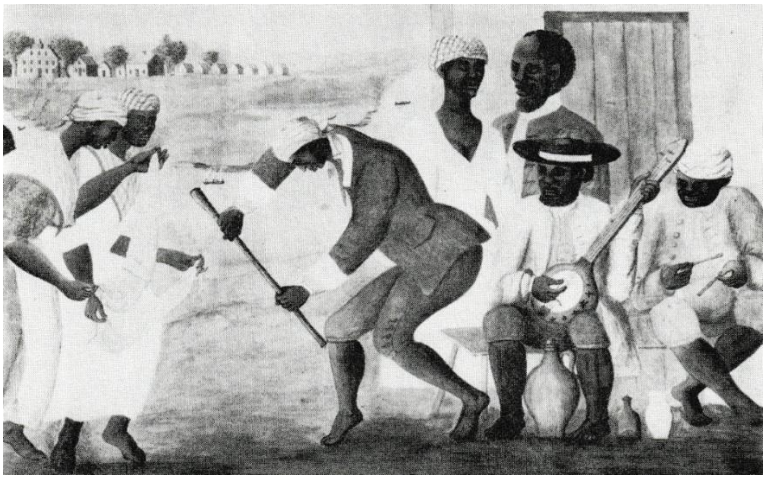

Figure 7 [406] "This folk painting from the late 1700s shows the distinctive African-American culture that developed in the slave quarters. African traditions are reflected in the headwraps, the dance, and types of musical instruments. Significantly, no whites are present; the master's house is seen in the background. (Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center)"[407]

[405] *Sunan Ibn Majah*, English reference: Vol. 3, Book 12, Hadith 2208, Arabic reference: Book 12, Hadith 2292. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/1265270>

[406] This illustration can also be found in Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 37.

[407] Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al., eds., "Images of Slavery: a Photographic essay*", Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 119.

The other painting found in the essay is that of a group of slaves from the 1700s. Again, the painting is another example of the "African traditions [that] are reflected in the headwraps"[408] and the white dress robes that are above the ankle and under the knee in length. For the sake of comparison, I added a modern (2007) photo of a group of Omani men dressed in similar white fashion.

Figure 8 Omani men in Adam wearing national dress at a camel race, November 2007. Photograph by Aisa Martinez[409]

Despite all of the shared characteristics between slave religious practices and Islamic acts of worship, there is a general trend of overlooking Islam when spirituals are discussed. For example, although Miles Mark Fisher (1953) contends that spirituals of the antebellum were rarely about the Christian faith, he claims that they are oriental in nature and seems to depict Jewish and Voodooism religious characteristics; he states,

> The characters mentioned in slave songs were, to be sure, Oriental. The prominence of Moses might be due to Jewish theology. […] Moses was a main character of voodooism. When Moses came from the mountain, he found the people worshiping a golden calf, which in that French-speaking country [Haiti] is *veau d'or*, possibly giving a name to

[408] Lawrence B. Goodheart, et al., eds., "Images of Slavery: a Photographic essay*", Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 119.
[409] Aisa Martinez, "Omani Men's National Dress: Displaying Personal Taste, Asserting National Identity," *Ars Orientalis* v. 47. Retrieved from <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/ars/13441566.0047.013/--omani-mens-national-dress-displaying-personal-taste?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

> voodooism. Negeoes have testified to the presence of supernatural voices and of angels ever since their introduction into the Americas.[410]

As discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, Moses ﷺ is as important a figure in Judaism as he is in Islam, and the story of a golden goat being worshiped when Moses ﷺ came back to his people is 'Islamically' correct. However, Fisher never mentions Islam, just like he does when he introduces a quotation from Frances Trollope on West African dress code. Trollope's quotation is a citation from observations made by the Muslim Berber traveller Muhammad Abu Abdullah Ibn Battuta. The fact that there is a clear tendency of overlooking Islam can be attributed to the 'typical' view of westerners that Islam is a faith for Arabs only.[411]

Many scholars, such as Sylviane Diouf, Miles Mark Fisher, Lawrence Levine, and others, contend that from spirituals other African-influenced music emerged. For example, Blues and jazz are believed to be mainly developments from spirituals. Of course, they are not strictly instrumental; there is blues poetry. Truly, there are countless blues poets. There is, for example, Langston Hughes, who is both a prominent Harlem Renaissance literary figure and a blues poet. His jazz poetry *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951) is reflection of the spiritual heritage. In his own words, he describes it: "like bebop, [it] is marked by conflicting changes, sudden nuances, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, and passages sometimes in the manner of the jam-session, sometimes the popular song, punctuated by the riffs, runs, breaks, and distortions of the music of a community in transition."[412] Hughes' description of his *Montage of a Dream Deferred* matches, to some extent, Howard Thurman's view on spirituals; he contends,

> To be sure, the amazing rhythm and the peculiar, often weird 1-2-3-5-6-8 of the musical scale are always intriguing and challenging to the modern mind. The real significance of

[410] Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States*, 179.
[411] Zain Abdullah, "West African "Soul Brothers" in Harlem" in *Black Routes to Islam*, ed. Manning Marable and Hishaam D. Aidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 250.
[412] Langston Hughes, *The Langston Hughes Reader* (New York: Braziller, 1958), 89.

> the songs, however, is revealed at a deeper level of experience, in the ebb and flow of the tides that feed the rivers of man's thinking and aspiring. Here, where the elemental and the formless struggle to a vast consciousness in the mind and spirit of the individual, shall we seek the needful understanding of the songs of these slave singers.[413]

In terms of the explanation of spirituals being formed with 'metrical peculiarities', Joel Chandler Harris offers an observation in his introduction to *Uncle Remus*; he says, "the songs depend for their melody and rhythm upon the musical quality of *time*, and not upon long or short, accented or unaccented syllables."[414] Another very plausible reason can be attributed to the idea that spirituals are reflections of life—and death—experiences. This makes them, according to Jungian thought, "psychological works" of art.

Undoubtedly, then, when attempting to apply analytical psychology to a product of human creativity, the key tool to do that is to understand the circumstances and experiences of the singers whose songs are the portrayal of their deep consciousness. Yet, the question that begs itself here is whether that is ever achievable; i.e. to dig deep into the human psyche to understand and appreciate its product which is charged with emotional and spiritual powers and heavily loaded with meaning that is created during times of unusual and exceptionally brutal circumstances. Nevertheless, one way is to consult slave testimonies and reflect on their experiences, because, according to an ex-slave called John Little in 1855 after his escape to Canada, "'Tisn't he who has stood and looked on, that can tell you what slavery is—'tis he who has endured."[415] Similarly, due to the special circumstances of slavery and its restrictions to slaves, the true intention of many spirituals is masked by hidden messages that are only known to slave communities; "Spirituals, by their very nature as folksongs, emerged in such a way that their primary meanings would be understood only to those in the folk community of origin, Africans in

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[413] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death*, 12.
[414] Joel Chandler Harris's introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1908), xvi.
[415] Norman R. Yetman, Introduction to *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 1.

slavery… [this] produced a body of music that could readily be utilized when needed as a basis for secret communication."[416] To understand spirituals, we might consider a consultation of a testimony of someone who knew spirituals, heard and sang them.

In Frederick Douglass's autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), there are first-hand insights into life lived as slaves and reflected in song. There is immense sadness. To read spirituals is never like listening to them, and to understand them, there is an essential prerequisite to decode their messages and appreciate their spiritual power. Their spiritual impact on Douglass, and many of those who attentively, affectively and actively listens to them, is associated with memory. This can be due to a piece of scientific information found in Koelsch's scientific study of *Brain and Music*: "The evocation of emotions with music has important implications for the specificity of meaning evoked by music as opposed to language. […] the language about feelings functions in a different mode than the grammar of words and things."[417] Douglass wrote,

> I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaints of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery. I can never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren in bonds. If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd's plantation, and, on allowance-day, place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him, in silence, analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul,—and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because "there is no flesh in his obdurate heart.[418]

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[416] Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*, 49.
[417] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 179.
[418] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (New York: Random House, 1845, 1981), 27-28.

Songs came from deep with singers and were charged outwards with great emotion and endless energy. True, the sounds of slave singing *are* still there. How cannot they be? Science confirms the fact that energy can be transformed from one form to another, but it cannot be created from or transformed to nothingness. This means that although our ears cannot detect the vibrations made by the vibrating vocal cords of singing slaves, and that there are no devices to do that for us, they *are* there. This law of physics and chemistry is known as 'conservation of energy.' In his *Lectures on Physics* (1963), Richard P. Feynman states,

> There is a fact, or if you wish, a *law*, governing all natural phenomena that are known to date. There is no known exception to this law—it is exact so far as we know. The law is called the *conservation of energy*. It states that there is a certain quantity, which we call energy, that does not change in the manifold changes which nature undergoes. [419]

In accordance with this law, the energy coming from singing slaves' lungs, producing the sounds of their songs, is still their vibrating or echoing in the universe; in other words, their energy is conserved and cannot be destroyed and vanish into thin air as this, scientifically speaking, is impossible.

Returning to the discussion of the last part of Douglass's quote, Arthur C. Jones (1993) is, like Douglass, "convinced that it is impossible to gain a full understanding of the spirituals from an examination of song lyrics alone, without hearing (and especially singing) the rhythms and melodies of the songs as well." [420] However, authentic experiences of hearing spirituals of being "delivered with simplicity, even with reverence,"[421] is an impossible task to some well-known African American writers and thinkers, such as James Baldwin and Zora Neale Hurston, who contend that the authenticity of these songs lies in the close contact that was between a performer/singer

[419] Richard P. Feynman, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, v.1., (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Group, 1963), 4-1.
[420] Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*, xvi.
[421] Hall Johnson, arr., *Thirty Spirituals Arranged for Voice and Piano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1949), 5.

and his responsive, participating audience during a time in which spirituals were sang by people going through specific circumstances, because they are songs whose "truth dies under training like flowers under hot water."[422] They, hence, cannot be replicated. Spirituals, hence, are not songs that are suitable to be sang in concerts in solo performances. This can be attributed to the sincerity of singing spirituals; they are powerfully charged with emotions. Their power comes from spiritual transcendence during a time of great suffering. Harold Courlander (1963) differentiates between a song sang in its 'natural setting' and 'popular, second-hand renditions.' He explains that behind a song "sung for the first time, is a buildup of experience and emotion which needs an outlet."[423] This means that the authenticity of the emotional experience cannot be easily replicated; as one blues[424] singer states,

> When you make a new blues and it says exactly what you got on your mind, you feel like it's pay day. Some blues, now, they get *towards* it, but if they don't quite get to what you got on your mind, you just got to keep on trying. There have been times when I sang till my throat was hoarse without really putting my difficulties in the song the way I felt them. Other times, it comes out just right on the first try.[425]

There seems to be a cathartic effect behind the verbalization of emotions and personal meanings through music. The cathartic effect creates a positivity that it is safe to say that it is remarkable that words of negative connotation are rarely present in slave music.[426] In *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame* (1972), John Lovell, Jr. notices that although the word "hate" is hardly ever used in spirituals, the spirit of love *is* there.[427] "The fact that

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[422] Richard Newman, "Spirituals, African American," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 1776.
[423] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 145.
[424] Although Courlander's main discussion is on blues, he does states that blues music is a means of "verbalization of deeply felt personal meaning […], and this applies to spirituals". Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 145.
[425] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.*, 145.
[426] Towards the end of this chapter, there is further discussion of the cathartic effects of music is in light of Jungian psychological works of art view.
[427] John Lovell, Jr., *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*, 310.

the spiritual has no word for hate seems rightly to suggest that hate is useless commodity."[428] Likewise, Arthur C. Jones Jr., holds similar view; he says,

> We have much to learn from these wise composers and singers, for many of them were able to transcend an experience of extreme degradation, emerging from it as spiritually, morally and emotionally evolved human beings. The fact that there were so many emotional and physical casualties is not shocking; the fact that there were so many who emerged from their suffering to live on psychological and spiritual "higher ground" *is* […] All of these spirituals teach us, more effectively than any other means of imaginable, the unlimited possibilities for human transformation and the manner in which the transformation process is aided and supported by the power of song and symbol."[429]

Truly, there is an immense power and determination in the face of slavery in spirituals. The combination of music and religion is one that explains that power. Du Bois believes,

> The Music of Negro religion is that plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences, which, despite caricature and defilement, still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil. Sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, it was adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave, until, under the stress of law and whip, it became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope.[430]

This combination seems to be effective to people who are in difficulty. At the battle of the Trench (also known as the Battle of the Confederates (627 AD)), as Muslim soldiers were digging a trench in preparation for the battle, they sang religious songs to distract themselves from what was burdening them, hunger, tiredness and cold. They sang religious pride songs and praise songs of God to keep themselves busy.[431] There is important belief that God was around and listened to them.

Likewise, slaves sang and reached to God whom they believed to be always present. This, perhaps, contributed to their survival. Howard Thurman states that their songs 'express the profound conviction that God was not done with them'. They truly believed that despite their dismal lives, it was not over yet, because God is ever-present and watching. Thurman adds,

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[428] Ibid.
[429] Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*, 23, 32.
[430] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 116.
[431] Ibn Hisham, *Alsira Annabawyya*, Vol. II, 216.

> The consciousness that God had not exhausted His resources or better still that the vicissitudes of life could not exhaust God's resources, did not ever leave them. This is the secret of their ascendency over circumstances and the basis of their assurances concerning life and death. The awareness of the presence of God who was personal, intimate and active was the central fact of life and around it all the details of life and destiny were integrated.[432]

W. E. B. Du Bois writes in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) a description of the impact of singing spirituals, which he calls "Sorrow Songs". Similar to view Thurman holds, Du Bois writes that in the songs there is hope that there will be a time in which slaves will gain justice. He writes,

> Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs (spirituals) there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their soul and not by their skin. Is such as hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs sing true?[433]

Although there are many African American literary views—as explained earlier—which believed that spirituals are not suitable for solo singing on stage, Harry T. Burleigh (1984) did compose many solo in concerts. The important thing of his performances is the presence of profound sense of spirituality. He explains,

> The voice is not nearly so important as the spirit; and then the rhythm […] it is an essential characteristic. Through all of these songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man. The cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the soul will come, and man—every man—will be free.[434]

Likewise, African American religious history thinker and author Richard Newman remarks that because spirituals are sung from the deep within, "these songs of sorrow [transform] into songs of resilience and overcoming, and even into affirmations of divine redemption and human triumph."[435] There is a general consensus among scholars and thinkers that the spiritual experience is clearly dependant on 'hope,' the belief that one

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[432] Howard Thurman, *The Negro's Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death*, 37-38
[433] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 162.
[434] Harry T. Burleigh, *Spirituals of Harry T. Burleigh* (Miami, Fl: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp., 1984), 4.
[435] Richard Newman, "Spirituals, African American," 1778.

day there will be deliverance. Newman's quote agrees with Anthony B. Pinn's description of ring shout sermons in that there are deep calls for divine deliverance; he says,

> their preaching had to inspire reaction; it had to ring true, and it had to offer hope. When preaching a sermon, it was common for those listening to speak their agreement through shouts of "amen," "preach," or other words of encouragement. This practice continues beyond the period of slavery and we refer to it as the "call and response" tradition.[436]

Interestingly enough, there is a striking similarity between ring shout sermons and Islamic *khutbas* (i.e. religious lectures) during which Muslims listening attentively shout some religious words and phrases, including 'amen' and God is great.

Hope is very important in the Islamic faith; there are many religious texts that emphasise its importance. In the Qur'an, for example, there is a direct command of not giving in to despair, "despair not of relief from Allah"[437], even those who are sinful, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."[438] Hope is to be kept alive by Muslims no matter what their circumstances are. This is not only to comply to a religious command but also it forms a coping mechanism. A prophetic hadith that is frequently quoted by Muslims, especially those going through difficulty reads, "How wonderful is the case of a believer; there is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to Allah and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him."[439] Patience is a virtue that is highly commended and frequently mentioned in the Qur'an, and the reward of believers who show patience is like no other. Obviously, patience is a hard job when living in severe circumstances, like

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[436] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 37.
[437] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Yusuf (Joseph), [12: 87].
[438] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Az-Zumar, (39: 53).
[439] Muslim, *Riyad as-Salihin*, Arabic/English book reference: Book 1, Hadith 27. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/1/27>

those during slavery; however, if it comes from the heart, it turns away the bitterness and sorrow of what is being endured and what emerges is hope. In Islam, among the numerous examples that deal with patience and hope is "If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it."[440] This is very similar to the quintessential message of spirituals, according to the quotations introduced above.

Internalizing the spiritual experience is something that is not unfamiliar to Muslims. It is, indeed, an important aspect of Islam is Sufism. Although it is often described as an 'order' or religious trend or practice, it is essentially what the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ used to do throughout his life. Like spirituals, the Sufi way is most importantly worshiping God from the heart, following the Prophetic saying when the Prophet ﷺ was asked about *Ihsan* (i.e. perfection or Benevolence); he said, "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you."[441] If the practices of Sufism are compared to those of slaves singing spirituals and the meetings that used to take place in the wilderness, there are definitely a few similarities.

Similar to most slave songs, spirituals contain a great deal of repetition. They were mostly performed in the wilderness, generally at night, accompanied with physical movements, charged with great emotions, and so highly spiritual that there were claims of some worshippers communicating with God, and some occasionally fainting. All of these characteristics can be said to apply to Muslim practices of worship, Sufi and otherwise. In West Africa, there are Sufi poets whose poetry complies with those characteristics. There

[440] Al-Albani, *Sahih Al-Albani*, English reference: Book 27, Hadith 479, Arabic reference: Book 1, Hadith 479. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/2204790>.
[441] *Sunan Ibn Majah*, English reference : Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 63, Arabic reference : Book 1, Hadith 66. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/1250630>.

is, for example, the powerful Sufi poetry of West African poet Shaikh Ibrahim Abd Allah at-Tijani al-Kawlakhi, such as *Finding Strength: Panegyric on the Intercessor of the Day of Judgement* (1955), which contains a great deal of repetition – morphological, phonological and phrasal. This is in addition to strict metrical observation and religious content. The following excerpt is from a long poem. It demonstrates only phrasal repetition. It takes a form of supplication by remembering Prophet Muhammed ﷺ to gain strength.

> May God's peace and blessings be upon our beloved [Muhammed ﷺ]
> May God grant him his ultimate pleasure.
> May God's peace and blessings be upon Muhammed ﷺ
> May God allow His servant to meet him.
> May God's peace and blessings be upon him he
> Who provided guidance and whose majesty was dominant.[442]

A spiritual sung by slave boatmen and reported by Mary Dickson Arrowood resembles that of Shaikh at-Tijani al-Kawlakhi in that the singer is calling his fellow slaves to find strength in a religious anticipation that their toil is soon to finish. There is also a good deal of repetition.

> Breddren, don' git weary,
> Breddren, don' git weary,
> Breddren, don' git weary,
> Fo' de work is most done.
>
> De ship is in de harbour, harbour, harbour,
> De ship is in de harbour,
> To wait upon de Lord….
>
> 'E got 'e ca'go raidy, raidy, raidy,
> 'E got 'e ca'go raidy,
> Fo' to wait upon de Lord.[443]

As mentioned previously, repetition works on multiple levels. It makes a poem musical and, hence, easier to memorise; in the context of religion, it demonstrates a sense of

[442] Ibrahim Abd Allah at-Tijani al-Kawlakhi, The Complete Poems (Abdeen: Dar Alnahar, 1955), 13-14.
[443] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals,'' in *Slavery in American Society*, 100.

urgency; repetition also may have soothing—hypnotizing—effect, which can be looked at as a healing method.

In addition to repetition, there are two interesting points to be analysed in the poem. The first is that, similar to some other slave songs, there is the word "Breddren" which is usually used by Muslims to address each other. There is frequent emphasis of the concept of brotherhood—and sisterhood—in Islam. There are, for example, a few Qur'anic verses that echo this;

> The believers are but brothers, so make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy.[444]
>
> Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. Remember the favor of Allah upon you, when you were enemies and he brought your hearts together and you became brothers by his favor.[445]
>
> They say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts any resentment toward those who have faith. Our Lord, you are kind and merciful.[446]

The Prophet ﷺ is also reported to have said, "None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."[447] These are just few examples of this Islamic aspect that occurs repeatedly in both the Qur'an and hadiths and also appears in many slave songs.[448]

The other interesting point about the spiritual is that the singer is informing his fellow slaves that their job is about to be done and that the ships are waiting for them to

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[444] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah al-Hujurat (The Chambers), [49:10].
[445] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Imran (The Family of Imran), [3:103].
[446] Ibid., interpretation of Surah al-Hashr (The Exile/Exodus/The Mustering/The Gathering), [59:10].
[447] At-Tirmidhi, *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*, English reference: Vol. 4, Book 11, Hadith 2515, Arabic reference: Book 37, Hadith 2705. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/678210>.
[448] There are more examples, including this hadith: The Muslims are like a single man. If the eye is afflicted, then the whole body is afflicted. If the head is afflicted, then the whole body is afflicted. (Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2586). Another hadith is "There is no Muslim servant who supplicates for his brother behind his back except that the angel says: For you the same." (Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2732). One more hadith is "Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false of speech. Do not seek out faults, do not spy on each other, do not contend with each other, do not envy each other, do not hate each other, and do not turn away from each other. Rather, be servants of Allah as brothers." (Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 5719). There are more, but for the sake of brevity only these are quoted to support the point.

take them home, the place where people go to rest when they finish work, obviously. However, there is a deeper meaning here; there is the question of where home is; whether it is in Africa from where slaves were brought on ships, or to God to whom all people belong—this is according to the Islamic view, because Muslims "Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."[449] This is also said during funerals. In light of this, the song clearly is about death and going back home, to God.

This interpretation of the above-quoted spiritual is what many spirituals sing of. They sing of weary lives and awaiting death which is only a transitional stage in the journey towards 'home.'

> This world is not my home.
> This world is not my home.
> This world's a howling wilderness,
> This world is not my home.[450]

There is a psychological dimension to this poem. The repetition of 'This world is not my home' gives a sense that the person of the poem is trying to convince themselves that they do not belong to this world and that can help in creating a coping mechanism by being relieved that they are going home one day and their suffering cannot last forever.

In short, in death there is hope, there is relief, and dying becomes a positive experience. Many slaves focused on their spiritual salvation; they knew that "their circumstances on earth were […] temporary and not deserving of much attention. Heaven would be their reward regardless of their lot on earth."[451] Through their spiritual, enthusiastic singing and active physical involvement during their worship, they released some of the negativity that surrounded their daily lives. They achieved what seems to be a

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[449] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah, [2:156].
[450] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals," in *Slavery in American Society*, 101.
[451] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 40.

cathartic mechanism. One slave preacher explained why some slaves shouted when singing spirituals; he says, "There is a joy on the inside and it wells up so strong that we can't keep still. It is fire in the bones. Any time that fire touches a man, he will jump."[452] This is a purely religious experience. Interestingly enough, it is a very important aspect of Islamic worship, the purification of one's soul. In fact, "Allah has linked the success of His servant with the purity of his soul, after making eleven consecutive oaths. There is not to be found in the Qur'an another oath such as this."[453] The opening verses of the ninety-first chapter in the Qur'an, Ash-shams, reads,

> By the sun and its brightness
> And [by] the moon when it follows it
> And [by] the day when it displays it
> And [by] the night when it covers it
> And [by] the sky and He who constructed it
> And [by] the earth and He who spread it
> And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it
> And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness,
> He has succeeded who purifies it,
> And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].[454]

In Jungian thought, spirituals can be looked at as "works where the consciousness of the poet is not identical with the creative process. […] Here the poet appears to be the creative process itself, and to create of his own free will without the slightest feeling of compulsion. He may even be fully convinced of his freedom of action and refuse to admit that his work could be anything else than the expression of his will and ability."[455] It is a complex problem that Jung states that answers to it cannot be found in "the testimony of the poets themselves. It is really a scientific problem that psychology alone can solve."[456]

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[452] Lawrence Levine, "Slave Spirituals" in *Problems in American Civilization: Slavery in American Society*, 113.
[453] Ahmad Farid, trans., *The Purification of the Soul*, 10.
[454] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Ash-Shams (The Sun), [91: 1-10].
[455] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 59.
[456] Ibid.

The cathartic effect emerges from "the poet's conviction that he is creating in absolute freedom".[457] This means that

> The ornamentations and free melodic and rhythmic elements heard in field calls may also be heard in prayers, moans, spirituals, blues, and solo worksongs. While the self-conscious song composer […or singer] may "borrow" call themes to incorporate into a blues piece, for example, the traditional singer already possesses these resources, and, in using them, it would never occur to him that he was taking from one genre to apply to another.
>
> Calls and cries are simply extracted out of the common storehouse of musical tradition.[458]

Similarly, slaves' soulfully singing might be a mere 'illusion' of their freedom, but because their singing came from the heart, "these songs of sorrow [turn] into songs of resilience and overcoming, and even into affirmations of divine redemption and human triumph."[459]

Indeed, spirituals are songs that make it clear that "death is not regarded as life's worst offering. There are some things in life that are worse than death."[460] Presumably, most slaves who sang spirituals did not chose to bring about their own deaths by committing or assisting suicide. Death is inevitable, but how a person dies is very important. Like many West African poems, African American poetry calls for heroic death. For example, in West African Fulani poetic tradition, poems praising courage were intoned and passed down from generation to the next to share the wisdom of seeking a dignified way of dying to "distinguish oneself in the eyes of the other members of the caste and not to prove unworthy of the *ceddo*[461] ethic".[462]

> God, for the sake of my mother's prayers
> God, for the sake of my father's fasts

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[457] Ibid.
[458] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.*, 88.
[459] Richard Newman, "Spirituals, African American," 1778.
[460] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death*, 15.
[461] 'Ceddo', short for 'ceddaagu', stands for 'warrior', and the 'ceddo ethic' promotes aspiration to belong to the ranks of the honourable and courageous.' Abdul Aziz Sow and John Angell, "Fulani Poetic Genres," *Research in African Literatures* v. 24, no.2 (Summer 1993) <http:/www.jstor.org/stable/3819886>62.
[462] Abdul Aziz Sow and John Angell, "Fulani Poetic Genres," *Research in African Literatures* v. 24, no.2 (Summer 1993) <http:/www.jstor.org/stable/3819886>63-64.

> Do not slay me with a small and shameful death
> That of dying in bed
> Amidst the tears of children
> And the moans of the elders
> And the marabout's appeal to God.
> Kill me when
> Swallowed bullets are spat (by rifles)[463]

Likewise, one of Claude McKay's best known poems, "If We Must Die", is a call to fight for the African American cause. This poem was very popular and resonated so well that it "was reprinted in nearly every leading Negro magazine and newspaper," remarks Stephen H. Bronz.[464]

> If we must die let it not be like hogs
> Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
> While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
> Making their mock at our accursed lot.
> If we must die, O let us nobly die,
> So that our precious blood may not be shed
> In vain; then even the monsters we defy
> Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
> O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
> Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
> And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
> What though before us lies the open grave?
> Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
> Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back![465]

This poem shares points of similarity with spirituals in that there is focus on life and death. In it, life is presented with negative quantifiers, such as a time where many black people are "hunted and penned in an inglorious spot"; whereas, as soon as death is introduced, positivity emerges with words like "nobly," "precious," "honor", "brave". This is very similar to how spirituals are semantically structured. This is discussed earlier in this chapter in a couple of examples of spirituals.

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[463] Ibid.
[464] Stephen H. Bronz, *Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness – The 1920s: Three Harlem Renaissance Authors* (New York: Libra Publ. Inc., 1964), 74.
[465] Claude McKay, *Selected Poems of Claude McKay* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1953), 36.

Claude McKay's response to how his poem was perceived can provide an example of the Jungian view of a poet writing 'psychological works' which reflect the life of the poet who sees himself as speaking collectively on behalf of black people. He is, also, a poet who, during the creative process, may think he is writing with "absolute freedom", when, in fact, he is being lifted by 'invisible currents'. These currents lifted many black poets, especially during the Harlem Renaissance, and made them speak on behalf of their race; McKay declares,

> To the thousand Negroes who are not trained to appreciate poetry, "If We Must Die" makes me a poet. I myself was amazed at the general sentiment for the poem. For I am so intensely subjective as a poet, that I was not aware, at the moment of writing, that I was transformed into a medium to express a mass sentiment.[466]

Obviously, McKay's words are about resistance. For him, it is an intellectual resistance. In the poem, he admits that although his people are "far outnumbered, they need to step up and fight even when dying, they fight back."[467] Truly, despite their apparent simple style and structure, spirituals provided a complex combination of spiritual and physical mechanisms to singing slaves. They tell us about how many slaves viewed life and death, and how holding on to God played an important role in their survival. This also played an important cathartic effect; Howard Thurman addresses this, saying,

> The *center of focus* was beyond themselves in a God who was a companion to them in their miseries even as He enabled them to transcend their miseries. And this is good news! Under God the human spirit can triumph over the most radical frustrations! This is no ordinary achievement. In the presence of an infinite desperation held at white heat in the consciousness of a people, out of the very depth of life, an infinite energy took shape on their behalf. […] this religious emphasis did not paralyze action, it did not make for mere resignation. On the contrary, it gave the mind a new dimension of resourcefulness.[468]

The result is that the combination of religion and music created a healing power and an endurance mechanism that kept hope alive in spirits that cried their hearts out in despair

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[466] Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), 228.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*, 41-42.

and agony. It is hope that forms the foundation of intellectual resistance through seeking education, which is the topic the following and final chapter focuses on.

CHAPTER FOUR

Intellectual Resistance: The Importance of Education and Seeking Knowledge in Islam in America

In many parts of the world, especially in West Africa, literacy and orality are not mutually exclusive. In West Africa, for instance, literary orality is a widespread cultural phenomenon. Generally, orality is most visible and popular in places where writing tools are scarce. For example, in areas, such as the Middle East and North and West Africa, where the biggest nomadic tribes in the world live and move from one place to another, making and carrying writing tools, books and scripts from place to place are inconvenient, and it is common to find people who employ memory to orally transmit their valued knowledge from generation to generation. In such places, a great deal of poetry and other religious manuscripts are preserved and handed down from grandparents and parents to children and grandchildren by word of mouth. The musical nature of poetry and religious manuscripts, especially the Qur'an and *dhikr* (words, phrases and sentences repeated, remembering God), facilitates the process of memorising to the extent that books, such as the Qur'an, are memorised word for word. Additionally, since "Education forms an important part of the Muslim system and has long been in operation

among African Muslims in a model patterned after the Arabs",[469] there are interesting similarities between Arabic orality and the West African one; the common denominator is Islam.

As discussed in Chapter I, many enslaved African Muslims never accepted being subjected to being enslaved or humiliated as human beings. They planned and led some of the major revolts in the New World, especially in South America; in Bahia in 1835, for example, there was one of the largest slave revolt, which was mainly planned and led by Muslim slaves.[470]

> In the United States, however, African Muslims practiced more subtle forms of resistance to slavery—some of them kept their African names, wrote in Arabic, and continued to practice their religion; some of them used the American Colonization Society to gain their freedom and return to Africa. All of this constituted intellectual resistance to slavery, as African Muslims, who had been members of the ruling elite in West Africa, used their literacy and professional skills to manipulate white Americans. This peculiar form of resistance accounts in part for the compelling and provocative nature of the life stories of the known African Muslim slaves in America.[471]

This insightful statement by Richard Brent Turner (1997) illustrates how Islam played an important role in the behaviour of African Muslims. Their literacy which they gained in Africa and was an essential practice of their religious teachings contributed quite literally in changing their lives and, for many, gaining their freedom and returning back to Africa, such as Ayyub Bin Sulaiman Diallo (aka. Job Ben Solomon (c. 1700-1773))[472]. This chapter, hence, concerns itself with the question of literacy, orality, seeking and preserving knowledge in Islam and for African American people, in their quest for freedom.

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[469] Muhammed Abdullah Al-Ahari, *Bilingual Islamic Education as taken from the Educational Theories of African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2016), 26-27.
[470] Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 153-157.
[471] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Blooming: Indiana University Press, 1997), 24.
[472] Ibid., 25.

For long periods of time West African literature,[473] and slave poetry in America, was neglected mainly because of its oral nature. This issue is enthusiastically challenged and rejected by many scholars and African thinkers and researchers. The translator of the African epic, *Sundiata,* D. T. Niane complains that the oral tradition of Africa is undervalued equally by home (i.e. West African) and Western intellectuals. He says in the preface to the epic:

> Unfortunately the West has taught us to scorn oral sources […], all that is not written in black and white being considered without foundation. Thus, even among African intellectuals, there are those who are sufficiently narrow-minded to regard 'speaking documents', which the griots are, with disdain, and believe that we know nothing of our past for want of written documents. These men simply prove that they do not know their country except through the eyes of the Whites.[474]

Niane's view stems from meeting griots and carefully listening to them and translating their words. In "The distribution of oral literature in the Old World" (1939), N. K. Chadwick suggests,[475]

> In 'civilized' countries we are inclined to associate literature with writing; but such an association is accidental …. Millions of people throughout Asia, Polynesia, Africa and even Europe who practise the art of literature have no knowledge of letters. Writing is unessential to either the composition or the preservation of literature. The two arts are wholly distinct.[476]

Other scholars who hold similar views to Niane include anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (2012). She says, "The concept of an *oral* literature is an unfamiliar one to most people brought up in cultures which, like those of contemporary Europe, lay stress on the idea of literacy and written tradition."[477] She adds, "What is true of classical literature is also true of many cultures in which writing is practised as a specialist rather than a universal art and, in particular, in societies without the printing-press to make the multiplication of

[473] According to the available resources, this was up until the middle of the last century.
[474] D. T. Niane, trans., *Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali* (Harlow: Longman, 1960), viii.
[475] It is important to note that although Niane and Chawick's quotations are quite outdated and, admittedly, contain some weak academic phrasing in them—for instance, "These men simply prove that they do not know their country…" is a sweeping and blasé phrase—they are relevant to the discussion and their views would probably have been less problematic in 1960.
[476] N. K. Chadwick, "The distribution of oral literature in the Old World", *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 69, 1939, 77.
[477] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 1970, 2012), 3.

copies feasible."[478] Likewise, Muslim Arab scholars, such as Abdulaleem Abdulrahman Khudir, contend that it is essential to recognise the oral aspect of African literature. Khudir (1985) says, "Truly, when we talk about African heritage or African history, we mean the oral heritage, and there is no point in any attempt to penetrate the history or the conscience of African peoples if we do not rely on this heritage, which measures and efforts were made to preserve it. It is transmitted from mouth to ear, from teacher to seekers of knowledge throughout the ages."[479] Literacy or writing, then, is not necessarily the defining ingredient of literature.

Poetry, a literary genre, qualifies for both labels of oral and written literary forms, although, arguably, much of it acquires a much more powerful effect when it is verbally recited. Nevertheless, there is a sensible counter-argument in this regard. Literature is often used to describe creative *written* art that essentially requires letters and words on pages; whereas, oral art is articulated and performed; it is a verbal art; it is open and public; it is folklore. In fact, because it is not written, any attempt to write about it definitely risks losing a major part of its aesthetic expression and falls short of conveying the stylistic element and the perception intended by its performer.

Interestingly enough, some have held extreme views and questioned whether a continent whose people are 'savage' capable of producing literature at all. Such coarse and extremely offensive statements are made by the British explorer and writer R. F. Burton, especially in his *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa* (1865). Burton bluntly says, "The savage custom of going naked […] has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none. […] There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing

[478] Ibid., 21.
[479] Abdulaleem Abdulrahman Khudir, *The Cultural Heritage of the Human Races in Africa between Originality and Renewal* التجديد و الاصالة بين افريقيا في البشرية للاجناس الثقافي التراث (Jeddah: Dar Albilad Publishers, 1985), 175.

that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions […]"[480] However, when linguists, scholars and grammarians started to examine and appreciate the African languages, linguistic and literary discoveries were made. Hence, by the end of the 19th century, an interest in translating and studying African texts grew. This interest coincides with the time when "slave holders became somewhat aware of the ability of slaves to use music to communicate subversive messages".[481]

In West Africa, the oral tradition is not restricted to literature. It is a combination of literary, historical, didactic, and religious values. The old Malian epic, *Sundiata* (translated in 1960), can provide an excellent example of West African oral literature as told by a Muslim griot called Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate, who starts the epic by introducing himself:

> I am a griot. […] master in the art of eloquence. […griots] are vessels of speech, we are repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations.[482]

The West African griot is a historian and a teacher, in a modern sense; or so is understood from Kouyate's words. Kouyate claims that he has the truth and history of Mali and its kings and tribes. He believes that he is a teacher and a bearer of knowledge. He is a griot, and it is a title of the learned whose books are stored not in libraries but in memory. Before colonization, in Africa "where everyone found his place, the griot appears as one of the most important of […] society, because it is he who, for want of archives, records the customs, traditions and governmental principles of kings."[483] That is how influential griots were, but, explains Niane, the role has been reduced and they are nowadays defined

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[480] R. F. Burton, *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa; or, a book of proverbial philosophy, idioms, enigmas, and laconisms* (London: 1865), xii.
[481] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Talyor and Francis Group, 2013), 39.
[482] D. T. Niane, trans., *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, 1.
[483] Ibid., vii.

as ‘artists.’ This is due to the ‘social upheaval’ that forced griots to “turn to account what had been, until then, their fief, viz. the art of eloquence and music.”[484] It is clear, then, that although Kouyate is a teacher and master of eloquence, his ancestors were, in fact, advisers to kings, a job that, undoubtedly, required great knowledge, experience, confidence and influence.

Nonetheless, the question of literacy remained an issue even as late as the twentieth century when in the mid-1960s linguistic research focusing on African American vernacular English became the centre of attention. For a long time, African American English was described crudely as baby-speech/talk, standard English with mistakes, Ebonics,[485] and so on. This issue inspired English-language linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum to write his article “African American Vernacular English is Not Standard English with Mistakes” (1999). After examining different grammatical and dialectic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Pullum comes to the conclusion that it is not an incorrect use of the English language; it only lacks the ‘prestige’ that standard English has. The article’s last paragraph conveys strongly that it is a racial rather than linguistic issue; he says, “anyone who thinks that AAVE users are merely speaking Standard English but making mistakes is wrong. They can try to make the case that speakers of AAVE are bad or stupid or nasty or racially inferior if they want to, but they will need arguments that do not depend on language, because linguistic study of AAVE makes one thing quite clear: AAVE is not Standard English with mistakes.”[486]

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[484] Ibid.

[485] The term ‘Ebonics’ is perceived as an offensive one by many linguists and scholars, such as Geoffrey K. Pullum, because of the cultural and the frequently racist uses in creating ‘puns and jokes’. More information on ‘Ebonics’ can be found in Pullums “African American Vernacular English is not Standard English with Mistakes” in Rebecca S. Wheeler, ed., *The Workings of Language* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1999), 40-41.

[486] Geoffrey K. Pullums “African American Vernacular English is not Standard English with Mistakes” in *The Workings of Language*, ed., Rebecca S. Wheeler, ed., (Westport CT: Praeger, 1999), 57-58.

John R. Rickford (1999), too, presents a phonological and grammatical investigation on AAVE and admits that the linguistic lists his study provides

> fails to convey […] the way skilled AAVE speakers use those [phonological and grammatical] features, together with distinctive AAVE words, prosodies and rhetorical/expressive styles, to inform, persuade, attract, praise, celebrate, chastise, entertain, educate, get over, set apart, mark identity, reflect, refute, brag, and do all the varied things for which human beings use language. It is because AAVE serves those purposes and serves them well that it continues to exist despite all the condemnations it receives from the larger society. For the preachers, novelists, storytellers, poets, playwrights, actors and actresses, street corner hustlers, church-going grandparents, working mothers and fathers and schoolyard children, rappers, singers, barber-shop and beauty-salon clients who draw on it daily, AAVE is not simply a compendium of features, but the integral whole which Claude Brown evocatively called "Spoken Soul."[487]

AAVE, then, is an identity marker to many black people in America. This may strike home to some African American poets, such as Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr, whose poem "Is it Because I am Black?" questions why his speech is conceived as baby-speech and link the way he speaks to who he is.

> Why do men smile when I speak,
> And call my speech
> The whimperings of a babe
> That cries but knows not what it wants?
> Is it because I am black?
>
> Why do men sneer when I arise
> And stand in their councils,
> And look them eye to eye,
> And speak their tongue?
> Is it because I am black?[488]

It is clear that from the first stanza that the poet is upset and feels insulted by how the way he speaks is perceived, as a load of unintelligible or meaningless words. However, he is not afraid to stand up for himself—and for the people of his race, because, as suggested by Eric A. Weil (2004), the 'I' in African American poem is racial, or communal; in Weil's words, "Black poets, because so many in their audience are white,

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[487] John R. Rickford, "Phonological and Grammatical Features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in *African American Vernacular English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 12.
[488] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water: 250 Years of African-American Poetry* (New York: Mentor, 1997), 99.

must constantly be aware that they speak not only as individuals but as representatives of their race. This fact is at the root of racism, but it is also at the heart of any ethnic minority's self-identity."[489] For example, African-American poet Haki R. Madhubuti declares clearly in *Enemies: The Clashes of Races* (1978), "I use writing as a weapon, offensively and defensively, to help raise the consciousness of myself and my people."[490] Nevertheless, white audiences can sometimes lack the right tools to comprehend significant messages in a poem written by a black person. This risks using crude or over-simplistic interpretations that can lead to making a poem appear to contain nonsense, which is the very thing Cotter wrote his above quoted poem about.

In order to clarify this point further, a poem titled "Corn-Shucking" appears in Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus* (1880). The depictions of African Americans introduced by Harris can illustrate how the African American character, whose dialect is distinctive, is perceived by white readers/audience, represented by Harris, who may fall short in interpreting the deeper/semantic meaning of a song which is important for 'both speech and music perception' because both require 'perception-action mechanisms and premotor coding'.[491] This means that "whites might hear the song but not fully grasp the way it was functioning in that context."[492]

At first the song appears to be a simple song that is sung to entertain the weary workers while shucking corn. Harris speculated about a recurring word in the song, 'Bango', and readily suggests that it is meaningless, and that it is "introduced on account

[489] Eric A. Weil, "Personal and Public: Three First-Person Voices in African American Poetry" in Joanne V. Gabbin, ed., *Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Art Movement to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2004), 223.
[490] Haki R. Madhubuti, introduction to *Enemies: The Clash of Races* (California: Third World Press, 1978), ii.
[491] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 243.
[492] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 39.

of its sonorous ruggedness," as he explained in a footnote.[493] Harris may have not been "aware of the ability of slaves to use music to communicate subversive messages [... i.e. "double-talk" or "signifying"] by which slaves could say something that contained a critique of slaveholders and the slave system, but those listening thought they heard something much less harmful in the meaning."[494]

Hence, Harris's simplistic view on a song in which about one-third of its seventy three lines/verses is a repetition of the line "Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango!" is just semantically incorrect. 'Bango', arguably, is a key word and *is* a meaningful one. In fact, the semantic structure of the line suggests that 'Bango' has a meaning that might be relevant to the work of shucking corn. This is, too, agreed upon by Stefan Koelsch's *Brain and Music* study in which he states that "processing of music- and language-syntactic information interacts at levels of morpho-syntactic processing, phrase-structure processing, and possibly word-category information."[495] This means that in both music and language, semantic structure relies greatly on syntactic formation of a song, speech and discourse. However, enslaved singers are more restricted than any other ordinary ones. This is because slaveholders were almost always around, they coded the language of their songs as not to explicitly express their thoughts, which would put them in troublesome situations. Although, their songs sound deceptively simple, they emphasise their perfectly serious subject matter and solemn features. With melodious words, they communicated much more complex messages, messages that produce vivid images of the poetic representations of their thoughts and feelings.

An investigation of the possible reference of 'Bango' can be found in Earl Lovelace's prize-winning Caribbean novel *Salt* (1996) which addresses the struggle of

[493] Joel Chandler Harris's introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1908), 186.
[494] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion*, 39.
[495] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 242.

the enslaved Africans from the moment they were captured onwards. Lovelace tells the history of Bango, who "is a worker who annually organises Quixotic freedom march among the villagers in instinctive protest against the island's failure to face the true meaning of emancipation from slavery."[496] African Americans[497] of both the U.S. South and the Caribbean share a common heritage with enslaved Africans in other North American areas; there is a great deal of demonstrably comparable cultural heritage between them. They, for example, were brought from West Africa to slave on plantation fields. Harold Courlander states that

> It is not only in group singing that the American Negro work gang shows similarities with African tradition, but in the patterns of group working as well. Throughout large parts of West and Central Africa, formal and informal labor groups for mutual assistance are commonly observed, and the tradition has survived strongly in Haiti, Jamaica, and other West Indian islands. Even where the institutionalized aspects of gang work have been altered in Africa, as in the instance where men gather to work for pay, the old patterns of work have nevertheless continued. The rhythmic use of tools, the sense of community, and responsive singing have remained significant elements in those patterns.
>
> Under conditions of slavery in the New World, the idea of musical dilemma and common enterprise was sufficient to sustain work music traditions.[498]

This means that the shared roots of slaves and African Americans can be seen in the common African cultural legacies that survived in different part of the American continents. For example, Muslim slaves, such as Omar Ibn Said (1770-1864),[499] wrote passages from the Qur'an that "are similar to those found on the amulets that African slaves in Brazil used in the Muslim insurrection of 1835 in Bahia."[500] Hence, it is possible that both the singer of 'Corn-Shucking' and the author of *Salt* are alluding to the same rebellious person, Bango. One can derive from the meaning of 'Bango' of the novel to find possible interpretation to that of the song. Consequently, it appears that the persona of the song might be implicitly informing the other slaves that it is time to join

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[496] Louis James, *Caribbean Literature in English* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 196-197.
[497] African American in a sense they are African descendants who live/lived in any of the American continents.
[498] Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 91-92.
[499] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 39.
[500] Ibid., 40.

the ‘march’ to gain their freedom. ‘Bango’, possibly, is a familiar name to the African enslaved community. Furthermore, another strikingly suggestive and interesting interpretation of the seemingly meaningless word ‘Bango’ of the song is that behind the ‘Bango’ of *Salt* lies ‘a culture of resistance going back to the early black leader of the slave revolt, Guinea John, who, a magician like the Haitian Macandal, ‘put two corn cobs under his armpit, and flew away to Africa, taking with him the mysteries of levitation and flight…’.’[501] It is, arguably, hardly a coincidence that both ‘Bangos’ (i.e. of the song and novel) are related to corn-shucking. One reason is that Africans in America “knew the original meaning of a name handed down through their community.”[502] The argument can be further strengthened by examining the posture of the singer in the picture provided next to the song in *Uncle Remus* (The picture is included below). It clearly illustrates the slaves hard at work shucking corn and the singer in the centre standing on a heap of shucked corn with his arms extended to the sky which suggests flight movement, similar to what the African magician does with corn cobs to fly back to Africa.

The picture drawn by artist and illustrator A. B. Frost (1851-1928) vividly shows that despite the physical confinement of the slaves, they created songs of freedom which, like most West African oral poems, were accompanied with active bodily gestures. Frost’s drawing successfully depicts both physical and emotional settings of the activity of corn-shucking. His career as an illustrator is distinguished for his ability to draw ‘stories whose only real point was to oppose characters with highly contrasting levels of vitality and energy. His animal and human creatures were driven by primal effects — fear, wrath, enthusiasm, hapless exuberance, or plain stubbornness — and he showed considerable verve in staging the arc of their emotions by skipping from one particularly

[501] Louis James, *Caribbean Literature in English*, 196-197.
[502] Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery, introduction to *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949, 2002), xli.

well-chosen attitude to the next.''[503] I think Frost's illustration of the singer of 'Corn Shucking' make appreciating and indeed understanding the song easier task for readers and scholars who are far removed from the time and place in which the song was sung and performed to help understand some of its hidden-messages or symbols. It is important to recall at this point the 'motor theory of speech perception' discussed in Stefan Koelsch's *Brain and Music* (2012). The theory involves speech decoding 'by the same processes that are involved in speech production.'[504] This means that when a song is being performed both singer and listeners are engaged in decoding processes. These processes mean that 'listening to action-related sentences activities premotor areas […] and perception of action words that are semantically related to different parts of the body […] activates premotor cortex in a somatotopic manner'.[505] Hence, the flight movement is performed by the singer as he sings and decoded by his listeners who interpret Bango for the flight for Africa.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that in the opening line of the song, the singer tells his fellow slaves that they 'know de day' in which they break the chains and fly. Then comes the refrain line of the song 'Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango' as if encouraging their flight, and 'Up'n down' suggests the flapping movement of the wings. Consequently, the song being technically characterized by clever duplicity, this particular line serves on two levels: a musical, repetitive one and a repetitive hidden message which despite its apparent simplicity, conveys a strong deep meaning that persistently urges the fellow slaves to revolt to gain freedom before ''de boss 'll awakin'', and it is too late. This hidden message illustrates the singer's attempt for the assertion of the slaves' identity by using words whose reference only those of African heritage may understand,

[503] Thierry Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Winsor McKay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 125.
[504] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 243.
[505] Ibid.

and whose powerful meaning is encased in a musical sonorous sound that deceive only those who think that Africa is no longer there within the slave entity.

> Oh, de fus news you know de day'll be a breakin'—
> (Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango!)
> An' de fier be a burnin' en' de ash-cake a bakin',
> (Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango!)
> An' de hen'll be a hollerin' en de boss 'll awakin'—
> (Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango!)
> Better git up, nigger, en give yo'se'f a shakin'—
> (Hi O, Miss Sindy Ann!)
>
> Oh, honey! w'en you see dem ripe stars a fallin'—
> (Hey O! Hi O! Up'n down de Bango!)[506]

The song closes with the interesting rebellious message that slaves need to be confident and never fear the white slaveholder. The singer commands his fellow slaves to "Git up'n shout loud! let de w'ite folks year you singin'". [507] Their act of singing may be seen as a symbol of freedom that cannot be taken away from them. This example demonstrates how African American songs and poems were misinterpreted by some white writers, including Harris and Thomas Nelson Page, whose depictions and interpretations of African American dialect are of different nature; i.e. Page's depictions are clearly racist and unappreciative, whereas Harris's appear to be made with lack of sufficient, familiar knowledge of slave coded messages. This is further discussed later on in this chapter.

[506] Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus: his Songs and his Sayings*, 186-189.
[507] Ibid.

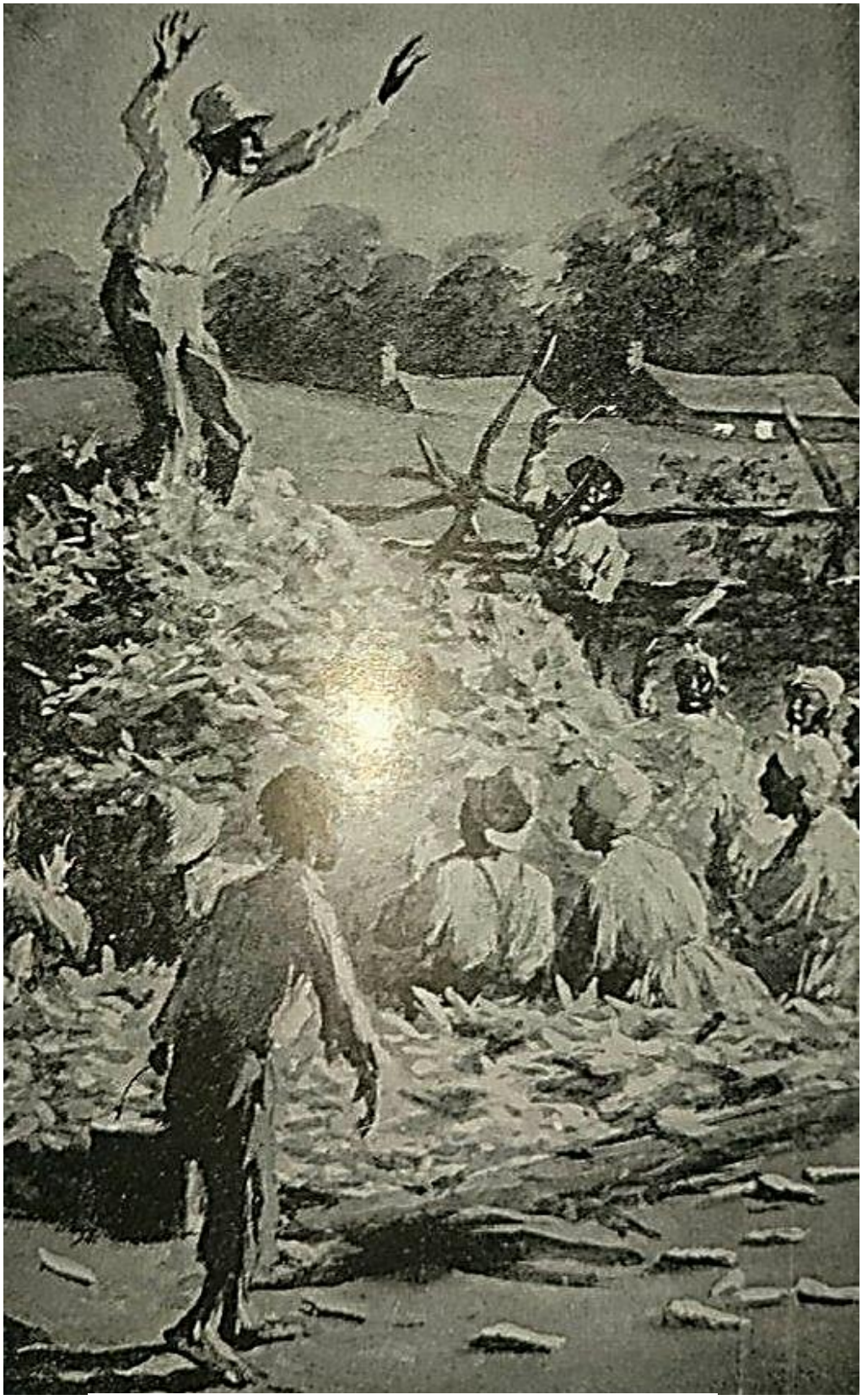

Figure 9 Corn-Shucking illustration as appears opposites to “Corn-Shucking” song in *Uncle Remus*

Again, to further appreciate the 'Corn-Shucking' song, Carl Gustav Jung's work "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" can help unlock hidden gems by applying his analytical psychology theory to the poem. Jung states that there are literary works in which we "expect a strangeness of form and content, thoughts that can only be comprehended intuitively, a language pregnant with meanings, and images that are true symbols because they are the best possible expressions for something unknown—bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore."[508] There is no question that the "Corn-Shucking" song fulfils all the points in Jung's statement, from its 'strangeness in form and content,' to it being 'pregnant with meanings'. However, in Harris's defence, Jung also states that "There is no Archimedean point outside his [the reader's] world by which he could lift his time-bound consciousness off its hinges and recognize the symbols hidden in the poet's work. For a symbol is the intimation of a meaning beyond the level of our present powers of comprehension."[509] This may attribute to Harris's interpretation of a word that is repeated twenty one times to be nonsense. More than that, recent scientific research affirms that "Symbolic musical meaning also includes social associations such as associations between music and social or ethnic groups",[510] and that "When humans listen to music, they automatically attempt to figure out the intentions (perhaps even the desires, and beliefs) of the individuals who create(d) the music. That is, as soon as we listen to music, our brains engage in mental state attribution (*mentalizing*, or *adopting an intentional stance*, also often referred to as establishing a *Theory of Mind*, TOM)."[511] This means that singers were using both coded messages by repeating words that are 'pregnant with meaning' and using music as a tool to communicate with their audience or fellow slaves complex emotional messages. In fact, employing musical instruments as means of

[508] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 60.
[509] Ibid., 61.
[510] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*, 162.
[511] Ibid., 161.

communication is not unfamiliar to Africans captured from West Africa. Talking-drums are known to have been used by West African griots. A talking-drum was designed in a way that it can produce sounds that resemble human speech prosody. It was/is used to communicate messages between villages/towns, to warn them of an enemy attack or spread of disease, for example. Indeed, the West African culture is an oral one.

In their introduction to Lorenzo Dow Turner's linguistic study of the Gullah dialect (otherwise known as Geechee/Sea Island Creole) mainly spoken in the Southern parts of the United States, including South Carolina and Georgia, Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery explain how white people entertained the over-simplistic view on African English and literary creativity. This view was attributed to lack of mental and physical capabilities. The conception, they say, was that "as long as Gullah literary characters were "in their place" their insight was non-threatening." [512] Mille and Montgomery precede to argue that to 'the white public and some white scholars' the Gullah dialect emerged "as not just the preservation of simplified baby talk, but as the product of impoverished learning capacity. Its speakers were alleged to lack the physical and mental capacity to learn to speak educated English."[513] The same view was held by many writers before Turner; the English of the enslaved Africans "is the worst English in the world." Africans, according to those white writers, "wrapped their clumsy tongues" around the English language.[514]

The purpose of introducing the Gullah dialect here is to set it as an example of the more general African American Vernacular English (AAVE). "Corn-Shucking" may not be sung by a Gullah speaker, but many linguists today believe that Gullah and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) have 'a close historical relation [… which] is

[512] Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery introduction to *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect,* xxiii
[513] Ibid., xxiii
[514] Ibid.

evident not only in their shared features but also in the obvious fact that their speakers share a similar heritage and common experience of *de facto* segregation.''[515] Hence, the above discussion on 'Bango' recurring in a slave song, 'Corn Shucking,' and a Caribbean novel, *Salt,* is a legitimate one.

It is important to stress here that white audiences' reception is not unanimous. The above discussion partly aims to demonstrate how African American songs and poems were undervalued and found appealing to white writers due to their simplicity, including Harris and Thomas Nelson Page, although the tone and content of both writers differ considerably. Harris's depictions of the African American dialect is not as influenced with racial prejudice as is Page's; in *Uncle Remus,* for example, Harris seems to be more interested in depicting the dialect of the African American people; whereas Page, from the very beginning of his *In Ole Virginia*, used words that are now considered racist. Page unsuccessfully attempted to replicate black dialect in his stories; his portrayal falls short to reflect the dialect in the same way African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, as discussed later in this chapter. Again, despite the fact that Harris's and Page's depictions of the African American dialect are at different levels of representing it, they do not, to a great extent, reflect the 'secrets' of the dialect as well as those who spoke the dialect or were in direct contact with the people who spoke it, like, for example, Paul Laurence Dunbar, whose dialect poetry is discussed later in this chapter as an example of the link between AAVE or dialect poetry and literacy.

Regardless of how Harris or Page interpret and reflect symbols, Jung contends that "A symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings."[516] This Jungian view of analytical psychology can help in linking the focus of this chapter to the

[515] Ibid., xxxiii.
[516] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 61.

Islamic religion. In the holiest books for Muslims, the Qur'an, there are symbols that have puzzled Muslim theologians for years. They were only able to produce speculations of what they mean, but until today the symbols seem to 'remain a perpetual challenge'. There are a few Chapters in the Qur'an that start with Arabic letters that do not seem to make a meaningful Arabic word, such as alif lam mim الم, kaf ha ya ayen sadd كهيعص, taa haa' طه, ya' seen يس, etc. The majority of Muslims, including Muslim scholars and Imams, agree that it is impossible to know what they stand for and that they are and will remain secrets of the Book. Imam Al-Qurtubi said in his *Tafsir* regarding the interpretation of the meanings of the letters,

> Interpreters disagree about the letters at the beginnings of the suras [i.e. chapters]. Amir ash-Sa'bi, Sufyan ath-Thawri and a group of hadith scholars say that Allah has a secret in each of His Books and these letters are Allah's secret in the Qur'an. They form part of the mutashabih (open to interpretation) ayats in the Qur'an about which only Allah knows. It is not necessary to discuss them but one should simply believe in them and recite them as they come. This position was related from Abu Bakr as-Siddiq and 'AH ibn Abi Talib. Abu'l-Layth as-Samarqandi related that 'Umar, 'Uthman and Ibn Mas'ud said, "The 'separated' letters are part of a hidden knowledge which cannot be explained." Abu Hatim said, "We only find the 'separated' letters in the Qur'an at the beginning of the suras. We do not know what Allah means by them." This was also stated by Abu Bakr al-Anbari, who reported via an isnad, that ar-Rabi' ibn Khuthaym said, "Allah Almighty revealed this Qur'an and He has kept the knowledge of whatever He wishes for Himself and He has acquainted you with what He wishes. As for what He has kept to Himself, you will not acquire it, so do not ask about it. As for what He has acquainted you with, it is that which you can ask and report about. You do not know the entire Qur'an and you will not teach all that you know." Abu Bakr said, "This tells us that the meanings of the letters of the Qur'an are concealed from everyone as a test from Allah Almighty. Anyone who believes in them is rewarded and is fortunate. Anyone who rejects and doubts them sins and is far from Allah's mercy." 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said, "A believer does not have any belief in anything better than belief in the unseen." Then he recited, "those who believe in the Unseen. [one of the following verses]"[517]

The above *tafsir* or interpretation of Imam Al-Qurtubi is important and quoted at length for two reasons. The first is that it agrees to some extent with Jung's question of the possibility of implementing analytical psychology to solve 'the mystery of artistic creation'; he contends, "Since nobody can penetrate to the heart of nature, you will not expect psychology to do the impossible and offer a valid explanation of the secrets of

[517] Aisha Bewley, trans., *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* Vol. 1 (London: Dar Al Taqwa, 2003), 131.

creativity. Like every other science, psychology has only a modest contribution to make towards a deeper understanding of the phenomena of life, and is no nearer than its sister sciences to absolute knowledge."[518] Jung, of course, is referring to human creativity not divine revelation. This means that no matter how much effort is made to unveil the secrets of creative process, even when applying scientific methods, it is impossible to arrive at fully understanding it, or even better, agreeing on an understanding, because, according to the Jungian thought, once there is an agreement by a number of people, what is agreed upon by science becomes a fact and by society a norm. In short, if we cannot configure symbols created by poets, it is even impossible to decode divine ones.

The second reason why Al-Qurtubi's quote is important is that it can demonstrate a striking similarity between African oral tradition—which can be Islamic too—and the Islamic one. Islam is highly oral; i.e. Muslims perform their daily prayers with oral recitations of the Qur'an, say their daily supplication orally, perform pilgrimage with oral *dhikr* (remembering God), *du'a* (prayer of supplication), etc.[519] In Al-Qurtubi's quote, it is quite clear how Muslim scholars relate the prophetic Hadiths (i.e. sayings) by word of mouth, and only the name of the narrator is presented. This is because there is a tradition that the reliability of narration is tested by quoting names that are known for honesty in relating and narrating. During the life of the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ and after his death, there used to be a group of people whose job was only to write accounts and reports of scholars, and then, what is allowed of narration went through five conditions of verification. The result of their work is that there are libraries in the Middle East known

[518] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 61.
[519] Some of these practices of worship can be read and/or said.

as libraries of men of scholarship.[520] This is very similar to the West-African griot who swears to never lie. Griot Mamadou Kouyate, in *Sundiata* affirms,

> My word is pure and free of all untruths; it is the word of my father; it is the word of my father's father. I will give you my father's words just as I received them; royal griots do not know what lying is. […] we are the depositaries of oaths which our ancestors swore.[521]

The task of the African griot was maintained among enslaved Muslims in America; and can even be seen in very recent African American literature. Cornelia Bailey starts her chronicle *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man* (2000) by introducing herself in a similar style to that of the West African Griot Mamadou Kouyate, she says,

> I am a storyteller and my tale is of a people so private our story has never been told before. I tell it now for my people […], and for people everywhere: you can survive if you believe in yourself and your culture.
> This is how I remembered it.
> Lean back and listen.[522]

The stories of griots are important for they contain information that would have been lost without them; Richard Brent Turner (1997) explains, "Their life stories are fascinating and extraordinary, for they tell us about African princes, teachers, soldiers, and scholars who were captured in their homelands and taken across the Atlantic Ocean to the "strange" Christian land called America, where they became the only known Muslims to maintain Islamic traditions during the antebellum period."[523]

Oral or written, seeking knowledge is essential to Muslims, and was recognised as the starting point towards freedom for African American slaves. 'Read' is the first word that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. God sent his Angel Gabriel ﷺ to command him to read. Gabriel ﷺ repeats the command three times but the Prophet ﷺ replies

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[520] Narrators agree that a prophetic Hadith (i.e. saying) is sahih (i.e. proven to be said by the Prophet ﷺ) when it meets five conditions, which aim to assess the reliability of narrators and the soundness of the saying. Also, this partly what is meant by the word 'isnad' in Al-Qurtubi quote.
[521] D. T. Niane, trans., *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, 1.
[522] Cornelia Bailey, *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 8.
[523] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 12.

repeatedly that he cannot read, i.e. he is illiterate. Then the Angel ﷺ recites the first five ever revealed verses of the Qur'an:

> Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists),
> Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood).
> Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous,
> Who has taught (the writing) by the pen[524]
> Has taught man that which he knew not.[525]

The word 'read' is repeated five times in total by Angel Gabriel ﷺ in his first meeting with the Prophet ﷺ when the Qur'an was revealed to him, for reading is key when seeking knowledge. Reading, according to many Muslim scholars like Muhammed Shamlul,[526] does not only mean reading written words in books but also *reading* signs in God's creation, in other words, reflecting. In fact, the meaning of 'Qur'an' as a word is derived from the root word 'read' (iqra', qira'a, Qur'an), and it is full of verses that stress the importance of reading signs, reflecting and using reason when seeking knowledge, and taking time while doing so. For example, in Surah Adh-Dhariyat (The Winnowing Winds), God says that his signs are everywhere, in the heaven, earth, and within ourselves. Then, there is a question that is an invitation to reflection "will you not see?" which appears many times in the Qur'an, in different wording but similar meaning.

> And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]
> And in yourselves. Then will you not see?
> And in the heaven is your provision and whatever you are promised.
> Then by the Lord of the heaven and earth, indeed, it is truth - just as [sure as] it is that you are speaking.[527]

The importance of reading and writing are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an with a Chapter titled "The Pen" and the divine description of the greatness of the number of God's words, which reflect the greatness of His knowledge: "If the sea were ink for

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[524] Muslims believe that Prophet Idrees (i.e. Enoch) was the first person to write using a pen. According to *Sahih Ibn Haban*, the Prophet ﷺ said that Prophet Idrees was the first to write with a pen.
[525] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Al-Alaq (The Clot), [96:1-5].
[526] Muhammed, Shamlul, *Lettering and Recitation Miracles of the Qur'an*.
[527] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Adh-Dhariyat (The Winnowing Winds), 51:20-23.

[writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement."[528]

In the Islamic faith, religion and seeking knowledge go hand in hand. This means that there is no conflict in believing in the unseen, God, and seeking knowledge. However, it is important to note that "Education without religion is to the Muslim mind an anomaly."[529] This is because the Islamic religion governs every aspect of its believers' lives; they, for example, must obey God and His Prophet ﷺ who says a few Hadiths that command Muslims to seek knowledge and make every effort to that; "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim."[530] The Qur'an contains many verses concerning the importance of seeking and transmitting knowledge. For example, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"[531] Another verse reads, "Allah will raise up to high ranks those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge."[532] Also, prominent Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jaiuziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, believe that "knowledge is the shortest path to Allah. Whoever travels the road of knowledge reaches Allah and the Garden by the shortest route. Knowledge also clears the way out of darkness, ignorance, doubt and scepticism. It is why Allah called His Book, "Light"."[533]

Furthermore, similar to the Hebrew Scripture,[534] God has many names or attributes. There are 99 names collected from different places in the Qur'an. These names

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[528] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave), [18:109].
[529] Muhammed Abdullah Al-Ahari, *Bilingual Islamic Education as taken from the Educational Theories of African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America*, 15.
[530] *Sunan Ibn Majah*, English reference: Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 224, Arabic reference: Book 1, Hadith 229. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/urn/1252230>
[531] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of, [39: 9].
[532] Ibid., interpretation of Surah Al-Mujadila (She Who Disputes/The Pleading Woman), [58:11].
[533] Ahmad Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, trans. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jaivziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (London: Al-Firrdous Ltd., 1993), 22.
[534] Muhammed Abdullah Al-Ahari, *Bilingual Islamic Education as taken from the Educational Theories of African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America*, 26.

are attributes of God, such as The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful, The Ultimate Provider of Peace, and so on. One of the most mentioned—some said it *is* the most mentioned—names/attributes is The All-Knowing, the Omniscient. It appears 157 times in the Qur'an. This reflects its importance. The name is the subject of many discussions. For brevity and relevance's sake, a brief discussion should be sufficiently illustrative. It is important for Muslims to learn God's attributes and study them to know the One they are worshiping and to find in His attributes what they can implement them in their daily lives. From this name, The All-Knowing, the Omniscient, Muslims believe that seeking knowledge is an act of worship—"Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise[535] —that knowledge sought must be shared—"Whoever is asked about knowledge and he conceals it, then Allah will clothe him with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection"[536]—and that no matter how much knowledge a person acquires, it will still be little—one of the most knowledgeable men, whose story with prophet Moses ﷺ is discussed briefly in Chapter I, saw "a bird [that] took with its beak (some water) from the sea: Al-Khadir then said, 'By Allah, my knowledge and your knowledge besides Allah's Knowledge is like what this bird has taken with its beak from the sea.'"[537] Muslims also almost daily use verses from the Qur'an in supplicating; one of which pertaining to knowledge is "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."[538]

Many Muslim and non-Muslim slaves recognised the importance of education. It is important, because it is their gate towards freedom. In his chapter "Means of Elevation" (1852), Martin R. Delany listed the "means by which God intended man to

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[535] *Riyad as-Salihin,* Sunnah.com reference: Book 13, Hadith 6, Arabic/English book reference: Book 13, Hadith 138. Retrieved from sunnah.com <https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/13/6>

[536] *Jami` at-Tirmidhi,* 2649, in-book reference: Book 41, Hadith 5, English translation: Vol. 5, Book 39, Hadith 2649. Retrieved from sunnah.com <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/41/5>.

[537] *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 3401, in-book reference: Book 60, Hadith 74, English reference: Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 613. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/bukhari/60/74>.

[538] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Ta Ha, [20:114].

succeed." He stated that black people need to seek 'literary attainments' to learn about "literature, science, religion, law, medicine, and all other useful attainments that the world makes use of." He believed that that is the secret how the white man overpowered the coloured man.[539] Many slaves took every opportunity to learn to read and write. In "Self-Emancipation and Slavery" (2008), Anthony B. Mitchell traces the quest of African Americans for literacy and freedom. Mitchell says,

> Africans who could read often taught others using whatever means and opportunities available. Inter-generational education also occurred as father and mother taught son or daughter, who in turn taught others, young and old. Some Africans taught themselves to read and write by observing whites. In many instances this process involved great ingenuity and courage as getting caught usually resulted in severe punishment or death.[540]

Mitchell's statement agrees with many ex-slaves' accounts documented in Norman Yetman's *Voices from Slavery* (1970) in which an ex-slave called Jacob Branch says, "Dere school for de white chillen in Double Bayou and I used to go meet chillen comin' home and dey stop 'longside de way and teach me my ABC."[541] Other ex-slaves, like Andrew Boone, received false and racist methods of 'counting'; he says, "I can't read and write but they learned us to count. They learned us to count dis way. "Ought is ought, and a figger is a figger, all for de white man an' nothing for de nigger."[542] The same way slaves recognised the importance of education, white slaveholders recognised its results; hence, they dealt harshly with any slave attempting to learn: "Penalties varied from loss of privileges, confinement, whippings, and beatings to mutilation and death."[543] Despite the fact that many of these penalties were practised against the knowledge-seeking slaves,

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[539] Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* in *Call & Response*, Patricia liggins Hill et al, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 488.
[540] Anthony B. Mitchell, "Self-Emancipation and Slavery: An Examination of the African American's Quest for literacy and Freedom" *The Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 2, no. 5 (July 2008), 88.
[541] Norman R. Yetman, Introduction to *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 41.
[542] Ibid.,, 33.
[543] Anthony B. Mitchell, "Self-Emancipation and Slavery: An Examination of the African American's Quest for literacy and Freedom," 88.

many of whom (i.e. slaves) did not give up their striving for knowledge. G. Osofsky (1969) reports,

> Austin Stewart vowed to teach himself letters after his master destroyed his spelling book and whipped him for having it. […] Northup, who knew how to write, contrived a pen from an old duck feather and ink from the bark of a maple tree. James W. Sumpter had his books in a hayloft and came there on Sundays. Leonard Black bought a book and his master found him with it and burned it. "You black son of a bitch, if I ever know you have a book again, I will whip you half to death." Black quoted the owner as saying. He went right out and acquired another.[544]

It is clear that slaves who sought education knew very well that education would bring them what they had longed for. Sadly, what survived and reached us from the autobiographies and heroic quest to freedom is very little. Still, they can give us insight into life under slavery. One of which was written by a Muslim slave, Ayyub Ibn Sulaiman (aka. Job Ben Soloman). His letter appears to be a call of distress, a letter to his father in Futa Jallon in West Africa. In the letter, written in 1731, Ayyub repeats his name and that he is in a place of distress and finishes with part of a Qur'anic verse Muslims say when they are in hardship. In his letter to his father, he sought help to pay a ransom to free him, states American Muslim scholar Muhammed Al-Ahari in his article "Job Ben Solomon's Handwritten Qur'an Found" (2013).[545]

[544] G. Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' on Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 40.
[545] Muhammed A. Al-Ahari, "Job Ben Solomon's Handwritten Qur'ān Found" (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2013), 3. Al-Ahari has kindly sent me a photograph of his letter, which is provided below (Figure 11).

Figure 10 Painting of Ayyub (aka. Job) by William Hoare, *in* Muhammed A. Al-Ahari, "Job Ben Solomon's Handwritten Qur'ān Found" (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2013), 22.

Figure 11 Letter written by Ayuba Suleiman Diallo to his father. Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (1701–1773), also known as Job ben Solomon, was a famous Muslim who was a victim of the Atlantic slave trade.[546]

Ayyub was well-educated and was a scholar who was literate in Arabic. His high level of intelligence helped him not only to be set free but also able to make friends in England with whom he had many correspondences regarding starting a form of trading

[546] The British Library Board, online images, https://imagesonline.bl.uk/en/asset/show_zoom_window_popup.html?asset=167385&location=grid&asset_list=174165,173760,173023,169002,169003,169004,167385,167373,167380,167381,167376,167230,167232,167233,167201,166919,165745,165699,165481,161797,156141,155170,155171,154769,150711&basket_item_id=undefined

between Europe and Africa. In *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (1984), Allan Austin provides a number of his letters that he sent to Sir Hans Sloane, Nathaniel Brassey, and John Chandler. His letters are highly religious in tone. For example,

> "The writer's name is Ayyūb b. Suleimān
>
> "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficient
>
> "Generous Mister Brassey
>
> "Member of Parliament for Satāt (?)
>
> "Peace be with you. He is all praise be to Allah, lord of the worlds, great praise. Mister Brassey, all the Muslims of Zagha, men and women, [wish] you the best, and Allah is the best. You are Mister Brassey. He [who writes and sends this] is Ayyūb b. Suleimān Zagha. All praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds. I said, all praise be to Allah."[547]

What is even more interesting about Ayyub is that he wrote three copies of the Qur'an, entirely from memory. He, says Al-Ahari, memorised word for word the whole Qur'an which contains seventy-seven thousand and four hundred and thirty nine words when he was fifteen.[548] Furthermore, what is fascinating about Sulaiman's story is his persistence and the spiritual devotion that he maintained and which was a feature that caught the attention of an English minister, Thomas Bluett, who wrote about him,

> He was brought into the tavern to us, but could not speak one word of English. Upon our talking and making signs to him, he wrote a line or two before us, and when he read it, pronounced the words Allah and Mohammed; by which and his refusing a glass of wine we offered him, we perceived he was a Mohametan [i.e. Muslim…]. For by his affable carriage, and the easy composure of his countenance, we could perceive he was no common slave.[549]

Although Bin Sulaiman spent only two years of his life in slavery in Maryland, his non-submissiveness to slavery not only gained him his freedom but made his name known in history; "Job's [i.e. Ayyub's] story became the eighteenth-century equivalent of a bestseller. He was a genuine celebrity, earning the patronage of the Duke of Montague.

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[547] Muhammed A. Al-Ahari, "Job Ben Solomon's Handwritten Qur'ān Found" (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2013), 5.
[548] Ibid., 9.
[549] Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Boonda in Africa; Who Was a Slave about two Years in Maryland; and afterwards being brought to England was set free, and sent to his native land in the year 1734* (London: Richard Ford, 1734), in Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 80.

He even met the royal family."[550] His strife for freedom started when Ayyub wrote a letter to his father, hoping that he would ransom him. His linguistic knowledge impressed James Oglethorpe, who was a member of the British Parliament. Oglethorpe purchased his bond and Ayyub travelled to England. "The Royal African Company, which hoped that Job might further its trading relationships in West Africa, eventually bought Job's bond and set him free. Then, in 1734, Job returned to his native Africa […]".[551]

Bin Suliman was not the only Muslim slave who demonstrated defiance in the face of his enslavement. Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima (1762-1825)[552] was a West African prince who was called a "Moor" in his enslavement. His story, similar to Bin Sulaiman's, "sheds further light on the central themes of global Islam, intellectual resistance, signification, and jihad, and shows how some African Muslim slaves used the American Colonization Society to gain their freedom and passage back to Africa."[553] Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima's story of getting his freedom, interestingly, began in Africa, where he and his people look after John Coates Cox, an Irish ship surgeon, who was badly injured, teaching Abd al-Rahman some English during his stay. After his recovery, Cox went back to his ship. Abd al-Rahman was later captured and transported to Mississippi. Later, when both men met again, Cox recognised Abd al-Rahman but failed to free him. Fortunately, Abd al-Rahman was able to send a letter written in Arabic and quoting Qur'anic verses to the ruler of Morocco, Abd al-Rahman II, who requested his freedom.[554]

Like the intellectual strength, religious devotion and Arabic and non-Arabic literacy of Ayyub Bin Sulaiman and Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima, there are more Muslim

[550] Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 3.
[551] Ibid., 2-3.
[552] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 28.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid., 27-31.

slaves who asserted their humanity and invited white people's curiosity and interest. Bilali Mahomet (also known as Bu Allah and Ben Ali) and Salih Bilali[555] were two Muslim slaves whose dress code, religious commitment and Arabic literacy left a striking impression on Georgia Conrad, who met them in the middle of the nineteenth century; she wrote,

> On Sapelo Island near Darcen, I used to know a family of Negroes who worshipped Mohamet. They were tall and well-formed, with good features. They conversed with us in English, but in talking among themselves they used a foreign tongue that no one else understood. The head of the tribe was a very old man named Bi-la-li. He always wore a cap that resembled a Turkish fez.[556]

Conrad's description of Bilai matches the description of one of his descendants, Cornelia Bailey, who proudly describes him in her chronicle (2000) as "a tall, dark-skinned man with narrow features, his head covered with a cap resembling a Turkish fez, [he used to] unfold his prayer mat, kneel and pray to the east while the sun rose. This was Bilali, the most famous and powerful of all the Africans who lived on this island during slavery days, and the first of my ancestors I can name."[557]

Bilali Mahomet was not only a fluent speaker of Arabic, he was, in fact, highly literate. After his death, he left a document that demonstrates his excellent proficiency in Arabic. Although he did not manage to return to Africa, he was successful in upholding his religious duties. His name was known by his descendants in the twentieth century. His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren communicated his story. One of his great-grandchildren, Katie Brown, was interviewed by the Savannah Unit of the Georgia

[555] For the sake of brevity, only a brief discussion on Bilali Mohamet is presented, because he showed more literacy and wisdom than Salih Bilali, who, in fact, seem to have been a student and companion of his senior Bilali Mohamet.
[556] Georgia Bryan Conrad, *Reminiscences of a Southern Woman* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute, n.d.) 13.
[557] Cornelia Bailey, *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man*, 1.

Writer's Project in the 1930s.[558] Brown remembers her grand-mother (i.e. Bilali's daughter) wearing a headscarf, like Muslim women do; she recalls, "She ain tie uh head up lak I does, but she weah a loose wite clawt da she trow obuh uh head lak veil an it hang loose on u shoulduh."[559]

It is impressive how many Muslim slaves, at least all of those I have read about, were recognised for intellectual defiance and fighting slavery by all means possible. They are often described as being highly intellectual; people who received advanced levels of education—Omar Ibn Said, who "was the most famous African Muslim slave in the antebellum period", was being trained in Africa to be "a scholar, teacher, and trader."[560] Ibn Said used his Arabic literacy to write religious thoughts that are "suggestive of inner jihad or the struggle within himself to maintain his faith in an alien environment."[561] He also left a document titled "The Lord's Prayer" which contained a paraphrase of Surah An-Nasr (The Victory)[562], chapter 110 of the Qur'an, which is a three-verse Surah about the ultimate victory of Islam,

> When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest,
> And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes,
> Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance.[563]

Additionally, Lamine Kaba, who declared to his biographer, Theodore Dwight, Jr., "There are good men in America, but all are very ignorant of Africa", was a man of exceptional knowledge and learning in multiple disciplines, law, philosophy, hadith, theology, and others.[564] Like Ayyub and Abd al-Rahman, Lamine Kaba, too, made his

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[558] Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writer's Project of the Works Projects Administration, *Drums and Shadows* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1940).
[559] Ibid., 158-70.
[560] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 38.
[561] Ibid., 40
[562] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 471.
[563] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah An-Nasr (The Victory), [110:1-3].
[564] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 37.

journey back to Africa after falsely decalring that he accepted Christianity as the true religion and that he wanted to go back to Africa to spread it. Dwight did not really buy Kaba's claim; however, he wanted to learn about African Islamic education and employ what he learns in sending Christian missionaries and Bibles in Arabic to covert Muslims there.[565] For this end, Dwight received a copy of a letter that Omar Ibn Said sent to Kaba in 1836, keeping in touch with him intercontinentally. He wrote,

> In the names of God The Compassionate, […] I am not able to write my life. I have forgotten much of the language of the Arabs. I read not the grammatical, and but very little of the common dialect. I asked thee, O brother, to reproach me not, for my eyes are weak, and my body also.[566]

Despite Ibn Said's own admission of him losing proficiency in Arabic, the comment of the translator of the letter is very complimentary. Muhammed Al-Ahari states in his *Bilingual Islamic Education as taken from the Educational Theories of African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America*" (2016),

> The translator Dwight employed mentions that, "...the narrative is very obscure in language, the writer, as he himself declares, being ignorant of the grammatical form.... It is written in a plain and, with few exceptions, very legible Moghrebby, or Western Arabic character.... It affords an idea of the degree of education among the Muslim blacks, when we see a man like this able to read and write a language so different from his own tongue. Where is the youth, or even adult, among the masses of our people who is able to do the same in Latin or Greek?"[567]

It is interesting that the documents that these Muslim slaves left behind are almost always in Arabic, not their native tongue, and that they communicate in Arabic among themselves. It is even clearer if we read the extra-lexical meaning of Ibn Said's saying "I have forgotten much of the language of the Arabs." It sounds as if he is not one of 'them', i.e. the Arabs. Arabic, as believed by Muslims, is the language of the people of Paradise, but before that it is the language of the Holy Qur'an. It has always been held in high esteem. In fact, throughout Lorenzo Turner's unprecedented linguistic study *Africanisms*

[565] Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 411-12.
[566] Ibid., 81.
[567] Muhammed Al-Ahari, *Bilingual Islamic Education as taken from the Educational Theories of African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America*, 49.

in the Gullah Dialect, which is based on historical evidence, Arabic is stressed to be the language that was used the most by slaves in written form. What is also interesting is that in addition to Muslim slaves' education, their bilingualism and multilingualism is very impressive, especially in the case of the freed slave Mohammed Ali Ben Said whose language skills astonished Norwood P. Hallow, who edited his autobiography for the 1867 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*. He said that the ex-slave African Muslim "wrote and spoke fluently the English, French, German, and Italian languages, while there is no doubt he was master of Kanouri (his vernacular), Mandara, Arabic, Turkish and Russian—a total of nine languages."[568]

Of course, not only Muslim slaves recognised the importance of literacy. Having endured the hardships of illiteracy, many slaves, ex-slaves and African Americans were eager to learn. For example, poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar's mother was an ex-slave. She is credited for planting in her son his passion for literature. Apparently, suffering from the terrible conditions of slavery, she knew and appreciated the importance of learning, and he responded to her wishes. "He excelled in literature. Delicate as he was and caring very little for outdoor life, he preferred to read and write and to debate topics that were beyond the understanding of most children of his age.[569] Although he was highly praised for his standard English poetry by his family and friends, his dialect poetry is often valued for its racial significance.[570] In fact, scholar and civil rights activist Mary Church Terrell described the poet as 'poet Laureate of his race.'[571] Dunbar's dialect poetry reflects his imagination of the sounds and scenery of plantation fields of the antebellum South as he

[568] Norwood P. Hallowell, "A Native of Bornu," *Atlantic Monthly* (October 1867), 485-95 quoted in Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 661-79.
[569] Charles McGinnis, "Paul Laurence Dunbar" *The Negro History Bulletin* v. 5 (May 1942), 170.
[570] Critic Jay Martin and biographer Gossie H. Hudson call on viewing Dunbar as a writer and a human being and examining how his personal experiences translate into his work, rather than attributing his literary creativity to his race.
[571] Mary Church Terrell, "P. L. Dunbar." *The Voice of the Negro* (April, 1906), 271-78.

registered the dialect of his parents and translated it into poetry. For him, the process of writing dialect poetry is natural and not spoiled by exposure to journal and newspaper articles which he could not afford to buy and read and which tended to stigmatise the dialect by implying that it is childish in nature and spoken by uneducated African Americans. Dunbar's representations are thus unlike the misrepresentations and inconsistencies found in Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus* and Thomas Nelson Page's short stories *In Ole Virginia* (1895) in which Page unsuccessfully attempts to replicate black dialect in his stories; his portrayal falls short in reflecting the dialect the same way Dunbar did due to Page's lack of direct contact with people who speak it. In the following quote, Page, unaware of the rule of 'r' deletion in the dialect, wrote 'marster' which, obviously, does not comply to the correct sound speakers of the dialect utter. He wrote, ""Marse Chan," said the darky, "he's Marse Channin'—my young marster; an' dem places—dis one's Weall's, an' de one back dyar wid de rock gatepos's is ole Cun'l Chahmb'lin's. Dey don' nobody live dyar now, 'cep' niggers."[572] Whereas, in *Voices from Slavery,* eighty-eight-year-old ex-slave W. L. Bost, interviewed at Asheville, North Carolina by Marjorie Jones, opens his account, "My Massa's name was Jonas Bost."[573] This can clearly demonstrates Page reflecting the African-American dialect in a racist manner.

Dialect poetry was viewed by some white critics as "significant and valuable" because it reflects 'primitive human nature'. Primitive, perhaps, because it depicts dialect spoken by people critics like W. D. Howells associate to racial attributes. Howell's critical introduction to Dunbar's *Lyrics of Lowly Life* is highly biased. It is a stereotypical piece which introduces the poet as a typical representative of the African American man, with descriptions that exaggerate Africans' physical features. Dunbar, as portrayed by

[572] Thomas Nelson Page, *In Ole Virginia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1896), 6.
[573] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 35.

Howells, has "the black skin, the wooly hair, the thick, outrolling lips, and the mild, soft eyes of the pure African type […] I suppose a generation ago, he would have been worth, apart from his literary gift, twelve or fifteen hundred dollars, under the hammer."[574] Obviously, Howells' presentation of the poet appears to be addressed to white readers, mainly because Howells refers to African Americans in his work with phrases like "that race" and "those people."[575] Regardless of Howells' racist and undermining comments about dialect poetry and African American people, Dunbar's dialect poetry is a celebration of his parents and of his race. Through his poetry, Dunbar defined himself by his roots. In his collection of poems *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896), 'Corn Song' portrays images from the stories he was told by his parents whose dialect is reflected in the song and whose descriptions of the fields and the scenery inspire the poet to vividly paint the experience of slaves as the sun goes down after a long toilsome day.[576] His song is similar in the structure of its performance to that of 'Corn Shucking' which appears in Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus*; it involves a main singer and a responsive crowd of slaves. In 'Corn Song,' Dunbar masterfully depicts the dialect and describes slaves' work in the plantation vividly. He uses words that appeal to readers' imagination and touch their feelings through his use of sensory details, taking the perception of the song to another level.

On the wide veranda white,
In the purple failing light,
Sits the master while the sun is lowly burning;
And his dreamy thoughts are drowned
In the softly flowing sound
Of the corn-songs of the field-hands slow returning.

Oh, we hoe de co'n
Since de ehly mo'n

[574] William Dean Howells, "Review of Paul Laurence Dunbar's Majors and Minors," In "Life and Letters," Harp Week – Electronic Access to Harper's Weekly (1896), 630

[575] Ibid.
[576] The song also appears in Dunbar's *Li'l Gal*, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, *Lyrics of Sunshine* and *Shadow*.

Now de sinkin' sun
Says de day is done.

[…]

Like Dunbar who found comfort in poetry, the tired and weary slaves find strength and joy in singing loudly.

Tho' the halting steps be labored, slow, and weary;
Still the spirits brave and strong
Find a comforter in song,
And their corn-song rises ever loud and cheery.[577]

Although Dunbar's dialect poetry is highly regarded—often for its racial value—it is criticised for not being fully loyal to the black people. In fact, it is suggested that Dunbar's treatment of the dialect took the same position as that of some white writers who presented the speakers of the dialect (i.e. slaves) as if they were content with their lives and enslavement. Black critics like Sterling A. Brown comments on Dunbar's poetry in his *Negro Poetry and Drama* (1937); Brown states that despite Dunbar being a pioneering black poet, he misread black history. According to Brown, the folk poet's 'basic flaw' is that his "attempts to represent authentic African American folk language in verse. He was not able to transcend completely the racist plantation tradition made popular by Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, Irwin Russell, and other white writers who made use of African American folk materials and who showed the 'old time Negro' as if he were satisfied serving the master on the antebellum plantation."[578]

Nevertheless, this argument can be refuted by examining a few of Dunbar's poems. Considered readings of poems like 'We Wear the Mask,' 'When Malindy Sings,' 'Frederick Douglass'—just to name a few—assert the poet's continuous commitment and loyalty to the black people. "When Malindy Sings" is a celebration of the black talent of singing. The speaker of the poem talks to a lady—a white lady presumably—whose

[577] Paul Lawrence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1899), 137-138.
[578] William L. Andrews, et al., ed. *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 119-120

attempts to sing by using a written music text are unpleasant. Practice, in her case, is not going to improve her singing and make her able to sing as beautifully and 'naturally' as Malindy does. Malindy is a slave girl probably working in a field and whose singing is inspired by Dunbar's mother whose singing outbursts were spontaneous as she worked in the kitchen. Malindy's spiritual singing echoes through the house and reaches the woods where birds, whose natural singing is similar to that of Malindy's, keep quiet just to hear her singing 'real melojous music, /Dat jes' strikes yo' hawt and clings'

G'way an' quit dat noise, Miss Lucy-
Put dat music book away;
What's de use to keep on tryin'?
Ef you practice twell you're gray,
You cain't sta't no notes a-flyin'
Lak de ones dat rants an' rings
F'om de kitchen to de big woods
When Melindy sings.[579]

The poem, when performed rather than read, ends with a *call* that echoes "F'om de valley to de hill." That call is Malindy's song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" sang softly and sweetly to further stress the message of the poem—that black singers are 'naturally' talented. Similar to hidden codes and messages found in many slave songs, this poem employs implicit irony to criticise the intellect of white people about whom, at the time of slavery, with all available assets—such as like Miss Lucy's 'music book'—the poet is not free to express judgement or voice his opinion.[580] This theme of 'masking' is recurrent in Dunbar's poetry.

In the same collection of poems, Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" is one of the best examples of his poetic talent in standard English and his loyalty to his race. The well-known poem is predominantly about the ordeal of black people who faked happiness to survive their miserable lives. Despite their immense suffering, the speaker of the poem is

[579] Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, 195.
[580] Steven Gould Axelrod, et al., ed., *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Traditions and Revolutions, Beginnings to 1900* (Rutgers University Press, 2003), 720.

too proud to ask for the world's sympathy, because what the world offers is merely "counting all […their] tears and sighs". The collective 'we' of poem includes the poet-speaker and black people. They, he says, wear masks that conceal their eyes and cheeks, features that when hidden accentuate their tearing eyes and sad smiles. People, namely white people, are blinded to their facial countenance and therefore deny their identity and humanity.[581] The poem, written in iambic tetrameter, serves as a good example of black people's literary creativity on one hand, and it illustrates the poet's allegiance to the African American cause.

> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
> And mouth with myriad subtleties,
> […]
> We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries
> To thee from tortured souls arise.
> We sing, but oh the clay is vile
> Beneath our feet, and long the mile,
> But let the world dream otherwise,
> We wear the mask![582]

The 'oral' significance of his poetry is that Dunbar incorporated the voices of slaves and their stories as dictated by his parents and became a powerful interpreter of his people's experience. He drew from the African oral tradition to write poetry that paved the way to prominent African American poets, including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and he was, consequently, called in 1906 'poet Laureate of his race' by scholar and civil rights activist Mary Church Terrell.

After surveying the importance of literacy and intellectual resistance with both Muslims and non-Muslim slaves and ex-slaves who drew from their oral heritage strength, it is important to bring into discussion a name that is quite prominent when topics of slavery, literacy and education, freedom are being discussed: Frederick

[581] Jay Martin, *A Singer in the Dawn: Reinterpretation of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975), 88-89.
[582] Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, 167.

Douglass, whose famous autobiographies, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and My *Bondage and My Freedom* provide important details of how he sought to learn. In the introduction to the latter, Douglass stressed the importance of learning as means of gaining freedom

> To his uncommon memory, then, we must add a keen and accurate insight into men and things; an original breadth of common sense which enabled him to see, and weigh, and compare whatever passed before him, and which kindled a desire to search out and define their relations to other things not so patent, but which never succumbed to the marvellous nor the supernatural; a sacred thirst for liberty and for learning, first as a means of attaining liberty, then as an end in itself most desirable; a will; an unfaltering energy and determination to obtain what his soul pronounced desirable; a majestic self-hood; determined courage; a deep and agonizing sympathy with his embruted, crushed and bleeding fellow slaves, and an extraordinary depth of passion, together with that rare alliance between passion and intellect, which enables the former, when deeply roused, to excite, develop and sustain the latter.[583]

Douglass believed that religion has a role, too, in gaining freedom. In his *Narrative*, he wrote, "I prayed for freedom for twenty years, but received no answer until I prayed with my legs" is often quoted out of context or misinterpreted. Robert W. Griffiths (2012), for example, introduces Douglass's quote in Chapter 8 of his book *Slaying the Dragon: An Everyman's Rejection of God and Religion*, suggesting that Douglass, by his statement, gave up on God, that he finally recognised that his prayers were in vain. Griffiths, obviously, does not include religious testimony of Douglass's in the Appendix of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in which Douglass clearly stated that he "love[d] the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ".[584] Moreover, if we read the quote from an Islamic perspective and in light of the previously mentioned stories of knowledge and freedom of Muslim slaves, when Douglass 'prayed with …his legs' can be interpreted as he acted upon the knowledge and wisdom he gained

[583] Frederick Douglass, introduction to *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: New York and Auburn, Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 10-11

[584] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (New York: Random House, 1845, 1981), 113.

throughout the years, in Islam, seeking knowledge comes before acting, doing, or saying anything; God says, "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge."[585]

One final example on the importance of education to African Americans is found in "An Hour with Harriet Tubman" (1911), in which Harriet Tubman tells James B. Clarke, who was a student at Cornell University at the time of the interview, how she helped to liberate hundreds of slaves during the Civil War. During their conversation, she sang a song she had sung to ease the distress of "frightened black Israelites". She clapped her hands and stamped her feet as she sang:

> Come along, come along, and don't be fool,'
> Uncle Sam rich enough to sen' us all to school;
> Come along, come along, don't be alarm,'
> Uncle Sam rich enough to give us all a farm.[586]

Tubman's song clearly stresses the importance of learning and knowing what people are entitled to in order to improve the livelihood of people.

There is a question that begs an answer. In Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* and in many ex-slaves' testimonies, there is clear struggle in slaves' attempt to learn, let alone owning writing tools. For example, Fannie Moore, an eighty-eight-year-old ex-slave interviewed at Asheville, North Carolina by Marjorie Jones, says,

> None of the niggers have any learnin', weren't never allowed to as much as pick up a piece of paper. My daddy slip and get a Webster book and den he take it out in de field and he learn to read. De white folks afraid to let de chillen learn anythin'. They afraid dey get too smart and be harder to manage . Dey never let 'em know anythin' about anythin'.[587]

Clearly, Fannie Moore's father received *typical* slave treatment for attempting to learn; whereas, the stories mentioned earlier in this chapter about Muslim slaves, there is evidence that they did not confront the same brutal treatment. In other words, many

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[585] *The Holy Qur'an*, interpretation of Surah Isra (The Night Journey), [17: 36].
[586] James B. Clarke, "An Hour with Harriet Tubman," in *Christophe: A Tragedy in Prose of Imperial Haiti*, William Edgar Easton (Los Angeles: Press Grafton, 1911), 121.
[587] Norman R. Yetman, *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, 229.

Muslim slaves left manuscripts after their deaths, some owned a copy of the Qur'an, such as Bilali who was buried with his Qur'an and prayer rug. Bilali left a 13-page-long script whose make and details suggest that Bilali did not take trouble hiding it, and its length suggests that he had access to writing tools: "The covering is rough buff skin with a flap, length wise like an envelope. A string of the same skin passes through it for tying. There is no writing of any kind on the cover to give clue to the name of the man."[588]

Figure 12 pages 4 and 5 of the Bilali document found in Muhammed Abdullah al-Ahari, Bilali Muhammad: Muslim Jurisprudist in Antebellum Georgia *(Chicago: Magribine Press, 2010), 24.*

The question is: were Muslim slaves treated differently to other slaves and, hence, enjoyed some 'luxuries' that non-Muslim slaves were punished to attempt to pursue? The fact that there are Arabic manuscripts and autobiographies left by Muslim slaves suggest that many Muslim slaves were indeed treated differently. This is, of course, not a

[588] Muhammed Abdullah al-Ahari, *Bilali Muhammad: Muslim Jurisprudist in Antebellum Georgia*, 11-12.

straightforward question. However, it is often suggested that in places where the Spanish and Portuguese ruled, Muslims slaves were reportedly continuously persecuted and efforts were made to battle Islam and "to prevent the importation of Muslim Africans to the New World, even persecuting those slaves suspected of being Muslim." [589] Nevertheless, "England had no such tradition and therefore had no reason to anticipate religious hostility in any a priori fashion."[590] In "Slave Evaluation Report" (1821), the deposition of Antonio Sadice described a thirty-year-old Louisianan called Osman as a "good carter, carpenter, and negro-driver, of uncommon intelligence." This person was reported to have been favoured by the British who were were "very much attached to Osman because he was not only a very smart, active & cunning fellow, but could speak with the Indians whose language he understood very well." [591] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable even suggest that "One indicator of [… such] comparative tolerance – even preference – for Muslim slaves that existed in the United States was the considerable writing (journalistic, scholarly, and even fiction) that emerged about Muslim slaves and their narratives."[592] Another indicator – an interesting one indeed – is reported by the jazz musician, Dizzy Gillespie. He noted that in the 1950s many black jazz musicians who assumed new Muslim names were allowed to enter "white only" restaurants and were described as "white" on their union cards. In Gillespie's own words, "Man, if you join the Muslim faith, you ain't colored no more, you'll be white,' they'd say. You get a new name and you don't have to be a nigger no more."[593]

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[589] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable, "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" in *Black Roots to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.
[590] Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58.
[591] Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 158.
[592] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marble, "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" in *Black Roots to Islam*, 3.
[593] Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To Be or Not … To Bop: Memoirs* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1979), 193.

A few of them were, as previously mentioned, freed and sent back to Africa, a dream a huge number of slaves never attained. This leads to another question: why were they treated differently if slaveholders were mainly, indeed only, interested in their financial gains from their slaves? To address the question, we can recall two quotes made by white people; the first is made by Sir Charles Lyell (1849) who described a Muslim slave nicknamed Old Tom. He says, "He remained a strict Mahometan, but his numerous progeny of jet-black children and grandchildren, all of them marked by countenances of a more European cast than those of ordinary negros, have exchanged the Koran for the Bible."[594] The second quoted is made by the English minister, Thomas Bluett, about Ayyub Bin Sulaiman; "we perceived he was a Mohametan [i.e. Muslim…]. For by his affable carriage, and the easy composure of his countenance, we could perceive he was no common slave."[595] Both quotes are discussed in different contexts in this thesis, and both indicate how Muslim slaves are 'humanised' and set apart from other slaves by their 'countenance'. Furthermore, Muslim slaves were distinguished by their religious practices that include the way they dress, food restrictions, praying five times daily with distinctive physical movements, Islamic names, communicating in Arabic, their previous education in Africa, etc., Turner remarks, "the very qualities that distinguished African Muslims from other slaves impressed their black compatriots, both slave and free, because they represented resistance, self-determination, and education."[596] In Africa, most of them received training to become people of professions, teachers, Islamic scholars, leaders, etc. Turner adds,

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[594] Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* (London: J. Murray, 1849), 266.
[595] Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Boonda in Africa; Who Was a Slave about two Years in Maryland; and afterwards being brought to England was set free, and sent to his native land in the year 1934* (London: Richard Ford, 1734), in Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 80.
[596] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 45.

> Vincent P. Franklin has shown that resistance, self-determination, and education were the "core values" of African-American culture from slavery to the present. Indeed, in the antebellum period, no other group of blacks in America had a religion that articulated these values more effectively than the African Muslims. Aspects of global Islam—literacy in Arabic, signification, and jihad—equipped them with the tools for a liberation struggle in America that in many cases resulted ultimately in their emigration back to Africa.[597]

Bilali Muhammad, for example, practised his religion publicly; he prayed and fasted despite being assaulted and pressurised to succumb to the system of slavery.[598] But, Bilali was not conforming to the slavery system; he was conforming to the Islamic teaching of being an ambassador of Islam. Cornelia Bailey states that

> You see, you can think of Africans as being victims, and in a sense they were, but they were also great survivors. If they survived the Middle Passage, and a lot of people didn't, then they survived everything that was thrown at them. They were determined people. They were expected to conform to the ways of the European slaveholders and they did just enough of that to get by, but they didn't want to lose all of their African selves. They hung onto their customs and beliefs as much as they could and in doing so they kept a good bit of their pride. Then they passed their traditions down so successfully that many of the Geechee ways I learned as a child can be traced directly back to Africa.[599]

Austin (1984) says that he was "a proud leader of men and an equally proud leader of Islam."[600] His traits as a leader made him responsible for managing Sapelo Island, overseeing of up to 400 or 500 slaves.[601] He demonstrated exemplary leading skills a few times, one of which was during the hurricane of 14 September 1824 when the slave-master was away: "Bilali saved hundreds of slaves by directing them into cotton and sugar houses made of an African material, tabby."[602] To Muslims, it is important to obey God and His Prophet[603] who was reported as saying, "A strong believer is better and is more lovable to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in everyone, (but) cherish that which gives you benefit (in the Hereafter) and seek help from Allah and do not lose

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[597] Ibid., 45-46.
[598] Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 17.
[599] Cornelia Bailey, *God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man*, 2-3.
[600] Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, 265.
[601] Ibid., 15.
[602] Ibid., 268-289.
[603] In Chapter IV, verse 59 of the Qur'an God orders believers to obey Him and his Messenger: "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."

heart, and if anything (in the form of trouble) comes to you, do not say: If I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so, but say: Allah did that what He had ordained to do and your 'if' opens the (gate) for the Satan."[604] It is clear, according to this hadith that no matter how difficult the hardship is, Muslims should not be disheartened and continue to ask God for assistance to endure their hardships.

As for why Muslim slaves' return to Africa was facilitated is a story that goes back centuries ago just at the start of the Transatlantic Slave Trade; for about 800 years, Muslims were generally more advanced in their power and scientific advances than Europe and formed a constant threat from North Africa and the Middle-East. Attempts to learn the Arabic language and study the Qur'an and gain Islamic knowledge were made by European monks to convert Muslims which, states historian Bernard Lewis in *Islam and the West* (1993), was futile.[605] This in addition to the defiant nature of Muslim slaves, who demonstrated both intellectual resistance and actual revolts against their enslavement, returning them to Africa was not a hard decision to slave masters.

> Although Europeans had finally surpassed global Islam in terms of technology and military power by the time of the antebellum period in America, the image of the "Moor" or the Muslim enemy was still a powerful signification for people of European descent everywhere. It explained the awe and respect that some African Muslim slaves received from some white Americans, as well as the repeated attempts on the part of whites to facilitate their return back to Africa, in order to rid America of Islam.[606]

Regardless of what Muslim slaves did to gain their freedom, as demonstrated by the stories of the Muslim slaves discussed in this chapter, it is evident that the knowledge they received in Africa coupled with their religious devotion were the means that many of them *sailed* their way back to their mother land. Non-Muslim Africans, likewise, knew that education was the key to their liberty. They, therefore, made tremendous efforts and

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[604] *Sahih Muslim*, 2664, in-book reference: Book 46, Hadith 52, English reference: Book 33, Hadith 6441. Retrieved from sunnah.com < https://sunnah.com/muslim/46/52>
[605] Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15-19, 33-34.
[606] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 44-45.

quite literally risked their lives in order to be free. They, most importantly, were never embarrassed by their dialect. They embraced it and were proud of their heritage that they sang it and wrote poetry with it. That is how they achieved their freedom. Like any human creative and artistic productivity, African oral heritage and African American oral — and written — poetry are only appreciated when racial prejudices are kept aside.

CONCLUSION

There are no precise and reliable statistical reports that clearly state the number of Muslim Africans enslaved during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. However, judging from the available historical and literary scholarship, it is possible to make the assumption that there was a considerable number of African Muslims taken into slavery. Many of them, reportedly, continued to practise their faith by praying five times a day, communicating in Arabic, dressing modestly, adhering to Islamic dietary rules, etc. Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable (2009) state that "Historians have unearthed texts written by Muslim slaves in English and Arabic, shedding light on a far-flung population of Muslim Africans enslaved throughout the New World, many of whom were distinguished by their literacy, and who struggled to maintain their faith through rituals and naming practices, by reading the Koran and writing Arabic, sometimes even launching jihads against their overlords."[607]

Because Islam is a religion that shapes almost every aspect of its believers' lives, it has a great influence over their artistic creativity. Recent examinations of African American music, namely spirituals, blues, jazz, and rap, have helped in identifying African and Islamic elements which have, generally, been overlooked. For example, when African American music, especially spirituals, is examined for its religious content and structure, it is often interpreted from a Judeo-Christian perspective, sometimes from a Voodoo perspective, but very rarely – if ever – from an Islamic one.

[607] Hishaam D. Aidi and Manning Marable, "The Early Muslim Presence and its Significance" in *Black Roots to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

In Chapter I, I noted a statistical study conducted in 2010 about the religious affiliations of people of West Africa for the last 150 years which demonstrates that over half of the population follow Islam.[608] This part of the continent is important, because it is the main part of Africa where most African slaves were captured. Among those captured was a good number of Muslims; some sources state that at least a third of enslaved Africans were, in fact, Muslims.[609] On this important piece of information, discussions and interpretations of slave songs and African American music are founded throughout the thesis.

The interpretations and analyses are made based on comparisons between primary Islamic texts, namely the Qur'an and Prophetic sayings (Hadiths), and slave songs and African American poetry. In many instances, the points of similarity are uncanny. For example, the famous slave song "Go Down, Moses" resembles the story of Moses ﷺ in Surah Taha, the twentieth Chapter in the Qur'an; spirituals and ring shout performances resemble Islamic acts of worship; "Levee Camp Holler" resembles the West African version of the Muslim call for prayer, etc. The points of similarity are too many to be overlooked or ignored. Acknowledging this gap in scholarship inspired the exploration and investigation of the topic of the thesis. My work, hopefully, is a contribution to a field of knowledge that has so far not received the appropriate appreciation and attention.

In order to make legitimate interpretations, linguistic, scientific and literary discussions are formed by implementing Jungian analytical psychology and other views made by its founder Carl Gustav Jung. One of his views about art is that it tells information about the artist; in other words, art reflects its creator's life experience and circumstances. Jung contends, "it has long been known that the scientific treatment of art

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[608] Houssain Kettani, "Muslim Population in Africa: 1950-2020," *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development* v. 1, no. 2 (June 2010).

[609] Okolo, "Islam and Blues," International Museum of Muslim Cultures, <http://www.muslimmuseum.org/?page_id=2850>.

will reveal the personal threads that the artist, intentionally or unintentionally, has woven into his work."[610] This is especially important when approaching an art made by people living in the hardship of slavery. Their artistic creativity can, in light of Jung's view, be interpreted as a reflection or portrayal of life during slavery, through the lenses of slave artists. This is also supported by another view of Jung's; he believes that analytical psychology in art emphasises the importance of identifying the 'human determinants' of a work of art in order to understand its meaning. This means that understanding and appreciating art rely on examining its creator, the artist, who, in the context of this thesis, is the singing African slave. Jung states,

> In order to do justice to a work of art, analytical psychology must rid itself entirely of medical prejudice; for a work of art is not a disease, and consequently requires a different approach from the medical one. A doctor naturally has to seek out the causes of a disease in order to pull it up by the roots, but just as naturally the psychologist must adopt exactly the opposite attitude towards a work of art. Instead of investigating its typically human determinants, he will inquire first of all into its meaning, and will concern himself with its determinants only in so far as they enable him to understand it more fully.[611]

In line with analytical psychological ways of approaching art, Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud (1991) believe that when African American music is discussed, one should take into account the history behind it and keep in mind that it is not only an utterance or a musical note but it is also the reflection of slavery, of striving for freedom. They believe,

> To understand the African-American spiritual and other forms of African-American music is to begin to understand the life of the African-American. This music represents not just notes on a page, but also the experience of slavery, reconstruction, segregation, civil rights, […] political strife, and other aspects of African-American life.[612]

Likewise, Jerry W. Ward holds, to a great extent, a similar view to that of Jung. In his introduction to *Trouble the Water*, Ward offers an interesting observation and advice when approaching and reading African-American songs and poetry. He contends,

> Like the origins of poetry throughout the world, the beginnings of African-American poetry are in speech and song. […] What is primal about its origins and

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[610] Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1966, 2003), 55.
[611] Ibid., 57.
[612] Marvin V. Curtis and Lee V. Cloud, "The African-American Spiritual: Traditions and Performance Practices," *The Choral Journal* v. 32, no. 4 (November 1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23548375> 21-22.

> strongly marked in its continuity as a tradition suggests the value of listening to the poetry as carefully as we read it silently. The beginnings of African-American poetry is the sound of Africans in the complex process of becoming Americans. Those historical moments of transformation are inflected with resistance, the trauma of loss, adaptation, cross-fertilizing, and synthesis.[613]

It is clear that African American poetry contains stories that tell the history of people who found in song a means to achieve multiple aims: to connect with God; to preserve their African heritage; to alleviate pain, to communicate with other slaves through coded messages. All of these purposes do not receive as much attention as their artistic and musical aspect does.

There is an obvious tendency in slave song and African American poetry to stress the importance of religion and connecting with God. As discussed in Chapter III, having strong faith and believing in God as always present, all the time and everywhere, were essential coping—indeed survival – mechanisms that gave many believing slaves hope, which was in many cases sought after in death. W. E. B. Du Bois writes a powerful statement of hope and justice:

> The Music of Negro religion is that plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences, which, despite caricature and defilement, still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil. Sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, it was adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave, until, under the stress of law and whip, it became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope.
>
> […]
>
> Some day the Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal, out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where all that makes life worth living – Liberty, Justice, and Right – is marked "For White People Only."[614]

In the last page of his reflective religious book *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (1947), the African American theologian Howard Thurman states that many

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[613] Jerry W. Ward, Jr., ed., *Trouble the Water: 250 Years of African-American Poetry* (New York: Mentor, 1997), xix.
[614] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1903, 1994), 116, 125.

slave singers did not allow their circumstances to define their fate; they believed in a Supreme Being, connecting with whom lifted their spirits and shaped their view on life. He says,

> They [slave singers] made a worthless life, the life of chattel property, a mere thing, a body, *worth living!* They yielded with abiding enthusiasm to a view of life which included all the events of their experience without exhausting themselves in those experiences. To them this quality of life was insistent fact because of that which deep within them, they discovered of God, and his far-flung purposes. God was not through with them. And He was not, nor could He be exhausted by, any single experience or any series of experiences. To know Him was to live a life worthy of the loftiest meaning of life. Men in all ages and climes, slave or free, trained or untutored, who have sensed the same values, are their fellow-pilgrims who journey together with them in increasing self-realization in the quest for the city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.[615]

Therefore, a slave song like "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" appears at first to be a sad one; yet, there are times the singer/persona of the song does not feel that way. This means that there is solace in prayer and talking to God, because the song opens with repetition of the line "sometimes I feel like a motherless child" and closes with the repetition of "Den I gi' down on my knees and pray, *pray*, Gi' down on my knees and pray." This means, in Thurman's words, that "the bitter contradictions of life are not final and that hope was built into the fabric of the struggle."[616]

In an attempt to define African American religion, Anthony B. Pinn states that the purpose of religion "is to provide greater life meaning, to help its adherents respond to the huge questions of life such as who we are, what we are, and, why we are."[617] To many slaves, religion was at the very least an outlet to relieve pain. The effect of letting out repressed emotions and its effect on the overall wellbeing of people is discussed in Chapter II, in which scientific discussions are introduced to illustrate the effect music has on the brain. The discussions include factual examples found in Stefan Koelsch's study

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[615] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 56.
[616] Ibid., 4.
[617] Anthony B. Pinn, *Introducing African American Religion* (London: Routledge, Talyor and Francis Group, 2013), 99.

Brain and Music (2012). Koelsch states that "Music can have effects on the wellbeing of an individual, often including regenerative autonomic, endocrine and immunological effects. Although such effects are not material in the sense that the individual can eat, drink, or even touch them, they nevertheless involve matter (hormone- and immune-molecules and cells which also modulate expenditure of glucose, fat, and minerals)."[618] This is important in order to understand how religion, the main topic of Chapter I, combined with music, which is the focus of Chapter II, produced powerful effects both physically and spiritually.

The discussions made in Chapter I and Chapter II pave the way to the discussions of Chapter III, in which singing spirituals is interpreted not as an art form, but as a practice of worship. For this reason, frequently quoted works of the prominent Harlem Renaissance African American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois, especially *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) which is introduced only occasionally, are not extensively focused on; rather, theological interpretations are presented. For example, Howard Thurman's *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (1969) is quoted to support the argument made in the chapter, whose main aim is to demonstrate that spirituals are an act of worship whose performances are often interpreted for their artistic value, rarely for their religious content and ritual.

What is striking about the slave songs is not only their religious or artistic value, but their reflection of the immense love the slaves had despite their awful lives. As stated in Chapters II and III, spirituals rarely contain words of hate or negativity. Many slaves used their singing skills to fight their oppressor. Megan Sullivan (2001) comments on 'African American music as rebellion,'

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[618] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 206-207.

> Slave owners in the United States sought to completely subjugate their slaves physically, mentally and spiritually through brutality and demeaning acts. African-Americans frequently used music to counter this dehumanization – to boost morale and toughen themselves psychologically.[619]

All in all, according to the Jungian school of analytical psychology, African American music is a reflection of the lives of the composers. Within their music, emotions and secret messages are hidden. Many slaves intelligently knew the emotive function of music as it is a prevailing practice in their African heritage, and now science comes to confirm that function. Koelsch confirms, "although music seems semantically less specific than language […] music can be more specific when it conveys information about feeling sensations that are problematic to express with words because music can operate *prior* to the reconfiguration of feeling sensations into words."[620] Also, they form a reservoir of historical information that resembles the job of the West African griot, part of whose job was to hand down knowledge from generation to generation by word of mouth. Fahamisha Patricia Brown contends,

> The language of African American music informs the language of African American poetry. "When musicians say cookin/ it is food for the soul/ that is being prepared…" (Baraka/Jones, "I Am Speaking of Future Good-ness and Social Philosophy," in *Black Magic*). Song functions in African American vernacular culture as primary recorder, the means of documentation of life and experience. Making music, then, continuing the song/talk that records and passes on the story, documents the events, celebrates the heroes, exposes the evils, and exhorts the people to keep on keeping on is the mission of the poet as well. The contemporary African American poet sings to a community and from a vibrant oral tradition by making song/talk.[621]

The discussions presented in this thesis should hopefully inspire more investigation into the topic of slave and African American music and song. Interesting insights are waiting to be uncovered. There are, for example, huge potential investigations in East African, such as Swahili, and West African, such as Hausan,

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[619] Megan Sullivan, "African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop" (2001). Retrieved from <http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/publicationsprizes/discoveries/discoveriesspring2001/03sullivan.pdf.> 22.

[620] Stefan Koelsch, *Brain and Music*,180.

[621] Fahamisha Patricia Brown, *Performing the Word: African American Poetry as Vernacular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 82.

religious poetry and slave songs, especially, spirituals. "The Song of Bagauda," for example, is a long Hausan poem –about twenty pages in written text – that was dictated by an old woman to M. Hiskett.[622] Reciting the whole poem entirely from memory, the old woman can be seen as a female African griot, a figure once was of special prominence; whereas, today they are considered mainly entertainment artists. Focusing on the role of woman in creating, singing and performing songs and poetry is another important aspect that lacks proper investigation today.

Also, there is a huge gap in the study of African music and religion in spite of the apparent importance to the appreciation of African and African American cultures. Part of the problem stems from the general tendency among scholars to think of Africa is a place of monolithic culture and that a term like "African religion" has been so loosely used that over time questioning the validity of such terms become overlooked. Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery (2002) contend that "In the early twentieth century, most Americans had little if any education about Africa, relying more on myths than factual knowledge for their ideas about that vast continent. Many viewed Africa as a great monolith and rarely differentiated its peoples, languages, cultures, or terrains."[623] In his *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (1984), Allan Austin believes that it is still the case when he wrote his book, commenting on a declaration made by a Muslim slave, Omar Bin Said.[624] For example, just few years before Austin made this statement, John Miller Chernoff, who developed familiarity with drumming traditions of the Ewe of Ghana, explains that there a form of 'pluralism' that exists in African societies; he says,

> African affinity for polymetric musical forms indicates that, in the most fundamental sense, the African sensibility is profoundly pluralistic […] Just as a participant in an

[622] M. Hiskett, "The 'Song of Baguda: A Hausa King List and Homily in Verse—I." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* v. 27, no. 3 (1964). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/611390>
[623] Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery, introduction to *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949, 2002), xi.
[624] Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

> African musical event is unlikely to stay within one rhythmic perspective, so do Africans maintain a flexible and complicated orientation towards themselves and their lives […] The sensibility we have found in musical expression more accurately appears to represent a method of actively tolerating, interpreting and even using the multiple and fragmented aspects of everyday events to build a richer and more diversified personal experience […] the adaptability and strength of an African's sense of community and personal identity reside in the aesthetic and ethical sensibility which we have seen cultivated in one of its aspects, music. As such as the values of an African musical event represent not an integrity from which we are moving away but rather than an integrity which, with understanding, we might approach. It is a felicitous orientation in a world of many forms.[625]

Likewise, John S. Mbiti's works are frequently quoted, confirming the view that in spite of the diversity of thousands of ethnic groups in Africa, "there are sufficient elements which make it possible for us to discuss African concepts of God as a unity and on a continental scale."[626] This seems, for me, a sweeping generalisation when the second-largest continent on earth is being discussed. Even if this view is plausible, statistical studies on religious affiliations of African people must be included in any relevant discussion. Mbiti's description of "the African God" is consistent with the Jewish, Christian and Islamic God – the God of the so-called Abrahamic faiths – His the most Supreme Being, the Creator of everything, King, Ruler, Provider, and so on. According to Mbiti, believers should be humble and honor and respect Him, and this is "the only image [of God] known in traditional African societies."[627] Additionally, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr (1995) tells us that "All African peoples recognized God as the One, […and] worshiped God, the One."[628] Another important aspect of "African religion" introduced by Floyd is that "In traditional African culture, […] religion permeated and was the basis for all aspects of life, including education, politics, harvesting, hunting, homemaking, and community welfare. Since religion permeated the everyday life of African peoples, the great number of religious beliefs that existed […] appeared as ideas and practices that

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[625] John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 155-156.
[626] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1990), 30.
[627] Ibid., 48.
[628] Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United* States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15.

governed everyday life in the various communities."[629] All of these aspects fit into the Islamic adherence and practices. However, there is a general tendency to overlook the powerful influence of Islam in Africa, despite the fact that statistical studies demonstrate that the largest-followed religion in Africa generally and in West Africa particularly is Islam.[630]

To conclude, many slaves sought to alleviate their pain by singing. What they left for us is their music, especially spirituals which "are available to all persons who are prepared to open themselves to the unsettling, healing power that inhabits these marvellous songs of life."[631] These songs were created out of "deeply meaningful, archetypally human experiences, relevant not only to the specific circumstances of slavery but also to women and men struggling with issues of justice, freedom and spiritual wholeness in all times and places."[632] Their spirituals "express deep suffering, endurance, and yearning for freedom in the peaceful kingdom of heaven."[633] True, they sang of deep pain, sorrow, suffering and strife, but they sang beautifully with love and faith, the only two things they had.

This thesis, hopefully, has contributed to a topic that has, thus far, received little attention. African American music, particularly slave song, still has so many uncovered treasures that are yet to be 'unfolded'. This complies with Alice Walker's dedication poem (1991) which is a call to stand together to remember African American history and appreciate its values. The continuous repetition of African American stories, from

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[629] Ibid.
[630] Please refer to the introductory paragraphs of Chapter I of this thesis for statistical information on religion in West Africa.
[631] Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), xi.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Monica Gordon Pershey, "African American Spiritual Music: A Historical Perspective," *The Dragon Lode* v. 18, no. 2 (Spring, 2000), 25.

African griots to modern-day hip-hop performers, stresses the importance of keeping their history alive.

> Rest in peace.
> The meaning of your lives
> is still
> unfolding.
>
> Rest in peace.
> In me
> the meaning of your lives
> is still
> Unfolding.
>
> Rest in peace, in me.
> The meaning of your lives
> is still
> unfolding.
>
> Rest, In me
> The meaning of your lives
> is still
> unfolding.
>
> Rest, In me
> In me
> the meaning of your lives
> is still
> unfolding.
>
> Rest.[634]

[634] Alice Walker, *Her Blue Body Everything We Know* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 313.

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