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Music and the New Negro: Spirituals, Folk-Songs, and the Blues

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The face of the New Negro was the singer Roland Hayes, whose portrait by Winold Reiss graced the cover of the *Survey Graphic* special issue, *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* in March 1925. These were indeed musical times, which also saw much discussion about music. Just to mention a few highlights: in February 1924 Paul Whiteman organised his "An Experiment in Modern Music" to showcase his ideas about jazz, a concert that culminated in George Gershwin's new composition, "Rhapsody in Blue"; in January 1925 Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong recorded W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues"; in April 1925 Paul Robeson gave his first public concert (arranged by Carl Van Vechten) at the Greenwich Village Theatre; in September 1925 *Vanity Fair* published four of Langston Hughes's 'jazz' poems, while in the same month there appeared both James Weldon Johnson's *Book of American Negro Spirituals* and Dorothy Scarborough's *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*; and finally in May 1926 both Paul Whiteman's *Jazz* and W. C. Handy's *Blues: An Anthology* (with illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias) were published.

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In this instance the relevant historical framework goes back to 1845 when Frederick Douglass asked his readers to pause and listen to the songs of the slave, which "represented the sorrows of his heart". There we would hear a "tale of woe," for "every tone was a testimony against slavery."[1] As Jon Cruz points out, the songs had first to be *heard*, to be distinguished from incoherent noise. Douglass heard them within the context of slavery, sounding that note of "unimpeachable credibility" given by experience.[2] Douglass's own testimony was heard by white abolitionists, often of a Unitarian and Transcendentalist background, who began to listen to those songs—which resembled and drew from Christian hymnology—within a religious context, thereby inventing them as 'spirituals', songs that indicated the slaves' grasp of Christian values:

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[1] *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1845, pp. 15, 14. The next few paragraphs draw extensively on two magisterial studies: Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, and Ronald Radano, *Lying Up A Nation: Race and Black Music*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2003.

[2] Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, p. 88.

> Slaves had fathomed the core values and principles of Christian teachings, and had taken them to heart. And they took them into the public sphere. For disenchanted cultural elites who possessed humanitarian sympathies, who were increasingly compelled to confront their sense of cultural erosion, who worried about the coming of market society and the new men of industrial power, and who were questing after a fleeting authenticity with the ideological weapons of romanticism, what better place to find evidence of an indisputable self rooted in an indisputable experience than in a slave? What more convenient place to find such authenticity than on the cultural margins and in the domestic backyard of American civil society where the spiritual-singing new Negro was now found?[3]

In this respect one of Cruz's key points is that "authenticity is an ascribed and appreciated dimension of cultural activity rather than an urgent and lived activity".[4] That initial ascription and appreciation of authenticity was largely due to two individuals.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1817-1911) studied at Harvard and was appointed to a Unitarian settlement at Newburyport in 1847. He was already a committed abolitionist and vigorous opponent of the US war of aggression against Mexico; in his new post he also took up the plight of female factory workers. All of this was too much for leading members of his congregation and he was dismissed. As a free-lance writer and lecturer, Higginson cultivated friendships with Emerson and Thoreau, and frequently spoke in favour of women's rights. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, followed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, he adopted a radical position on the slavery issue, helping to establish the Boston Vigilance Committee, which vowed to resist the rendition of fugitive slaves. When anti-slavery settlers in Kansas were attacked by pro-slavery forces from Missouri determined to drive them out, Higginson, acting as an agent of the Kansas Aid Committee, purchased guns and ammunition and took them to Kansas to arm the settlers. Eighteenth months later he became one of the 'Secret Six' raising money for John Brown's effort to initiate a slave insurrection in the South. He was the only member of the group who remained in the country during the trial and subsequent congressional investigation into the Harpers Ferry affair. When the Civil War started, Higginson volunteered to fight and in 1862 was put in command of the first black regiment of the Civil War, the 1st South Carolina Volunteers. Injured in a raid, he resigned in 1863, but continued to fight for equal treatment of African-American soldiers.

Higginson's Civil War memoir is notable for the warmth of his portrayal of the black soldiers in his charge. Struck by the songs he hears at night in their tents, he is determined to transcribe as many as he can: "Writing down in the darkness, as I best could,—perhaps with my hand in the safe covert of my pocket,—the words of the song, I have afterwards carried it to my tent, like some captured bird or insect, and then, after

[3] Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, p. 97.

[4] Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, p. 110. See also Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* [1989], Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

examination, put it by".[5] The analogy with natural history is telling, as is the covert nature of the transcription—very much the norm until the use of the phonograph.

Higginson set the tone: a deep ethnosympathy (as Cruz calls it) based on radical religious views, seeing the songs within a literary tradition whose lineaments had been established by Walter Scott:

> The present writer had been a faithful student of the Scottish ballads, and had always envied Sir Walter the delight of tracing them out amid their own heather, and of writing them down piecemeal from the lips of aged crones. It was a strange enjoyment, therefore, to be suddenly brought into the midst of a kindred world of unwritten songs, as simple and indigenous as the Border Minstrelsy, more uniformly plaintive, almost always more quaint, and often as essentially poetic.[6]

The second important individual was the distinguished scholar William Francis Allen (1830-1889), who, sent to run a school for newly emancipated slaves at Port Royal on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, started to collect the folk-songs he and others had heard. They were published as *Slave Songs of the United States* in 1867.[7] The Sea Islands would remain an area of high importance into the 1920s on account of the Gullah language in use among the black population, supposedly showing signs of African origins. Allen's approach was more scholarly than Higginson's in the sense that he wanted to classify and study the spirituals, introducing a protoethnographic note that would later flourish when Negro songs were studied as folk-music. Then, after the Civil War spirituals were cherished and developed in the new black colleges and universities, notably Fisk and Hampton, although there was often opposition within those colleges from classically-trained musicians who looked down upon what they heard as barbarous sounds of primitive African origin, prefering to coach their black charges in the higher traditions of European classical music.

"From the beginning", Andrea Brady notes, "the collection of African American folk song was a site of struggle: between a perceived obsolescence caused by the supposed end of chattel slavery, and a recognition of the continuity of practices of artmaking and domination from slavery into Jim Crow; between academics who claimed institutional authority, and so-called amateurs; between white negrophile and African American

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[5] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870, p. 124.

[6] Higginson, *Army Life*, p. 149.

[7] William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States*, New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867. Charles Ware was Allen's cousin; Lucy McKim Garrison was the daughter of James Miller McKim, leader of the Philadelphia-based Port Royal Relief Committee. The songs are mostly, but not exclusively, religious. Allen's journals of his time on the sea-islands and later in Charleston are published as *A Yankee Scholar in Coastal South Carolina: William Francis Allen's Civil War Journals*, ed. James Robert Hester, Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. On McKim, see Samuel Charters, *Songs of Sorrow: Lucy McKim Garrison and Slave Songs of the United States*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015.

scholars; between scientistic models of ethnography and ones based on participant observation."[8]

As Ronald Radano puts it: "By embracing the ideals of romantic perfectibility associated with folklore and the spirituals, these reformers described qualities felt to be missing in themselves, thus revealing a white double consciousness to which they could only gesture in a series of rather desperate imitative acts".[9] Black spirituals were not therefore simply trivial expressions of primitive purity: "In fact, they were vital to the Anglo-Saxon psyche precisely because they constituted the alter ego of the white self, representing the supplement or missing link of American national identity."[10]

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The paradigm that came to dominate music studies in the 1920s was that of the folk, the Romantic term *par excellence*, with its origins in the work of Johann Gottfried von Herder. Institutionally, those studies found a home in the American Folk-Lore Society [AFLS] founded, along with its *Journal of American Folk-Lore* [*JAFL*], in 1888 under the aegis of William Wells Newell (1839-1907), an independently wealthy scholar fully aligned with the Boasian vision of the nascent discipline of anthropology. Higginson joined the AFLS, along with four other members of the radical but short-lived Transcendental Club (1836-1840), indicative that the ethnosympathetic vision was at least one strand within the new folk-lore studies.

Franz Boas himself took over editorship of the *JAFL* in 1908: its editorial offices remained in Columbia until 1935, an important aspect of the institutional footings that anthropology was laying down in these years.[11] From an anthropological perspective folk-lore provided a valuable textual corpus, the study of which was a significant element in the attempt to understand another culture, which for US anthropology in these years usually meant an indigenous American culture. Dealing almost exclusively with what they regarded as non-literate cultures, the anthropologists collected their material orally, either through transcription or eventually via phonograph cylinders.

Concurrently with these developments, George Lyman Kittredge (1860-1941) was continuing the pioneering work of Francis James Child (1825-1896), the first professor of English at Harvard University. Child's lifetime project had been the collecting of popular English and Scottish ballads, anonymous poems, often found in manuscript collections, that nonetheless were seen, in the Romantic tradition, as expressive of the national heritage (although Scots might want a say about how many national heritages are involved in the phrase 'English and Scottish'). At the time of his death Child had

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[8] Andrea Brady, *Poetry and Bondage: A History and Theory of Lyric Constraint*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, p. 216.

[9] Ronald Radano, "Magical Writing", in his *Lying Up a Nation*, pp. 164-229, at 169.

[10] Radano, "Magical Writing", p. 184.

[11] So the *JAFL* was edited by Boas and his followers between 1890 and 1935. Boas himself was editor from 1908 to 1924.

almost completed the five volumes of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898). Kittredge added a bibliography and an introduction to the final volume that served as a celebration of Child's achievement. Kittredge became Gurney Professor of English at Harvard in 1917, and he followed Child in embedding his study of folk-lore within the teaching of what was then emerging as the canon of 'English Literature': Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Old Norse, Chaucer, and Shakespeare.

Its focus on American Indians meant that the anthropological strand within folk-lore studies was more clearly identified as *American*: it certainly didn't have the old-world affiliations of the literary study of folk-lore, both to British origins and to other national traditions such as the Finnish, where folk-lore studies had already reached a high level of sophistication. But the broad division had various nuances and crossovers. One element of the literary strand was a strong interest in US regions. Kittredge himself studied New England folk-lore, and his student John Lomax soon put Texas at the forefront of folk-lore studies—a development to which Dorothy Scarborough would contribute. Such regional studies inevitably involved oral collection, the methodology more associated with anthropological research. Local folk-lore associations followed, usually co-existing happily enough with the national association, although the Chicago branch, headed by Fletcher S. Bassett, briefly threatened to disrupt the harmony in the early 1890s.[12] But regional folk-lorists never quite fit the picture. They were often 'amateur' in the sense that their interests didn't necessarily square with their institutional position—where they had one, which some didn't. They tended not to be dealing with a huge body of material, as many of the specialists in European folk-lore and indeed the US anthropologists were, and their interests were less—if indeed at all—in theoretical questions and more in the texture of local culture, an interest sociological rather than literary.

Despite intermittent tensions, the anthropological and literary strands of the AFLS managed to work together, although the former was dominant. Kittredge was brought onto the board of the *JAFL* in 1908. The presidency of the AFLS was occupied by both wings, with a 60/40 dominance in favour of the anthropologists. The AFLS usually met in conjunction with the American Anthropological Association, although sometimes also with the Modern Language Association. And some figures straddled the divide: Stith Thompson was trained by Kittredge but his work on American Indian narratives brought him into close contact with the anthropological study of folk-lore.[13] The anthropologists made great play of their more scientific approach to folk-lore, although the Harvard methodology shared with contemporary Finnish work a rigorous formalism that could probably make an equal claim to scientificity. In any event the orientation of both strands was survivalist: this material was in danger of disappearing forever if not now collected. Child had been clear that education and literacy had

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[12] Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 22-31. See also Susan A. Dwyer-Shick, *The American Folklore Society and Folklore Research in America, 1888-1940*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1979.

[13] Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians*, Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929.

brought an end to the oral traditions that produced ballads: on this conservative reading there was no reason to suspect that the same would not happen with local folk-songs.

The idea of 'the folk' was based upon a fundamental division which corresponded to the uncertain line between the lettered and the unlettered. Those doing the studying belonged, needless to say, to the former group. The unlettered included all groups regarded as 'savage' or 'primitive', but also the illiterate or partially literate within broadly civilised societies—peasants, country-dwellers, even children. It also included the ancestors of the lettered, making it a category whose boundary was never as nitid as that between civilisation and savagery. The Curator of Ethnology at the United States National Museum, Otis T. Mason, captured the relationship in a vivid metaphor drawn from periodical culture:

> Consider for a moment the range of the science called anthropology. In addition to investigating what man is, it now comprehends all that he does, his activities manifested in speech, in arts of comfort, in arts of pleasure, in social organization, duties and customs, in philosophy, literature, and science, in religion. Without doubt, there is also a folk-speech, folk-trades and practices, folk fine art, folk-amusement, folk-festival, folk-ceremonies, folk-customs, folk-government, folk-society, folk-history, folk-poetry, folk-maxims, folk-philosophy, folk-science, and myths or folk-theology. Everything that we have, they have,—they are the back numbers of us.[14]

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That attention should be paid to *Negro* folk-lore was recognised from the beginning of the AFLS. In his opening piece for the first issue of the *JAFL*, William Wells Newell listed its concerns:

> It is proposed to form a society for the study of Folk-Lore, of which the principal object shall be to establish a Journal, of a scientific character, designed:--
> (1) For the collection of the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America, namely:
> (a) Relics of Old English Folk-Lore (ballads, tales, superstitions, dialect, etc.).
> (b) Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union.
> (c) Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America (myths, tales, etc.).
> (d) Lore of French Canada, Mexico, etc.
> (2) For the study of the general subject, and publication of the results of special students in this department.[15]

Newell contributed his own "Myths of Voodoo Worship and Child Sacrifice in Hayti"' to this inaugural issue, launching a scathing critique of the reports of cannibalism in the country peddled by Spenser St. John and recently repeated by James

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[14] Otis T. Mason, "The Natural History of Folk-Lore," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 4, no. 13 (1891), pp. 97–105, at 103.

[15] [William Wells Newell], "On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore", *Journal of American Folklore*, 1, no. 1 (1888), pp. 3-7, at 3. Interestingly the Harvard graduate and Mayan epigrapher C. P. Bowditch wrote one of the earliest studies of Negro folk-songs: "Negro Songs from Barbados", *Folk-Lore Journal*, 5, no. 3 (1887), pp. 130-133.

Anthony Froude.[16] The paper was a model of the AFLS's mandate to use serious scientific methodology to dismantle amateur depictions of folk cultures. Later contributors were not, however, as fastidious, offering papers on black superstition, 'voodoo', and cannibalism which combined reports of religious customs with stereotypes of black exoticism and depictions of slaves happy in their bondage.[17] Not surprisingly, given this record, twenty-seven years later in his editor's report, Boas could announce little progress:

> Since the Journal has been so developed that North American Indian, English, French, and Spanish folk-lore in America are all well represented, it seems desirable to take steps to develop the field of Negro folk-lore, which heretofore has received only slight attention, and it will be the endeavor of the Editor to devise means of accomplishing this object.[18]

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The literary approach to folk-lore pioneered by Child and developed by Kittredge took as its exemplar the form of the ballad, inevitably prioritising British origin over local American examples and lyrics over music. Kittredge remained a patron of folk-lore studies, but the growing interest in American folk-*song* moved its centre of gravity towards autochthonous developments and towards sonic dimensions.[19] The key figure here was John Avery Lomax, whose deep knowledge of Southern songs associated with the cattle trails had eventually led him to Harvard to study with Kittredge. Lomax returned to Texas in 1907 to resume his teaching position at A&M and with Kittredge's support published his ground-breaking collection *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* in 1910, sparking a national interest in folk-song collection.[20]

Gene Bluestein argues persuasively that Lomax's work, soon undertaken along with his son, Alan, represented a properly American enterprise, fully in the spirit of Herder's original insights, which had been naturalised by Emerson and Whitman and then associated with American folk-lore by Constance Rourke in her classic essay, "The Roots of American Culture".[21] At the 1913 AFL conference, Lomax, the retiring

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[16] William Wells Newell, "Myths of Voodoo Worship and Child Sacrifice in Hayti", *Journal of American Folklore*, 1, no. 1 (1888), pp. 16-30.

[17] Cruz, *Culture in the Margins*, p. 107.

[18] Franz Boas, "Editor's Report", in Charles Peabody, "Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society", *Journal of American Folklore*, 29 (April-June 1916), pp. 295-298, at 295-296. Cruz points out that "From its inception in 1888 until 1914, the journal [*JAFL*] published over one hundred entries on African Americans, many containing treatments of music" (Cruz, *Culture in the Margins*, p. 179). Clearly Boas didn't regard them very highly.

[19] See Gene Bluestein, "The Sources of American Folksong", in his *The Voice of the Folk: Foklore and American Literary Theory*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972, pp. 91-116.

[20] John Avery Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1910. On Lomax, see Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, pp. 71-124.

[21] Constance Rourke, *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays*, ed., with a preface, by Van Wyck Brooks, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942. Bluestein's argument is linked to the Harlem

president, offered seven categories of American folk-song, one of them being "Negro ballads"—in other words, secular black songs.[22]

The interest in black folk-song in general had been boosted by what became known as the Dvořák Manifesto or Statement. Appointed as director of the New York Conservatory in 1892, Antonin Dvořák published "The Real Value of Negro Melodies," in the *New York Herald* in May 1893.[23] A fortnight later the *Cleveland Gazette* quoted him:

> I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. When I first came here last year I was impressed with this idea, and it has developed into a settled conviction. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil.[24]

This endorsement from a prominent European musician lent enormous credibility to the claims for Negro music that both black and white critics would make in the early decades of the twentieth century. First off the mark was W. E. B. Du Bois.

The chapter in *The Souls of Black Folk* on what Du Bois called the "sorrow songs" brings together the original Douglassian imperative and the stamp of the new social scientific consciousness influenced by recent folk-lore studies. The songs came to him in his youth, Du Bois says, out of a South of which he had no experience, "and yet at once I knew them as of me and of mine", claiming a personal authority for his analysis—while also giving recognition to the Port Royal experiment and white collectors like Thomas Wentworth Higginson for preserving the songs.[25] However, the

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Renaissance writers by Bernard R. Bell in his *The Folk Roots of African-American Poetry*, Detroit: Broadside Press, 1974, pp. 20-31.

[22] John A. Lomax, "Some Types of American Folksong", *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 28 (January-March, 1915), pp. 1-17, at 3.

[23] [Antonin Dvořák], "The Real Value of Negro Melodies", *New York Herald*, 21 May 1893, p. 17.

[24] "Negro Melodies", *Cleveland Gazette*, 3 June 1893, p. 1. See "The Dvorák Statement", in Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009, pp. 273-276. Dvořák's inspirations included an article entitled written by Mildred Jane Hill (1859-1916) under the pseudonym Johann Tonsor ("Negro Music", *Music*, 3 (November 1892), pp. 119-122), given to the composer by the music journalist James Gibbons Huneker, and the singing of Henry Thacker Burleigh, later a distinguished composer but at the time a young student at the Conservatory whose singing of Negro spirituals as he mopped floors to earn money for his tuition attracted Dvořák's interest. (Tonsor's article waxed lyrical, as Dorothy Scarborough would later do, about how the "potent spell" of Negro music "revivifies the past" for those grown up in the South—at least the whites.) See Michael Beckerman, "Dvorak as Prime Mover, Sitting Duck and More", *New York Times*, 17 November 2002, Section 2, p. 30. There has also been the suggestion that the journalist James Creelman, employed by Jeannette Thurber to publicise her Conservatory, may have written "The Real Value of Negro Melodies".

[25] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Sorrow Songs", in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903, pp. 250-264, at 250. In a self-review in *The Independent*, Du Bois called the style of his book "tropical—African" (*The Independent*, 57, no. 2920 [November 1904], p. 1152.

chapter is particularly notable for its prodigious claim that "the Negro folk-song" (he doesn't use the term 'spiritual') stands "not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas" and therefore, using one of Du Bois's favourite phrases, counts as "the greatest gift of the Negro people" to the national table.[26] That claim colours all discussions of black folk-song, however defined, during the 1920s, but it begs the question—which is *the* question—of exactly what is allowed to count as authentic in this favoured category, a category that Du Bois immediately sets out to limit. "[T]he true Negro folk-song still lives in the hearts of those who have heard them truly sung", he claims—failing to provide an explanation of what counts as 'true'—but poor imitation and crude caricature has sought "to spoil the quaint beauty of the music" (the word 'quaint', which he uses twice—perhaps picked up from Higginson—rubbing against "I knew them as of me"), producing "debased melodies which vulgar ears scarce know from real", thereby adding a division among listeners to a division within the songs themselves.[27] Some of that caricature was to be found in minstrelsy and white musical theatre, but the division here was not racial: modern choral versions of sorrow songs by black groups could be seen as pale imitations of the 'originals', "forcing them into a regularized tempo and the more rigid mold of the European tempered scale".[28] That some Negro folk-songs are not worthy will become a motif as the new century develops, and the word 'vulgar' will play a leading part in the discussion.[29]

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Among the collectors of Negro folk-songs were three remarkable women based in New York. Independently wealthy, Elsie Clews Parsons (1875-1941) made her name as a progressive sociologist before moving to anthropology, undertaking valuable studies of the Pueblo and Zuni peoples. At the December 1915 annual meeting of the AFLS it was announced that the President had been "authorized to appoint Mrs. Elsie Clews Parsons upon the Editorial Board to assist in the publication of material on Negro folk-lore".[30] In the event, Parsons assumed the costs of all the various issues on Negro

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[26] Du Bois, "The Sorrow Songs", p. 251. "[A]nd, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness" (*Souls of Black Folk*, p. 52).

[27] Du Bois, "The Sorrow Songs", p. 253.

[28] See Eric J. Sundquist, "Swing Low: *The Souls of Black Folk*", in his *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 457-539, at 472 and 474.

[29] It's worth noting that in the early twentieth century the term 'spiritual' is not self-evident or universally used. Apart from Du Bois's 'sorrow-song', one distinguished collector simply referred to them as 'songs', another as 'hymns', while the larger designation 'folk-song' encompasses the fully secular material that did not come into focus until the second decade of the twentieth century: see John W. Work, *Folk Song of the American Negro*, Nashville: Press of Fisk University, 1915, and R. Nathaniel Dett, ed., *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Insititute*, Hampton, Va.: Hampton Insitite Press, 1927.

[30] Charles Peabody, "Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society", *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 29 (April-June 1916), pp. 295-298, at 297.

material that the *JAFL* published during her lifetime—and even one after her death—as well as assisting financially in the collection of much of the material. The first two numbers appeared soon after Boas's announcement: the second issue of 1917 contained no fewer than six contributions by Parsons, as well as other work on Georgia, Suriname, and the Bahamas.[31] Parsons's pieces were on North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Florida, the Cape Verde Islands (collected in Rhode Island and Massachusetts), and the Bahamas. Then the third issue of 1919 contained three contributions by Parsons, including an illuminating piece about the racial complexity of the Lumbee, as well as seven folk-tales from the Sea Islands in South Carolina, and tales collected from the students at Tuskegee and Georgia State College.[32] Parsons turned her attention to black folk-lore to such good effect that when Melville Herskovits wrote a piece for the memorial issue dedicated to her by the *JAFL*, he began by saying that "[t]he contributions of Elsie Clews Parsons to the study of Negro folklore are so extensive as to comprise, in themselves, the bulk of the available materials in this field".[33] Even so, her interest in the Southwest never waned.

The second of the women collectors was Natalie Curtis Burdin (1875-1921), who published four volumes of Negro folk-songs, two of spirituals, two of work and play songs.[34] Born to a financially secure and well-connected family (Theodore Roosevelt was a family friend) with a house in Washington Square, and having studied piano at the conservatories in New York City and Paris, as well as at Bayreuth, Natalie Curtis (Burlin after her marriage in 1917) had made her reputation with *The Indians' Book*, a collection of songs and stories from eighteen tribes, illustrated with handwritten transcriptions of songs as well as with artwork and photography; and she was a prominent member of the AFLS in New York (as well as helping establish a branch at

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[31] *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 30 (April-June 1917).

[32] *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 32 (July-September 1919). Parson's essay is "Folk-Lore of the Cherokee of Robeson County, North Carolina" (pp. 384-93).

[33] Melville J. Herskovits, "Some Next Steps in the Study of Negro Folklore", *Journal of American Folklore*, 56 (January-March 1943), pp. 1-7, at 1. Parsons' first publications on Negro folk-lore were "The Provenience of Certain Negro Folk-Tales: I, Playing Dead Twice in the Road", *Folk-Lore*, 28 (1917), pp. 408-14), and "The Provenience of Certain Negro Folk-Tales: II, The Pass Word", *Folk-Lore*, 28 (1917), pp. 206-18. Later essays include *Folk-tales of Andros Island, Bahamas*, New York: G.E. Stechert, 1918; "Bermuda Folk-Lore", *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 38 (1925), pp. 239-66; and "Barbados Folk-Lore", *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 38 (1925), pp. 267-292. On Parsons, see Desley Deacon, *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

[34] Natalie Curtis Burlin, *Negro Folk-Songs*, 4 vols., New York: G. Schirmer, 1918-1919, including words and music On Curtis Burlin, see Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin: A Life in Native and African American Music*, Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2010, and William M. Clements, "The 'Offshoot' and the 'Root': Natalie Curtis and Black Expressive Culture in Africa and America", *Western Folklore*, 54, no. 4 (October 1995), pp. 277-301. Two of the songs Curtis offered as 'folk-poems': "Again the Negro", *Poetry*, 11, no. 3 (December 1917), pp. 147-151.

Hampton), taking advice from Franz Boas (though usually ignoring it).[35] As part of a longstanding relationship with the Hampton Institute in Virginia (which took both Native American and black students), Curtis began in 1910 to transcribe African American music. In 1911, she, David Mannes and his wife Clara (sister of Walter Damrosch)—with support from George Foster Peabody and Felix Adler and advice from James Reese Europe—founded the Music School Settlement for Colored People in New York (4-6 West 131st Street), with first David Irwin Martin and then J. Rosamund Johnson as musical directors; and in 1912 (2 May) she helped sponsor the first concert featuring black musicians at Carnegie Hall, with Europe's 125-member Clef Club orchestra playing *inter alia* ten upright pianos, forty-seven mandolins, eleven banjos, thirteen cellos, and an assortment of ukuleles and guitars.[36] The concert, with a fully integrated audience, was a stunning success. Other such concerts followed, all helping raise funds for the music school. A. Clayton Powell and W. E. B. Du Bois were on the board of directors.

Curtis remained wedded to ideas of primitivism and white superiority. She was helped financially by Charlotte Osgood Mason, who was infatuated with supposed alternative spiritualities to be found among so-called primitive peoples. They shared a romantic racialism which found in black people a child-like simplicity lost in the mechanisation of modern mass culture. Curtis had a friendship—occasionally antagonistic—with Henry Krehbiel, the long-time (white) music critic for the *New-York Tribune*, who championed Dvořákian ideas. She also worked within the Hampton ethos, which tended to stress the positive aspects of the experience of black slavery, which had introduced blacks to Christianity and civilised values, with plantation songs therefore appreciated as reminders of the benefits received in bondage: *Cabin and Plantation Songs, as Sung by the Hampton Students* even had a section called "The Sunny Side of Slavery".[37] Hampton provided Curtis with funding and advice from school leaders, and she could draw on a student folk-lore society begun in the 1890s to collect tales, customs, and songs.[38] Her informants came chiefly from the singing groups on the Virginia campus and at the associated Penn School on St. Helena Island off the coast of South Carolina, an island that became the focus of intense sociological study in the 1920s as a site of particularly 'authentic' African survivals.

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[35] Natalie Curtis, *The Indians' Book: An Offering by the American Indians of Indian Lore, Musical and Narrative, to Form a Record of the Songs and Legends of their Race*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907.

[36] See Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese* Europe, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 61-73. Mannes was a violinist and concert master with the New York Symphony. As an impoverished youngster, he'd taken violin lessons from a black musician called John Douglass, whose career was blighted by racism. See Lester A. Walton, L. H. White, A. W. K. and Lucien H. White, "Black-Music Concerts in Carnegie Hall, 1912-1915", *The Black Perspective in Music*, 6, no. 1 (Spring 1978), pp. 71-88, which reprints newspaper articles from that period about the Carnegie Hall concerts.

[37] *Cabin and Plantation Songs as Sung by the Hampton Students*, ed. Thomas P. Fenner, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1876.

[38] Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin*, p. 217.

Curtis also collected songs in Alabama, describing the emotional intensity with which she experienced their beauty and power: "nothing less than the primitive essence of untaught and unteachable creative art… it was spirited singing and it was devout; but the inspirational quality of the group-feeling made this music seem a lambent, living thing, a bit of 'divine fire' that descended upon these black people like the gift of tongues".[39] Curtis recognised that the 'eccentric' beat of syncopation was the difference between European and African American music, a difference whose origin—like most people at that time—she traced back to Africa, with rhythm the point of demarcation with European music.[40]

At an International Congress on Art History at the Sorbonne, Curtis confronted Edward Burlingame Hill, a composer and Harvard professor of music, who argued that America had no folk music on the grounds that Native American and African American songs could never be classified as properly 'American'. "If those songs that are the very voice of our South are not American, what is!", Curtis exclaimed. She especially objected to what she described as "Mr. Hill's everlasting monopoly of the white race, and I resented the notion that only New England with Harvard College as its 'hub' can be 'American'!" For her America "is an agglomeration of races that have given us a folk-lore almost as rich and diverse as that other agglomeration of races that we call Russia. And all the music of America is not found in universities and schools but out in the great expanse of territory that stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans and from Canada to Mexico."[41] This ringing declaration was, in effect, her final testament. She was killed a few days later as she stepped off a bus in a busy Parisian street.

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[39] Natalie Curtis Burlin, "Negro Music at Birth", *The Musical Quarterly*, 5, no. 1 (January 1919), pp. 86-89, at 86 and 87.

[40] Curtis Burlin, *Negro Folk Songs*, Book 2, pp. 4-5. "In the bias of pitch based staff notation deficient in capturing temporal subtlety, an African rhythm would be conceived, giving way to a broad-based language that sought to describe it. In African rhythm, Americans and then the world heard the primitive, the peasant, the agrarian, together with baser forms of danger: the idiot, the savage, the wild man, the beast. For Allen, as for most Americans at the time, black or white, African-inspired rhythm was a mere reference point with vaguely 'barbaric' associations, still subordinate to the dominant qualities of spiritually inspired plantation melody. But from this time forward it would become an increasingly significant influence, to the point of informing figurations of race and music by the 1890s and dominating them across the twentieth century. It is important to underscore that this rhythmic quality was not a 'true' African feature coming to bear, as if notation had finally revealed a retained musical seed or essence. Rather black musical difference becomes categorized and constructed as that which exceeds notation and is, accordingly, conceptualized as rhythm, the marginal expression of Europe's pitch-centered harmonic system… Rhythm would be increasingly accepted as the cultural ground of a distinctively black musical creation… Difference thus becomes key to figurations of black music, assigning a status of exception that gives to African-Americans a source of racialized power" (Radano, *Lying Up a Nation*, pp. 223 and 229).

[41] N. Curtis to "Dearest Friends,"Oct. 16, 1921, Music Collection — Natalie Curtis Burlin, Hampton University Archives, Hampton VA (quoted in Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin*, p. 321).

From the very beginning, collectors made it clear that what came to be known as 'spirituals' were carved out of a much larger black sonic field. The remainder was simply noise: incomprehensible shouting of no conceivable interest, musical or otherwise.[42] The division between spiritual and noise was then clearly marked in various ways: religious v. secular, respectable v. non-respectable, decent v. indecent. In actual fact such divisions were far from rigid: as Douglass and Du Bois pointed out, religious imagery could very effectively reference the secular conditions of slavery; but the unrigid divisions tended to be rigidly maintained and policed by the (usually white) collectors.

Secular folk-songs were always treated rather differently. The religious context lent a dignity to spirituals that they could carry over into concert performances. There was always also a supposition that church performance would continue, relatively immune from changing circumstances. Secular songs were more closely tied to the socio-economic situation that had produced them. Slavery itself had disappeared, and by the early twentieth century even the plantation economies themselves were undergoing huge changes. The situation here was close to that in other parts of the world and folk-song collection became a key element of the folk-lore societies that sprang up.

Interest in Negro folk-song that didn't fit the 'spiritual' category was, however, slow to develop. The Harvard archaeologist Charles Peabody was fascinated by the songs sung by African American labourers he employed during an excavation of Native American burial mounds in the Mississippi Delta during the summers of 1901 and 1902 and published a description of what he had heard in the *JAFL*. The lyrics resembled what would later be called the blues.[43] But, as Karl Hagstrom Miller notes, Peabody was annoyed by hearing commercial songs: he was interested in a sharp contrast between 'white' and 'black' music and inclined to play down or ignore complexities or crossovers.[44] That is Miller's main point: that musicologists and folk-song collectors were determined to 'segregate' music in line with the segregation that ran through the nation in those years. Alongside this are those further related segregations between the vulgar and the refined and between the authentic and the inauthentic, the former often supposedly only found in relics of the past. As a whole, folk-lore studies presented folk culture as an outgrowth of essential racial temperaments and capacities rather than as a result of contemporary social and political contexts.[45]

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[42] "From the time of the earliest observation through most of the nineteenth century there remained a considerable body of black song making that was not readily accessible even to those whites whose interest in humanitarian reformism carried them to the racial and cultural margins" (Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, p. 49).

[43] Charles Peabody, ''Notes on Negro Music", *Journal of American Folklore*, 16, no. 62 (July 1903), pp. 148–52.

[44] Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

[45] Miller, *Segregating Sound*, p. 259.

With respect to secular Negro songs, other early landmarks are few. The white Georgian sociologist Howard W. Odum (1994-1954) collected Negro folk-songs as early as 1906 for his M.A. dissertation at Clark University under the influence of one of his teachers at the University of Mississippi, Thomas P. Bailey, travelling through Lafayette County with a phonograph, transcribing songs and subjecting them to social-science analysis.[46] He correctly thought that secular songs were more representative of black culture than spirituals but, in practice, as a Southern gentleman, he disliked the enforced intimacy with rural black singers, often vagrants singing songs he regarded as obscene, so he abandoned the work and turned to the issue of white rural underdevelopment about which he would write extensively.

Another early collection was by W. H. Thomas in Texas and, as noted earlier, Natalie Curtis Burdin's volumes contained secular as well as spiritual songs. Most noteworthy, however, was the collection made by the black chemist, teacher, and administrator at Fisk University, Thomas W. Talley (1870-1952), the first anthology of secular folk-songs by a black scholar.[47]

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From its beginnings folk-lore studies has been obsessed with distinguishing the supposedly 'authentic' from various debased or inadequate forms. The forefather himself, Herder, made it clear that the *Volk* of which he was speaking, anonymous authors of the songs he was collecting and celebrating, were entirely different from "der Pöbel auf den Gassen", the vulgar rabble in the alleyways outside his house, who would shout and sing in an entirely different manner.[48] The real sounds of his immediate environment were rejected in favour of songs more distant in space and time, preferably both. Like anthropologists, folk-lore collectors travelled far and wide in search of an unsullied original, a fountain of authenticity forever beyond reach.

By the 1920s the negative side of the binary was strongly associated with commercialism, the modern form of the brutal market economy that had alienated the white protestant radicals who had shown an early interest in Negro songs, with commercialism itself in turn now tarred with images of depravity. So, for example,

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[46] See Howard W. Odum, "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry: As Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes", *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 24, no. 96 (1911), pp. 255-94 and 24, no. 94 (1911), pp. 351-96. See John M. Dougan, *Two Steps from the Blues: Creating Discourse and Constructing Canons in Blues Criticism*, Ph. D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 2001, p. 30. At this stage Odum tended to view the songs principally as examples of racial inferiority: see his *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro: Research into the Conditions of the Negro Race in Southern Towns: A Study in Race Traits, Tendencies and Prospects*, New York: Columbia University, 1910. In the early 1920s, prompted by the race-record phenomenon, Odum worked with his research assistant, Guy Johnson, to shape his early findings into *The Negro and his Songs* (1925), followed by *Negro Workaday Songs* (1926), and, after further research, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* (1928), a partly fictionalised biography of a singer he referred to as Left Wing Gordon (John Wesley Gordon).

[47] W. H. Thomas, *Some Current Folk-Songs of the Negro*, Austin: Folk-lore Society of Texas, 1912; Thomas W. Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes (Wise and Otherwise)*, New York: Macmillan, 1922.

[48] Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* [1784], Tübingen: Ed. V. Müller, 1807, p. 69.

Henry Krehbiel wrote a scathing review of James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* devoted almost entirely to Johnson's willingness to value ragtime, the form that 'noise' had eventually taken in the early twentieth century. In 1914, Krehbiel had written a substantial treatise on spirituals called *Afro-American Folk Songs*, emphasising the anonymous, collective nature of those songs, focusing on the music rather than the words, and arguing that their essential elements are African in origin.[49] In the book he referred in passing to ragtime as the "debased offspring" of black folk-song, neatly combining suggestions of illegitimacy and debauchery, so he was well primed to object to Johnson's lack of objection to the fact that what Krehbiel calls the "vulgar music which has taken possession of the vaudeville stage and the dancehalls" originates from—as he delicately puts it—"houses whose character is not a fit subject for description but where the musicians were negroes", and to criticise JWJ for giving scant attention to the spirituals, which house "the unperverted elements" of Negro song.[50] (He perhaps failed to notice that JWJ was writing a preface to an anthology of poetry.) As is usual in discourses of moral panic, there is no actual argument here, merely the attachment of derogatory language to one side of a supposed division. Krehbiel's circumlocution for 'brothel' suggests that the unspoken positive against the negative of vulgarity is 'refinement', with all its class connotations. Products like sugar and flour are 'refined' to remove impurities: they get whiter and whiter. Language can carry racial connotations without using the terms 'black' and 'white'. 'Vulgar' and 'refined' also correspond closely with 'high-brow' and 'low-brow', terms which became hegemonic in this period but which also led the way to a deliberate attempt to foster a 'middle-brow' culture that might 'resolve' some cultural loggerheads.

Ragtime had defenders other than Johnson, the most forthright being the white theatre and music critic, Hiram Kelly Moderwell (1888-1945), who, as an expert on Wagner, could not be accused of low-brow tastes. In jousting with critics of ragtime, he cottoned on to the implications of the insult 'vulgar':

> Because most of the ragtime pieces they hear are feeble (as Heaven knows most American music is feeble) they lump the whole art in one and call it 'vicious' or 'vulgar.' What an argument they use against themselves in that word 'vulgar' they never guess. It is an old thought to most of us that the art of the vulgus, the people, is the material for national expression. Dante, creating his 'Divine Comedy' from the vulgar language, Balakireff creating a national school of music from the vulgar songs, are classic instances.[51]

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[49] Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music*, New York : G. Schirmer, 1914.

[50] Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, p. v; "James Weldon Johnson's Comments on American Negro Music", *New-York Tribune*, 2 April 1922, p. IV, 7. Johnson's response appeared the next week: "James W. Johnson Replies to Criticism of His Preface", *New-York Tribune*, 9 April 1922, p. IV, 5.

[51] Hiram Kelly Moderwell, "Two Views of Ragtime: I. A Modest Proposal", *The Seven Arts*, 2, no. 3 (July 1917), pp. 368-376, at 369. Though even Moderwell wanted to take ragtime out of the cafes.

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The appearance of *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* in March 1925 offers a useful staging post, which sees Alain Locke take stock of several decades of debate and of new music, and offer a calibration of what it is of real value from a New Negro perspective. Folk-music is in fact Locke's first example of how Negro life has been transformed in the decade before he writes—and by folk-music he means "Negro spirituals".[52] A clue as to what Locke sees as valuable within music comes in his swift listing of young African American talent: "Diton, Dett, Grant Still, and Roland Hayes".[53] Carl Rossini Diton (1886-1962) was a pianist and composer who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and studied at the Juilliard. He performed traditional spirituals in concert style. R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) was a pianist and professor known for his use of African-American folk songs and spirituals as the basis for choral and piano compositions in the nineteenth-century Romantic style. He also published a collection of spirituals as sung at Hampton Institute. William Grant Still (1895-1978) was a multi-instrumentalist who had played with W. C. Handy and Fletcher Henderson but would soon put his classical education—at the Oberlin Conservatory and with Edgard Varèse—to good use, writing symphonies and operas. Roland Hayes (1877-1987), whose picture was on the cover of *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, was a lyric tenor who had made his reputation in Europe before giving a much-noted concert at Boston's Symphony Hall singing Berlioz, Mozart, and spirituals. By 1925 he'd secured professional management with the Boston Symphony Orchestra Concert Company.

As this list suggests, when it came to Negro folk-songs, there was a broad consensus among the black intelligentsia that spirituals provided the material out of which great black music could eventually be created. Dvořák was the guarantor of this view, much quoted by its proponents, who included the triumvirate of W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Charles S. Johnson.[54] In terms of the singing of spirituals, Roland Hayes was the pre-eminent example for this consensus, already indicating through his vocal performance the potential inherent in the spirituals: they could be sung, to great (white) acclaim, in exactly the same manner in which he sung Schubert's *lieder*. Hayes was committed to singing spirituals: he had belonged to Fisk's Jubilee Singers (1905-09) and his attempt to operate within both classical and folk traditions led to his expulsion from Fisk, whose music department, for many years and despite the success of the Jubilee Singers, firmly followed the classical route. But still and all Hayes only ever tacked spirituals on to the end of his concerts, while it was Paul Robeson who gave full concert performances of spirituals, sung in a style that some proponents, Carl Van Vechten the

[52] Alain Locke, "Enter the New Negro", in *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, *Survey Graphic*, 53, no. 11 (March 1925), pp. 631-634, at 631.

[53] Alain Locke, "Youth Speaks", in *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, *Survey Graphic*, 53, no. 11 (March 1925), pp. 659-660, at 659.

[54] Du Bois, "The Sorrow Songs"; Locke, Alain Locke, "The Negro Spirituals", in *The New Negro*, pp. 199-213; [Johnson], "Lyra Africanus", *Opportunity*, 3 (November 1925), pp. 322-23.

most vociferous, found more "natural" and "traditional" than Hayes's renditions.[55]. In best Herderian fashion, Locke wanted to see continuity. He could understand as well as anybody that changing circumstances meant that folk songs were not going to continue being produced in the South, nor the existing ones sung, but he saw them, in his favourite organic metaphor, as providing in their very decomposition the soil that could nourish new growth: unself-conscious folk forms would nurture self-consciously formal idioms.[56]

On the reverse side of this high-mindedness, Locke saw popular jazz and blues recordings as promoting an exotic primitivism through which white listeners could confirm their romantic, reductive stereotypes of black culture and consciousness, thereby rejecting the notions of folk authenticity to which he was wedded. He thus spent very little time addressing mass-produced music during the decade, promoting instead the evolution of pure African American folk idioms into a high African American art music in the mode advocated by Dvořák. The model for that kind of African American musical culture was Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), who had transcribed and orchestrated Negro spirituals and West African folk melodies for the concert stage.[57]

Locke's own musical preferences are clear from his initial list of young talent, but his broader culturalist agenda made it inevitable that, despite his lack of enthusiasm for the new music, blues and jazz—in both musical and dance forms—would have to feature in the special issue, so popular had those forms become in New York in the early 1920s.[58] In the end dance features only in Claude McKay's poem, "Negro Dancers" (which Locke included without McKay's permission) and his approach to the problem of writing about jazz was to ask a journalist with the *New York Amsterdam News*, Joel A. Rogers (also a writer of fiction and black history), to provide an essay, perhaps deliberately choosing a Jamaican popular writer not central to his intellectual phalanx, but then to radically reshape the essay in accordance with his own views. That Joel A. Rogers appears as James in both editions of *The New Negro* perhaps also indicates the level of Locke's esteem for the man.[59]

The journalist Joel Augustus Rogers (1880-1966) had made his name with the self-published but soon widely admired novel *From 'Superman' to Man* in which a debate between a well-read Pullman porter and a white racist Southern politician is used to debunk stereotypes about black people and white racial superiority. He'd also written

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[55] Carl Van Vechten, "The Folksongs of the American Negro", *Vanity Fair*, 24 (July 1925), pp. 52, 92.

[56] See Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, p. 77.

[57] For example, *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies, Transcribed for the Piano by S. Coleridge-Taylor*, with a preface by Booker T. Washington, Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1905.

[58] For background, see Alwyn Williams, "Jazz and the New Negro: Harlem's Intellectuals Wrestle with the Art of the Age", *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 21, no. 1 (July 2002), pp. 1-18.

[59] A shorter version of the section on "Jazz at Home" appears in Chapter 4 of Susan Gillman, Peter Hulme, and Jak Peake, *The Tropics in New York*.

for *Negro World* and *The Messenger* and had another novel, *Blood Money*, serialised in the *New York Amsterdam News*.[60] In the event, Locke evidently made fairly substantial editorial changes to Rogers' essay on jazz, apparently without consulting him, and then—as was his wont—destroyed the original draft. In a letter to Charles Boni, pitching an anthology of Negro songs, which he wanted to edit and introduce, Locke, trying to bolster his musical credentials, noted that "I so largely rewrote the Rogers article on jazz that it is practically my own".[61] We can only guess as to Locke's contributions to the piece based upon Rogers' mild comment in a letter to his editor that there was "injected into it a tinge of morality and 'uplift' alien to my innermost convictions". "Of the two evils the church and the cabaret," Rogers continued, "the latter so far as the progress of the Negro group is concerned, is less of a mental drag."[62]

Rogers is surely responsible for the history in the essay, noting jazz's ancestry in the wild dancing of West Africa and Haiti, ragtime as its immediate precursor, its early exponents in the Mississippi delta, and the speed and complexity of its contemporary rhythms, which make it the characteristic product of the "modern manmade jungles".[63] Among its instrumentation he notes "cowbells, auto horns, calliopes, rattles, dinner gongs, kitchen utensils, cymbals, screams, crashes, [and] clankings". As to its recent

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[60] See Thabiti Asukile, "Rogers, Joel Augustus", in *Harlem Renaissance Lives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Eveleyn Brooks Higginbotham, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 431-32.

[61] Letter from Alain Locke to Charles Boni, undated [November 1925], ALP 10-7. Locke's proposition, putting forward himself as editor, organiser, and introducer, elicited a very sharp response from Boni (Charles Boni, Jr. to Alain Locke, 6 November 1925, ALP 10-7). A *Survey Graphic* editorial note has Rogers's essay ready for recopying with inserted paragraphs (which are presumably Locke's): ALP 115-11.

[62] J. A. Rogers, Letter to Alain Locke, 7 March 1925, ALP 8-13. One of the essay's key paragraphs begins: "Musically jazz has a great future. It is rapidly being sublimated" (J. A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home", *HMNN*, pp. 665-67, 712, at 667 [further page references included in the text).). As one of the stages in the alchemical Magnum Opus, sublimation is part of the process of refining and purification and is a word associated more with Locke than with Rogers. So, for example, in 1928 Locke spelled out his idea that the future for black artistic production lay in the contribution of the "folk temperament"—which would include jazz and the blues—being raised to the levels of "conscious art". What is now, according to Locke, the folk temperament's "irresistibly sensuous, spontaneously emotional, affably democratic and naïve spirit" will reappear, almost unrecognisably, as "sublimated and precious things" ("Beauty into Ashes", *The Nation*, 126 [18 April 1928], pp. 423-24, at 424). On sublimation, see Bruce Barnhart, "Music, Race, and Sublimation: Ragtime and Symphonic Time in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*", in his *Jazz in the Time of the Novel: The Temporal Politics of American Race and Culture*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013, pp. 41-81; although he takes the 1925 usage at face value, as belonging to Rogers. He reads *The Autobiography* as a critique of the idea of sublimation.

[63] Rogers, "Jazz at Home", *HMNN*, p. 665 The text of "Jazz at Home" appears unaltered from the special issue in both editions of *The New Negro*. Here, in the special issue, the essay is sympathetically framed: Langston Hughes's poem, "Jazzonia", is prominently placed on its first page and it's accompanied by two striking drawings by Winold Reiss which brilliantly capture the angularity and dissonance of urban jazz, fully in keeping with Rogers' analysis, if not with Locke's. In *The New Negro* these were replaced by a small drawing by Aaron Douglas at the beginning of the essay and a small decoration by Winold Reiss at its end.

development, Rogers namechecks W. C. Handy, Jasbo Brown, and Shelton Brooks (666).[64] Brown was a legendary figure—who probably never existed. Brooks is mentioned because of his invented dance, "Walkin' the Dog", seen as a forerunner of the Charleston, then sweeping the country, and a reminder that in 1925 jazz signified dance as much as music. "Broadway studies Harlem", as Rogers writes, indicating the traffic in inspiration that dated back to Jim Europe and the Castles, Vernon and Irene. What white imitators can never capture, though, Rogers writes—and these would certainly be Rogers' words—is "Negro rhythm" (666).

It's probably at this point that Locke interjects. The next paragraph begins "Musically jazz has a great future"; which implicitly suggests that its present is somewhat lacking. Leopold Stowoksi is quoted as representative of the classical musicians who have recognised the importance of jazz:

> Jazz has come to stay because it is an expression of the times, of the breathless, energetic, superactive times in which we are living, it is useless to fight against it. . . . America's contribution to the music of the past will have the same revivifying effect as the injection of new, and in the larger sense, vulgar blood into dying aristocracy. . . The Negro musicians of America are playing a great part in this change. . . . They are not hampered by conventions or traditions, and with their new ideas, their constant experiment, they are causing new blood to flow in the veins of music. The jazz players make their instruments do entirely new things, things finished musicians are taught to avoid. They are pathfinders into new realms.[65]

It's easy to see why Locke was attracted by Stokowski's metaphor. Blood transfusion techniques had developed rapidly during the First World War and blood donor clinics had only recently been established. Giving blood was—as Richard Titmuss would recognise in 1970—the ultimate gift, and the idea of gift-giving was central to the developing New Negro discourse.[66] Always seeking out the middle ground, Locke could see in Stokowski's words a recognition of the vulgarity of jazz, yet also the opportunity to redeem that vulgarity through putting it to useful purpose. As always, metaphors have their limits. Perhaps propping up a dying aristocracy wasn't such a desirable goal. And the US blood transfusion service was rigidly segregated until 1950.

Stokowski had been interviewed after attending Paul Whiteman's "An Experiment in Modern Music", which was touring the country after its success in New York. Locke refrained from quoting another sentence of Stokowski's: "Mr. Whiteman has taken the worst type of American music, which is of African descent, and through masterly representation and his own orchestration brought it into the field of art." Eighteen musicians are depicted on the full-page feature: all of them are white.

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[64] See DuBose Heyward, *Jasbo Brown and Selected Poems*, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931. Brooks composed "Some of These Days", "Walkin' the Dog", and "Darktown Strutters' Ball".

[65] Locke was drawing on the account of Stokowski's words in the *Washington Post*: "They Say Jazz Is Here To Stay", 18 May 1924, p. SM7.

[66] Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1970.

In "Jazz at Home" the orchestras—black and white, but all therefore playing large venues rather than small cabarets—are praised for containing "none of the vulgarities and crudities of the lowly origin". Negro artists are allowed to have done "pioneer work": the "finer possibilities" are now being demonstrated by the white bandleaders, Paul Whiteman and Vincent Lopez, and the French modernists, Darius Milhaud and Erik Satie, a statement that directly contradicts Rogers' earlier remarks (667). The interjection over—it can be assumed—Rogers' voice returns to assert that jazz's "true home is still its original cradle, the none too respectable cabaret" (667)—where Rogers himself and Langston Hughes and Eric Walrond and Miguel Covarrubias went to listen to it, but across whose threshold Alain Locke rarely if ever stepped. The spirit of jazz is in the lyrics of the popular song, which Rogers quotes, adding (though unacknowledged) Joe Grey and Leo Wood to the roster of poets appearing in *The New Negro*:

> Runnin' wild; lost control
> Runnin' wild; mighty bold,
> Feelin' gay and reckless too
> Carefree all the time; never blue
> Always goin' I don't know where
> Always showin' that I don't care
> Don' love nobody, it ain't worth while
> All alone; runnin' wild. (667)[67]

Very much not 'running wild', Locke's voice then returns with an acute point about jazz's success owing something to the reaction against the horrors and strain of war, immediately followed by exactly the kind of 'uplift' interjection to which Rogers objected: "No one can sensibly condone its excesses or minimize its social danger if uncontrolled; all culture is built upon inhibitions and control" (667). The editor's gloved fingers allow that "The cabaret of better type provides a certain Bohemianism for the Negro intellectual, the artist and the well-to-do" (712). Locke's condescension is reserved for "the tired longshoreman, the porter, the housemaid and the poor elevator boy in search of recreation, seeking in jazz the tonic for weary nerves and muscles", who are likely to find themselves exploited by "the bootlegger, the gambler and the demi-monde" (712).

The final paragraph, with its carefully modulated sentences and reference to Byron's words about Cervantes, must be Locke's too. Jazz is graciously allowed "a popular mission to perform" "in spite of its present vices and vulgarizations, its sex informalities, [and] its morally anarchic spirit", the author blithely unaware that those are precisely the qualities that make jazz jazz. "It has come to stay," Locke admits, "and

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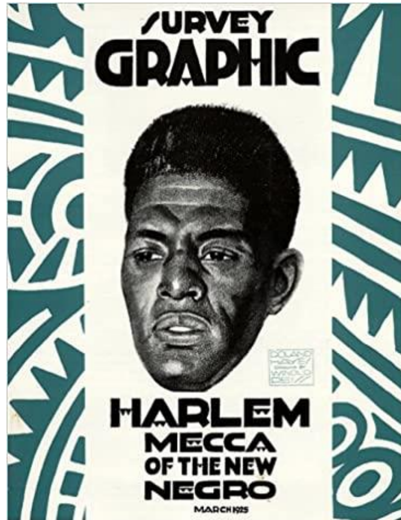
[67] *Runnin' Wild* (1922). Arthur Harrington Gibbs wrote the music. The song featured in a successful Broadway show of the same name (29 October 1923 to 28 June 1924).

they are wise, who instead of protesting against it, try to lift and divert it into noble channels" (712). Thankfully, jazz was not for being lifted or diverted.[68]



At the end of the day, however, Locke's purpose was achieved: his rewriting of Rogers' essay ensured that jazz was kept in its proper, subsidiary, place. Then later that year in *The New Negro*—with Locke now in full control of material and placement—the essay on jazz appeared unaltered but the editor headed the new section on music with his own essay on spirituals.[69] "The Spirituals", Locke asserted, "are really the most characteristic product of the race genius as yet in America. But the very elements which make them uniquely expressive of the Negro make them at the same time deeply representative of the soil that produced them. Thus, unique spiritual products of American life, they become nationally as well as racially characteristic".[70] Towards the end of the essay, readers of the original editions encountered Winold Reiss's portrait of Roland Hayes, just as Locke was praising his favourite singer: "In the process of the art development of this material the Negro musician has not only a peculiar advantage but a particular function and duty. Maintaining spiritual kinship with the best traditions of this great folk art, he must make himself the recognized vehicle of both its transmission and its further development".[71] A mark of this development was Hayes's transposition of spirituals into the genre of the German *lieder* that he sang in the Konzerthaus in Vienna in the summer of 1923, a concert Locke witnessed and extolled.[72] That was why the portrait of Roland Hayes had already been prominently displayed in

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[68] A decade later Locke had become much more sympathetic – and knowledgeable – about jazz: see "Toward a Critique of Negro Music", *Opportunity*, 12 (November and December 1934), pp. 328-331; 365-367, 385 ", where he recognises the achievements of Armstong and Ellington and lauds "the two geniuses of the South", Amadeo Roldán (1901-1939), a violinist who composed a suite based on Nicolás Guillén's *Motivos de son*, and Alejando García Caturla (1906-1940); and *The Negro and His Music*, Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936.

[69] This emphasis, Andrew Warnes suggests, "made tactical sense, allowing [Locke] to ground his call for political transformation in a body of cultural work whose established credibility inoculated it to a degree from the simplifications and stereotypes of his intensely racist era" ("African American Music and the New Negro Revival", in *A History of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Rachel Farebrother and Miriam Thaggert, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 307-324, at 312).

[70] Alain Locke, "The Negro Spirituals", *The New Negro*, p. 199.

[71] Locke, "The Negro Spirituals", p. 207.

[72] Alain Locke, "Roland Hayes: An Appreciation", *Opportunity*, 1 (December 1923), 356-58.

the "Harlem" special issue. As Shane Vogel puts it in his essay on Locke: "To Locke, Hayes was quite literally the face of the New Negro".[73]

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A couple of months before the appearance of *The New Negro* two more signal contributions to the study of Negro folk-song appeared. The interest in spirituals reached a culmination for this period in James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (quickly followed by *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*) and the less studied field of secular song was addressed by the third of the notable female collectors from New York, Dorothy Scarborough.[74]

Johnson's preface to his first *Book* offers an authoritative guide to the state of black music—not just spirituals—in 1925. In the breadth of its analysis and sureness of its judgements, it emphasises the paucity and staleness of musical analysis in *The New Negro*. Within 40 pages Johnson underlines the dignity, nobility, and originality of the spirituals; assesses recent scholarship on African creativity (quoting Marius de Zayas from his *African Negro Art*); tackles the question of individual versus collective composition (coming down on the side of "talented individuals"); considers the poetry of the spirituals via a learned disquisition on Negro dialect; and gives a brief history of the collection of spirituals from Port Royal and Fisk to Henry Krehbiel, John W. Work, and Natalie Curtis.[75] Agreeing with Carl Van Vechten that most concert performances of spirituals fail to capture their power, he makes an exception for "the genius and supreme artistry" of Roland Hayes and the "sheer simplicity" of Paul Robeson.[76] But what is truly remarkable about the preface is that Johnson makes no divisions between spirituals and the various forms of secular music, except to suggest that while 'swing' is characteristic of all black music, it manifests itself in a slightly different way in spirituals.[77] So, rather than emphasising the special quality of spirituals as opposed to other forms of black music, Johnson places spirituals within the whole black musical spectrum, including discussions of *Runnin' Wild*, work-songs and shout-songs, and

[73] Shane Vogel, "Alain Locke and the Value of the Harlem Renaissance", in *A History of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Rachel Farebrother and Miriam Thaggert, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 361-377, at 370. Although it was Kellogg who'd insisted, ever so diplomatically, that Hayes's face should be on the cover (Paul U. Kellogg, Letter to Alain Locke, 17 February 1925, ALP 88/5).

[74] *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, ed. James Weldon Johnson, New York: Viking, 1925, and *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, ed. James Weldon Johnson, New York: Viking, 1925; Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925. See the joint review by Scarborough's friend, Muna Lee: "Songs From the Heart of The American Negro", *New York Times*, 18 October 1925, p. BR7.

[75] James Weldon Johnson, "Preface" to his *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, pp. 11-50. He also defers to Krehbiel on the technical aspects of the music (p. 14) and quotes from his work (p. 18), clearly not harbouring bad feelings from Krehbiel's mean-spirited review of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*.

[76] Johnson, "Preface", pp. 25-29.

[77] Johnson, "Preface", pp. 28-34. And on rhythm, p. 16.

barber-shop quartets.[78] He even quotes Albert Friedenthal on the combination of African and Spanish musical traditions in the *habanera*.[79]

Born in Texas, Dorothy Scarborough (1878-1935) lived half her adult life in New York although she always considered herself a Southerner.[80] After studying at Baylor University she was immediately employed on the faculty but moved in 1915 to Columbia University for doctoral study. Initially employed on short-term contracts at Columbia, she eventually became an Associate Professor, making her one of the most senior women teaching at the university at that time, and by the early 1920s she was an established figure in the New York literary scene, reviewing books, contributing to and editing anthologies, and writing a series of novels, one of which, *The Wind*, was turned into a film starring Lillian Gish.[81]

Scarborough's interest in Negro folk-songs went back, she often said, to her childhood but the collecting began around the time she became one of the 92 charter members of the Folk-Lore Society of Texas [FLST] in 1910. The FLST was founded by Leonidas Payne, a professor in English at the University of Texas with a lively interest in Texas writing and lore, and John Avery Lomax, whose deep knowledge of Southern songs had eventually led him to Harvard to study with George Lyman Kittredge. Lomax had returned to Texas in 1907 to resume his teaching position at A&M and with Kittredge's support published his ground-breaking collection *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* in 1910, sparking a national interest in folk-song collection.[82]

Elected president of the FLST for 1914-15, Scarborough gave her presidential address in May 1915 on "Negro Ballads and 'Reels'". Her first publication in folk-lore studies came the following year in the first volume of the FLST's own publication.[83] It was at this point that Scarborough, eager to gain her Ph.D., moved to Columbia where apparently her doctoral committee didn't regard Negro folk-songs as appropriate material, leading her to write *The Supernatural in Modern Fiction*.[84] Perhaps in deliberate counterpoint to the painstakingly rigorous survey offered in her thesis, Scarborough next wrote a series of loosely-linked essays, as if *From My Southern Porch*—actually her

[78] Johnson, "Preface", pp. 31-34, 00.

[79] Johnson, "Preface", pp. 18-19.

[80] For more detail on Scarborough's background and career, see the background paper, "Alongside Harlem: Dorothy Scarborough in New York".

[81] Dorothy Scarborough, *The Wind*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925; *The Wind*, dir. Victor Sjöström, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, 1928.

[82] John Avery Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1910. On Lomax, see Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, pp. 71-124.

[83] The presidential address was never published; "Traditions of the Waco Indians", in *Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society*, no. 1, ed. Stith Thompson (1916), pp. 50-54.

[84] Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

sister's house in Richmond, Virginia. Occasional Negro folk-songs were included, as they would be in her first novel, *In the Land of Cotton* (1923).[85]

With a strong foothold at Columbia, Scarborough returned with gusto to her folk-song project. With typical thoroughness she mailed a letter in late 1920 to scores of institutions, schools, and universities throughout the South, asking for help.[86] Through her deceased father (a judge and a Baylor trustee), her sister, and the members of the FLST, she also had a whole slew of personal contacts to draw on. Beyond this, she went into the field, touring the South in the summers of 1921 and 1922, and then more extensively in 1923, with primitive recording equipment and a fast-moving pencil: "there is something positively fatal about a pencil! Songs seem to be afraid of lead-poisoning".[87] *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* was published in 1925.[88]

Despite all the letters she received, Scarborough's book tends to emphasise the serendipity of collecting: "I chanced upon an old woman in Atlanta, Georgia, one summer, as I was sauntering down a street by myself"; in Birmingham, Alabama, "I was strolling leisurely in the colored section of the town"; "I was wandering about in the suburbs of South Waco"; "I was enjoying a solitary horseback ride".[89] Racial stereotypes abound: "The Negro loves a ballad… The Negro is by nature a mimetic creature… The Negro is a born dramatist…"; "by nature is aquiver with rhythm". There is even reference to "the lighter, happier side of slavery".[90] As Karl Hagstrom Miller notes, "Scarborough's understanding of the supposed interracial harmony of the slave era, her narrative implied, granted her a special ability to bridge the twentieth-century color line". [91] Jim Crow and lynching don't feature. She joins a long list of white collectors clearly motivated by nostalgia for the fading world of the Old South, some of whom, as Sundquist notes, "blithely reinscrib[ing] racist norms within the crucial work of cultural preservation".[92]

If anything, Scarborough tends to underplay the songs, valuing them for "their homely simplicity, their rough humour, their awkward wistfulness", lacking the literary quality of the Scottish and English ballads. Although "they would not stand the rigid tests of poetry", they're to be valued simply because they are "made in

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[85] Dorothy Scarborough, *From a Southern Porch*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919; *In the Land of Cotton*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923.

[86] "I ask your aid…", Dorothy Scarborough Papers at the Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas (Texas Archives 153), series 1, subseries 1, folder 3.

[87] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p. 4.

[88] The best discussion is Marybeth Hamilton, "On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs", in her *In Search of the Blues: Black Voices, White Visions*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2007, pp. 53-90.

[89] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, pp. 13, 13, 43, 130.

[90] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, pp. 65, 97, 128.

[91] Miller, *Segregating Sound*, p. 258. See also, in the same vein, Lily Young Cohen, *Lost Spirituals*, New York: Walter Neale, 1928.

[92] Sundquist, "Swing Low", p. 476.

America".[93] Despite all this, her opening description of folk-songs is oddly erotic. You have to speak to them gently, she writes, otherwise they will fly off saucily from under your nose. "You must know how to mask your trembling eagerness in their presence", feigning indifference, wooing and coaxing and wheedling "with all manner of blandishments and flatteries".[94] But then any potentially dangerous traits, such as sensuality or obscenity, are hived off into the Creole songs of New Orleans. Here she refers to George Washington Cable's work on the Place Congo, telling "of primitive, sinister dances". Cable is not without a tone of moral disapproval with regard to the dances, but he uses neither of these adjectives in his description.[95]

Running through Scarborough's account is a geographical division which clearly has personal connotations for her. Negro folk-songs come from the South whereas New York is home to the commercial recording business. The black folk-singer "is bound by no traditions, but sings what pleases him. He is liberated from conventional concepts, first because he is born free of nature, and then because he makes his song for his own pleasure, not to please some crabbed editor shut up in a dark cell in Manhattan".[96] One of the victims of "some crabbed editor… in Manhattan" is of course Scarborough herself, scrabbling to make a literary career while looking back nostalgically to the world of her childhood. In *From A Southern Porch* she'd lamented that "In the city where I live, I have a little square of roof that is my own, and which I fondly call my porch, gloating over less favored mortals who must huddle on stoops or hang over fire-escapes to get a breath of air. But it does not serve the purposes of a real porch, —it is only a pathetic substitute. When I retire there hopefully to think, my neighbors' maids shake angry dustcloths over me, my neighbors' husbands raucously discuss the monthly bills, my neighbors' victrolas try to outsound the hurdy-gurdy in the street beyond, while my neighbors' babies cry incessantly".[97] This is exactly Herder's "der Pöbel auf den Gassen", except that his rabble are not wielding victrolas churning out ragtime and blues. Even down South, she recalls, "the promise of folk-songs" often resulted only in "age-worn phonograph records, … or Broadway echoes, or conventional songs by white authors!".[98] Persistence was always needed to dig deeper towards the folk roots.

Despite her persona as a Southern lady travelling alone with pencil and notebook, and despite her evident distaste for victrola and phonograph records, Scarborough

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[93] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p. 74.

[94] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p. 3.

[95] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p . 118; George Washington Cable, "Creole Slave Dances: The Dance in Place Congo", *Century Magazine*, 31 (1886), pp. 517-32.

[96] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p. 192.

[97] Scarborough, *From A Southern Porch*, p. 31.

[98] Scarborough, *On the Trail*, p. 3. A similar view was expressed by Newman I. White in his *American Negro Folk-Songs* (1928), dismissing the "popular blues of the cabaret singers, sheet music, and phonograph records" as simply "factory product" (p. 00).

herself used recording devices, a heavy one in New York, a lighter version when she travelled. She corresponded extensively with the Edison company in an effort to get the best equipment, frequently requesting financial assistance from Columbia to do so. Erika Brady notes the irony of the phonograph—symbol of technological change—being used to record the lore and songs in the process of disappearing on account, in large part, of the invention of the phonograph. "It provided an apparently 'authentic' recording of a song and undermined the possibility of authenticity; it was the cause of the tradition's vanishing, and the mechanism of its preservation." It was the enemy, "the means of disseminating commercial products of the music hall among the as yet 'uncontaminated' rural populace".[99]

Recording black voices with modern technology initially tended to leave its supporters uneasy since the value of the black voice supposedly lay in its primitive authenticity, unaffected by the scourge of modernity. Amateur collectors were relatively open about their use of wax cylinders for recording, but professionals tended to understate their reliance and often managed to avoid mention, perhaps because a machine was reminiscent of other instruments such as calipers that they wanted to put behind them or because the presence of a phonograph would suggest the absence of the kind of interpersonal empathy called for by the mystique of participant-observation.

As well as sending her tons of material, several of Scarborough's respondents suggested that the person she needed to talk to about Negro folk-songs was W. C. Handy who, handily, had his office on West 46th Street in New York. She telephoned and he issued her "a cordial invitation" to visit him with her friend and collaborator Ola Lee Gulledge.[100] She wrote an account of her visit which exists in three forms: an early draft (probably 1921), a published essay (1923), and as the last chapter of *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (1925), which confirmed the further division of secular black folk-song into the respectable and non-respectable.[101]

The form of Negro music with which Handy was associated was the blues, "the peculiar type of negro music now so popular" as Scarborough calls it in her draft, the first of many adjectives she deploys to keep such music at a distance from 'authentic'

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[99] Brady, *Poetry and Bondage*, p. 214 and 84. See also her *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*, Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999; and William Howland Kenney, "African American Blues and the Phonograph: From Race Records to Rhythm and Blues", in his *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 109-143. The first use of the phonograph for ethnographic purposes was by Jesse Walter Fewkes in Calais, Maine, in 1890.

[100] "The Blues" [typescript] (DSP 2.15.10), p. 1. Further page numbers are included parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation TB.

[101] "The 'Blues' as Folk-Songs", *Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society*, no. 2, ed. J. Frank Dobie (1923), pp. 52-66. Further page numbers are included parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation TBFS. The last chapter of *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* restores some of the original material about Handy omitted in the published essay but is otherwise amended only slightly. "The 'Blues' as Folk-Songs" was reprinted in *Jazz in Print (1856-1929): An Anthology of Selecetd Early Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Karl Koenig, Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2002, pp. 112-16.

Negro folk-song. The reception room was busy and in Handy's office their conversation was constantly interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. The blues *is* folk-music, Handy asserted: "Each one of my blues is based on some old Negro song of the south" (*OT* 265). The scene is telling. Two Southern white women interested in Negro folk-song are lectured on the blues by a black musician and entrepreneur who is pioneering a new form. *My* blues is not a term heard in the cotton fields and levees; nor is *based on*. Handy is occupying and indeed embodying a new commercial world; Scarborough wants to capture what that new world is in the process of deploying and destroying. Ironically, of course, Handy and Scarborough were both attracted to New York from the South because it was fast becoming the intellectual and commercial centre of the country with one of the most forward-looking universities and thriving publishers of books and music. They had more in common than she realised.

Scarborough questions Handy about his career before the blues and he gives a potted version of his life-story.[102] Asked whether the blues are a new invention, he says that they've been sung for many years but only recently "developed and exploited". He was the first to publish one: "Memphis Blues" in 1912 (*OT* 269). After explicating the blues for his visitors—with Scarborough presumably transcribing his words, which she gives as quotations and without intervention from herself or Gulledge—Handy invites them downstairs and summons his pianist and quartet to play blues for two hours.

Scarborough sent her first draft to Gulledge, who returned it with scribbled notes in pencil on the backs of two of the pages, the most telling of which reads: "Why not say that it was typical of all publication offices—filled with vaudeville stars (both genders—black and white) + <u>cigarette smoke</u>. Do you think it out of place to stress how business-like it was when the man said 'Mr Handy is in his office & is very busy and will not be able to see you'—and so forth" (TB 8-9 verso). Gulledge had clearly been more upset by their reception than Scarborough herself—though Handy *did* see them and clearly spent considerable time with them—but when she came to publish an account of the visit Scarborough's language betrayed her reservations about the blues, "a peculiar barbaric sort of melody" with "a jerky tempo, as of a cripple dancing because of some irresistible impulse". She pedantically wonders—or pretends to wonder—whether a singular song should be called 'a blue' ("what is the grammar of the thing?"). The three-line stanza "makes the listener gasp, and perhaps fancy that the censor has deleted the other line" (*OT* 264). But she is perhaps playing the rôle of the maiden lady teacher for her Texas readership.

Scarborough seems prepared to accept the blues as a modern form of folk-music: "It is not often that a student of folk-songs can have such authentic information given as to the music in the making, for most of the songs are studied and their value and interest realized only long after the ones who started them have died or been forgotten. Rarely can one trace a movement in folk-song so clearly, and so I am grateful for the chance of talking with the man most responsible for the blues" (*OT* 272). But she struggles to

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[102] A longer version was eventually published as W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography* in 1941.

understand and has to fall back on old stereotypes as explanation: "Here, as in much of the Negro's folk-song, there is sometimes little connection between the stanzas. The colored mind is not essentially logical, and the folk-song shows considerable lack of coherence in thought. Unrelated ideas are likely to be brought together, and stanzas from one song or from several may be put in with what the singer starts with, if they chance to have approximately the same number of syllables to the line. Even that requirement isn't held to, for a Negro in his singing can crowd several syllables into one note, or expand one syllable to cover half a dozen notes. The exigencies of scansion worry him but slightly" (*OT* 272). For someone who did worry in her poetry-writing about the exigencies of scansion, the blues sound uncomfortably—if interestingly from our viewpoint—like a form of modernist poetry. Indeed she does refer to the blues as "negroid free music" (TB 52) and one of her concluding remarks strikes the same note: "These fleeting informal stanzas, rhymed or in free verse that might fit in with the most liberate of verse-libertine schools of poetry, these tunes that are haunting and yet elusive within bars, have a robust vitality lacking in more sophisticated metrical movements" (*OT* 65). However, when all is said and done, as Abbe Niles pointed out, the six supposed examples of the blues that Scarborough quotes from in the last chapter of *On the Trail* "exhibit no musical characteristic of the blues, old or new".[103]

There was clearly a very personal dimension to Dorothy Scarborough's collecting of Negro folk-songs: they were a constituent part of her upbringing in the South which she was remembering and valorising in her new northern world—a world she sometimes disparaged but which she also embraced as providing an environment in which she could flourish on her own merits as a woman writer and academic. At the same time, however, she was inserting herself into the new field—or possibly discipline—of folk-lore studies, although her position with respect to that field always remained on the margins given her primary self-identification during the 1920s as a novelist. In terms of contacts and institutions Scarborough's affiliation was with the literary strand—Kittredge and Harvard—although her primary interest in *Negro* folk-songs serves to complicate matters. Boas is mentioned among those who helped her but, as with Natalie Curtis, there is little evidence in her writing that she took any advice he may have given.

The most melancholy view of Negro folk-song—which at least had a certain logic to it—was voiced by Jean Toomer, who thought that mechanisation had already won and that there was no future for folk-songs. He himself, he recalled—in a classic anthropological trope—had been lucky enough to hear a family of "back-country Negroes" during his visit to Sparta, Georgia, the first time he'd ever heard this kind of singing. But he—in a further classic anthropological trope—is the only one to recognise the beauty of the music: the town Negroes object to what they call "shouting", preferring their "victrolas and piano-players". "The folk-spirit", he concludes, "was

[103] Abbe Niles, "Sad Horns", in *Blues: An Anthology*, ed. W. C. Handy; with an Introduction by Abbe Niles; Illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias, New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1926, pp. 00-00, at 15. Niles didn't mention Scarborough by name but the reference is unmistakable.

walking in to die on the modern desert". *Cane* was therefore a swan-song, an elegy to a disappearing form.[104] And in some respects Scarborough's ultimate position was close to Toomer's, although she had experience of those folk-songs from an early age, which Toomer—brought up and educated in Washington DC and points north—did not. She certainly shared his dyspeptic view of how the new mechanical forms of the reproduction of music were replacing the folk songs she associated with the way of life she'd experienced growing up in Texas.

Scarborough's final contribution to the study of Negro folk-song came in 1928 when Charles S. Johnson asked her to contribute to his anthology *Ebony and Topaz*. "New Light on an Old Song" briefly recounts a third-hand story of a US missionary in West Africa hearing a funeral dirge which was unmistakably identical to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot".[105]

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While Scarborough remained oblivious to the folk-songs around her in the form of contemporary blues, others had no trouble recognising them. In the early 1920s, prompted by the race-record phenomenon, Howard W. Odum worked with his new research assistant, Guy Johnson (1901-1991), a Texan with a degree from Baylor, to shape his early findings into *The Negro and his Songs* (1925), followed by *Negro Workaday Songs* (1926), and, after further research, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* (1928), a partly fictionalised biography of a singer he referred to as Left Wing Gordon (John Wesley Gordon).[106] In *Negro Workaday Songs* Odum and Johnson remarked on the difference between 'folk blues' (blues music totally unmediated by the various filters of commercialism), and 'formal blues' (the composed blues music popularized primarily on record), but presciently argued that the boundaries between these two blues styles were so fluid that it was "no longer possible to speak with certainty of the folk blues, so entangled are the relationships between them and the formal compositions".[107]. In his review of *The Negro and His Songs*, Eric Walrond welcomed the book ("the collection is

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[104] Jean Toomer, "The Cane Years", in *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. Darwin T. Turner, Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1980, pp. 116-27, at 123. Taken from "Outline of the Story of an Autobiography", in the Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, JWJ MSS 1, Box 20, folder 514.

[105] Dorothy Scarborough, "New Light on an Old Song", in *Ebony and Topaz: A Collectanea*, ed. Charles S. Johnson, New York: Opportunity, 1927, p. 59. See Sundquist, "Swing Low", p. 520.

[106] Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and his Songs: A Study of Typical Negro Songs in the South*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1925; *Negro Workaday Songs*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1926; *Rainbow Round My Shoulder: The Blue Trail of Black Ulysses*, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1928. Johnson's views probably steered Odum towards a more progressive outlook: "[I]t is probably safe to assume a case of the student leading the teacher" (Daniel J. Singal, "Howard W. Odum and Social Science in the South", in his *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014, pp. 115-52, at 143). See also Lynn Moss Sanders, *Howard W. Odum's Folklore Odyssey: Transformation to Tolerance through African American Folk Studies*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

[107] Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, p. 25.

of immense value") while mildly deprecating the "pitifully absurd" ways in which the authors attempt to arrive at supposed "ethnic truths" about the Negro.[108] However, he had no hesitation in bringing into the discussion—beyond the range of material contained in the book—not only the new folk-songs sung in crowded Negro tenements telling of migration from the South (which Scarborough's investigations had failed to turn up) but also the commercial songs apparent, for example, in the "at least two hundred" versions of *West Indies Blues* with its invocation of Marcus Garvey:

> I quit the bestes' job in town
> A runnin' elevator
> Told my boss man in New York
> I'd be back soon or later
> When I come back to this great land
> You'd better watch me Harvey
> I'se gwine to be one great big man
> Like my friend Marcus Garvey.[109]

Interestingly, the disdain of white folk-song collectors for the commercial blues of the 1920s was echoed by later white writers with a genuine interest in the blues—but only what they regarded as the authentic country blues.[110] "In 1966, Charles Keil was having none of this. He insisted that the group valorized ancient blues singers because they were old, poor, and obscure and ignored the vibrant contemporary blues scene. Locating black musical authenticity in the past, Keil charged, white scholars could assuage their liberal guilt while averting their eyes from the contemporary plight of African Americans."[111]

So, Toomer wasn't interested in a way forward; Locke had his continuity planned; Handy and Van Vechten and Hughes knew that the blues were actually the continuation of Negro folk-songs in a different form, developed by migrants to the city in ways appropriate to their changing social conditions; Scarborough perhaps sensed that they were, but couldn't accept the difference as other than a loss.

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The moral panic associated with black music and dance was assuaged by the unlikely combination of the black bandleader and composer, James Reese Europe, and the

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[108] Eric Walrond, "Negro Folk-Song", *Saturday Review of Literature*, 11 July 1925, p. 891.

[109] Written by Edgar Dowell, Clarence Williams, and Spencer Williams, the song was first recorded by New Orleans vocalist Esther Bigeou on 14 December 1923. See John Cowley, "West Indies Blues: An Historical Overview 1920s-1950s — Blues and Music from the English-speaking West Indies", in *"Nobody Knows Where the Blues Came From": Lyrics and History*, ed. Robert Springer, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006, pp. 187-263.

[110] See Marybeth Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues: Black Voices, White Visions*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2007. White blues critics such as Charters and Oliver would insist that the only authentic blues were the primitive folk blues, another version of the romantic longing for folk purity.

[111] Dougan, *Two Steps from the Blues*, p. 277, referencing Charles Keil, *Urban Blues*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

English dancer, Vernon Castle. Europe's fascination with Handy's "Memphis Blues" resulted in the development of the foxtrot as Castle and his wife, Irene, began through example and "how-to" articles to teach middle America the 'proper' way to dance so as to avoid vulgarity:

> I am more amazed to find, going back over the newspapers of the day, day, that in the midst of the battle Vernon and I were never attacked. I think now it was because both sides regarded us as their champions. We were clean-cut; we were married and when we danced there was nothing suggestive about it. We made dancing look like the fun it was and so gradually we became a middle ground both sides could accept.[112]

The most 'dangerous' of the new dances was the tango.[113] The Castles developed a version in which danger was averted by the man keeping his hands in his pockets.

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During the 1920s Paul Whiteman (1890-1967) led the most popular danceband in the USA. He was widely referred to as the 'King of Jazz', a title he accepted, even though he played orchestrations of jazz and other popular music. At the height of his fame and popularity he published an autobiography, co-written with the journalist Mary Margaret McBride, whose title suggested that his name was synonymous with jazz. Not everyone agreed. Within the cultural debates of the period Whiteman claimed a middle way—very much a middlebrow position between the supposed highbrow of European classical music and the supposed lowbrow of black popular music. He wanted to defend (his version of) jazz by claiming that it kept the best qualities of the original music while toning down its wildness and immorality, that is to say its blackness:

> The early jazz was each man for himself and devil take the harmony. The demoniac energy, the fantastic riot of accents and the humorous moods have all had to be toned down. I hope that in toning down we shall not, as some critics have predicted, take the life out of our music. I do not believe we shall. It seems to me that we have retained enough of the humor, rhythmic eccentricity, and pleasant informality to leave us still jazzing.[114]

While Paul Whiteman's *Jazz* offers an impeccably white and singular perspective on jazz and blues, *Blues: An Anthology* has decidedly mixed origins and materials: scores and background by the black jazz musician and entrepreneur W. C. Handy, an introduction by the lawyer and jazz *aficionado* Abbe Niles, and illustrations by the

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[112] See Irene Castle, *Castles in the Air*. As told to Bob and Wanda Duncan, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1958, p. 86.

[113] See Richard Barry, "Tango Pirates Infest Broadway", *New York Times*, 30 May 1915, p. SM16.

[114] Paul Whiteman and Mary Margaret McBride, *Jazz*, New York: J. H. Sears & Company, 1926, p. 210. On Whiteman's *Jazz*, see Sieglinde Lemke, "Whiteman's Jazz", in her *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 59-94; and Mario Dunkel, *The Stories of Jazz: Narrating a Musical Tradition*, Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2021, pp. 53-87.

Mexican artist and frequenter of Harlem cabarets, Miguel Covarrubias.[115] The book is effectively a compendium: "Niles's historical notes were combined with Handy's musical notation, piano and voice arrangements, a chart of guitar chords, and a bibliography, creating a comprehensive source that appealed to those interested in the genealogy of the blues, and those who simply wanted to play the music."[116] As Niles recalled in the foreword he wrote to Handy's later autobiography: "'*My Lord*,' a Texan lady is said to have remarked, '*a Mexican, a Yankee and a nigger!*'".[117]

Born and raised in Alabama, W. C. Handy (1873-1958) had a solid training as a musician before serving his time in travelling minstrel shows.[118] It was while working in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1903 that he had a subsequently famous 'awakening' on Tutwiler railway station when he overheard a black man singing a single line over and over while playing a steel guitar using a knife as a slide. What kept the repetition from becoming monotonous, Handy realised, was the flatted, or minor, note deliberately played out of scale by this guitarist with the dull edge of his knife pressed against the strings.[119] This 'blue note', as it was later called—technically an unexpected minor third, fifth, or seventh within an otherwise major strain—had been previously observed but nobody before Handy could approximate that sound on a printed score. Two years later, in Cleveland, Mississippi, he heard a local band play: "They struck up one of those over and over strains that seem to have no beginning and certainly no ending at all. The strumming attained a disturbing monotony, but on and on it went, a kind of stuff associated with cane rows and levee camps. Thump-thump-thump went their feet on the floor. It was not really annoying or unpleasant. Perhaps 'haunting' is the better word".[120] Impressed by the quantity of coins the audience threw onto the stage, Handy started to realise the commercial potential of what only later became known as the blues. He published his own first blues ("Memphis Blues") in 1912 (the same year as JWJ's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*), setting up a music company with Harry Pace,

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[115] *Blues: An Anthology*, ed. W. C. Handy; with an Introduction by Abbe Niles; Illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias, New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1926.

[116] Dougan, *Two Steps*, p. 38.

[117] Abbe Niles, "Foreword" to W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1941, pp. v-xiv, at ix. The Texan lady might have been Dorothy Scarborough, though she would probably have been too polite to make such a remark. It might even have been Niles' wife, Katherine, presumably speaking in jest. Or it might have been Niles' invention, making playful fun of Scarborough and/or of his wife, or of Texans more generally. Whoever it was missed a trick in failing to point out that the publishers, Albert and Charles Boni, were Jews.

[118] On Handy see David Robertson, *W. C. Handy: The Life and Times of the Man Who Made the Blues*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009; Tim Brooks, "W. C. Handy", in his *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004, pp. 409-436; and Mario Dunkel, "W. C. Handy, Abbe Niles, and (Auto)biographical Positioning in the Whiteman Era", *Popular Music and Society*, 38, no. 2 (2015), pp. 122-139.

[119] Handy, *Father of the Blues*, p. 74.

[120] Handy, *Father of the Blues*, pp. 76-77.

and moving to New York City in 1918 where Pace & Handy became one of the largest black-owned businesses in the city and where Handy set about making himself the authority on the blues.[121] Financial success brought fame and a house on Striver's Row, but an economic recession in 1921 alongside severe health problems and poor financial management caused a decline in Handy's fortunes only reversed after his meeting with Abbe Niles.

As a student at Connecticut's Trinity College in the 1910s Edward Abbe Niles (1894-1963) began to collect sheet music of popular songs, eventually becoming an enthusiast for the blues.[122] As he recalled in 1941, "To me in Connecticut in 1913, came the *Memphis Blues*, an olive among the marshmallows of that year's popular music".[123] After graduating from Trinity College, Niles served in World War I as a pilot in the Air Corps, subsequently receiving a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford followed by a law degree from Harvard. He married his wife Katherine and joined the prestigious law firm of Cadwalader, Wickersham, and Taft in New York, all without losing his fascination with the blues.

In spring 1925, Niles introduced himself to Handy, beginning a 33-year friendship that included legal and financial counselling and literary collaborations. He soon began writing about popular music and reviewing books on the subject in *The New Republic*, *The Bookman*, and *The Nation*, often acknowledging Handy's input. His pieces on jazz and the blues are now considered the most perceptive written in the 1920s, culminating in a magisterial assessment of jazz for the 1929 *Encyclopedia Britannica*.[124] *Blues: An Anthology* is the most lasting collaboration between the two, recently called "an unrecognized masterpiece of the Harlem Renaissance".[125]

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[121] See W. C. Handy, "How I Came to Write the 'Memphis Blues'", *New York Age*, 7 December 1916, p. 6.

[122] The definitive introduction to Niles is Elliott S Hurwitt, "Abbe Niles, Blues Advocate", in *Ramblin' on My Mind: New Perspectives on the Blues*, ed. David Evans, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008, pp. 105-151; but see also Sam Charters "Abbe Niles: A Pioneer Jazz Critic of the '20s", *The Jazz Review*, 2, no. 4 (May 1959), pp. 25-26; and the pieces by Don Armstrong in his series American Blues Journalism, 1920s-70s:, "1920s Music Journalism History, Part 5" (18 November 2019) <https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2019/11/18/american-blues-journalism-1920s-70s-part-5/>; "1920s Muci Journalism History", Part 6" (20 November 2019) < https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2019/11/20/american-blues-journalism-1920s-70s-part-6/>; "American Blues Journalism, 1920s-70s, Part 7" (22 November 2019) < https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2019/11/22/american-blues-journalism-1920s-70s-part-7/>; "American Blues Journalism, 1920s to 1970s, Part 8" (25 November 2019) <https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2019/11/25/american-blues-journalism-1920s-70s-part-8/>; "Abbe Niles and Blues Pornograph Records" (27 February 2020) < https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2020/02/27/abbe-niles-and-blues-pornograph-records/>; "Black Gospel/White Critics" (10 April 2020) < https://www.music-journalism-history.com/2020/04/10/black-gospel-white-critics/>;

[123] Abbe Niles, "Foreword", to Handy, *Father of the Blues*, p. v.

[124] Abbe Niles, "Jazz", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th edition, New York: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc 1929, vol. 12, pp. 982-84.

[125] Robertson, *W. C. Handy*, p. 94.

The publication history of *Blues: An Anthology* has its complexities. It was updated by the authors in 1949 as *A Treasury of the Blues: Complete Words and Music of 67 Great Songs from Memphis Blues to the Present Day*. Niles revised his introduction and the number of songs was increased from 50 to 67, with the notable inclusion of "Memphis Blues", whose copyright Handy had reacquired in 1940. After the death of all three authors there have been several further editions. Three of them, by Macmillan (1972), Da Capo (1990), and Dover (2012) use the original title but actually base themselves on the 1949 *Treasury*, varying the number of songs and in the latter two cases including introductions by contemporary scholars. Only the Applewood edition (2001) reproduces exactly the 1926 original.[126]

'Anthology' was a popular term in the early twentieth century, though *Blues: An Anthology* may have been the first time it was used for a collection of musical scores.[127] Niles was responsible for the compilation of the material: the choice of the word 'anthology' was probably his way of claiming respectability for a form not yet, in his view, given its due. *Blues: An Anthology* could therefore sit on serious bookshelves alongside a tome such as *Modern American Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, published the previous year.[128] Equally important—or from Handy's point of view even more so—many of the transcriptions of the scores and lyrics were accompanied at the bottom of the page by some version of "Copyright MCMXXVI by W. C. Handy Music Pub." A decade earlier Handy had been tricked into selling the copyright of "Memphis Blues" and so made no money when the song became wildly successful. Of the fifty transcriptions in *Blues: An Anthology*, sixteen were of pieces written by W. C. Handy, a further thirteen arranged or rearranged by him, and thirty-two copyrighted to one of his companies or to him individually. "St Louis Blues" carries the additional phrases "International Copyright Secured" and "All Rights Reserved".[129] One detects Niles's

[126] *A Treasury of the Blues: Complete Words and Music of 67 Great Songs from Memphis Blues to the Present Day*, ed. W. C. Handy; with an historical and critical text by Abbe Niles; with pictures by Miguel Covarrubias, New York: C. Boni ; distributed by Simon and Schuster, 1949; *Blues: An Anthology. Complete Words and Music of 53 Great Songs*, ed. W. C. Handy; with an historical and critical text by Abbe Niles; with pictures by Miguel Covarrubias. Rev. by Jerry Silverman, New York: Macmillan Co., 1972. [4th. printing New York: Collier Books, 1979]; *Blues, An Anthology: Complete Words and Music of 53 Great Songs*, ed. W.C. Handy; with an historical and critical text by Abbe Niles; with pictures by Miguel Covarrubias; revised by Jerry Silverman; new introduction by William Ferris, New York : Da Capo Press, 1990; *W. C. Handy's Blues, An Anthology: Complete Words and Music of 70 Great Songs and Instrumentals* by Abbe Niles, Miguel Covarrubias, W. C. Handy, Elliott Hurwitt; Mineola NY: Dover Publications, 2012; *Blues: An Anthology*, ed. W. C. Handy, Bedford MA : Applewood Books, 2001 [facsimile of 1926 edition].

[127] *Negro Songs An Anthology*, ed. Clement Wood, Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius, 1925, included no scores. In fact, although it had short sections of spirituals and folk-songs, it mostly consisted of published poems by writers such as James Weldon Johnson and Claude McKay.

[128] *Modern American Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Louis Untermeyer, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925.

[129] See Copyright Act of 1909.

lawyerly hand taking care to protect his friend's ownership of what would become one of the most frequently recorded tunes in musical history.

Blues: An Anthology was warmly welcomed. A book reception held at the Cotton Club included black guests, a rare occurrence for that venue. James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Carl Van Vechten, and Edmund Wilson all provided positive reviews, the first three singling out Covarrubias's illustrations for special praise.[130] Van Vechten's was the most informed review, referencing James Weldon Johnson's championing of ragtime and jazz in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, drawing on his own experience to praise the three Smiths—Bessie, Clara, and Mamie, and opining that no other painter, living or dead, has depicted American Negroes with "with the imagination and fidelity of spirit" shown in Covarrubias's drawings.[131] The Mexican artist had provided eight full-page plates, one as a frontispiece, three at points within Niles' introduction, and four between the introduction and the scores, as well as six smaller illustrations, one a sketch of Handy himself.[132]

In his introduction Niles was clearly inventing a history for the blues in which Handy held a central place as writer, player, and publisher—and Niles himself established his credentials as a scholar of blues and jazz.[133] This was the first history of the blues and central to that history is a rejection of the model—fast becoming the orthodoxy in 1926—that while the blues and other forms of 'primitive' folk music might provide useful seed material, jazz's future as a 'proper' musical form depended on its symphonic development by skilled arrangers such as Paul Whiteman, Vincent Lopez, Art Hickman, Meyer Davis, and Paul Specht. That the Handy/Niles position was not a simple 'black' counterpart to the 'white' view can be seen from the support given to Whiteman's version by a large swathe of black critics, notably Alain Locke in his revisions of J. A. Rogers' article on jazz in *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*.

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[130] James Weldon Johnson, "Now We Have the Blues: Review of *Blues: An Anthology*", *Saturday Review of Literature*, 19 June 1926, p. 868; Langston Hughes, "*Blues*—By W. C. Handy", *Opportunity*, 4 (August 1926), pp. 257-59, at 259; Carl Van Vechten, "Mean Ole Miss Blues Becomes Respectable", *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 June 1926, p. F1; Edmund Wilson, "Shanty-Boy Ballads and Blues", *The New Republic*, 47 (14 July 1926), pp. 227-29.

[131] Although Van Vechten is now remembered for his enthusiasm for Harlem nightlife and for his array of photographs of significant black figures, it's worth recalling that he was one of the leading music and dance critics of the early twentieth century, his reviews and essays collected into five substantial books: *Music After the Great War* (1915), *Music and Bad Manners* (1916), *Interpreters and Interpretations* (1917), *The Merry-Go-Round* (1918), *The Music of Spain* (1918).

[132] "Covarrubias's drawings fundamentally shaped the character of Handy's book, providing a peritextual framing for Niles's text and the musical scores" (Dunkel, *The Stories of Jazz*, p. 114).

[133] The close relationship between blues and jazz is suggested by the early confusion as to the title of *Blues: An Anthology*, which was first advertised as *The Blues: An Anthology of Jazz Music from the Early Negro Folk Blues to Modern Music* and even reviewed under that title by Niles's friend Sigmund Spaeth. The advertisement is in *The Bookman*, 62 (February 1926), p. xxvii; the review, just entitled "Blues", in *The Bookman*, 63 (June 1926), pp. 479-80. Perhaps pre-publication copies carried the older title.

Niles had already begun a campaign against the Whiteman view of jazz. When, building on the success of "Rhapsody in Blue", Gershwin wrote a concerto to be performed at Carnegie Hall, the director of the New York Symphony, Walter Damrosch, wrote an introductory programme note that picked up on the gendered representation of jazz in these years:

> Lady Jazz, adorned with her intriguing rhythms, has danced her way round the world, even as far as the Eskimos of the North and the Polynesians of the South Sea Isles. But for all her travels and her sweeping popularity, she has encountered no knight who could lift her to a level that would enable her to be received as a respectable member in musical circles.
>
> George Gershwin seems to have accomplished this miracle. He has done it boldly by dressing this extremely independent and up-to-date young lady in the classic garb of a concerto. Yet he has not detracted one whit from her fascinating personality. He is the prince who has taken Cinderella by the hand and openly proclaimed her a princess to the astonished world, no dount to the fury of her envious sisters.[134]

Niles had fun with this image, picturing what went before:

> Mr. Damrosch: "I'll receive her, for you, George, but I draw the line at what goes with her, those saxophones and cowbells and—She says she ain't herself without 'em? Well perhaps she can have a Charleston stick, and a wire brush for the snare drum, and—hm—yes, she can hang a derby hat over the trumpet. We can always call that 'a felt cap' in the program-notes. But that's all, absolutely all."[135]

Published within a few months of Whiteman's *Jazz*, Henry O. Osgood's *So This Is Jazz* announced its viewpoint with a frontispiece photograph of Paul Whiteman. In the book Osgood suggested—probably only half in jest—that there should be a plaque in the foyer of the Palais D'Or, previously the Palais Royal (Broadway and 48th Street), where Whiteman's orchestra used to play. The plaque would read: "*Site of the* PALAIS ROYAL *where* PAUL WHITEMAN *First Conceived the Idea of Making An Honest Woman out of* JAZZ".[136] This put jazz's origins firmly in the brothels and on the streets. Whiteman's response was to offer a slight twist: "I never questioned her honesty. I simply thought she needed a new dress", a statement capable of various interpretations, perhaps the least insulting being that jazz was a lower-class woman who married up when she met Whiteman.[137]

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[134] Quoted in Lawrence Gilman, "Mr. George Gershwin Plays His New Jazz Concerto", *New York Herald Tribune*, 4 December 1925, p. 19.

[135] Abbe Niles, "Lady Jazz in the Vestibule", *The New Republic*, 23 December 1925, pp. 138-139, at 138.

[136] Henry O. Osgood, *So This Is Jazz*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1926, p. 131.

[137] Paul Whiteman, "In Defence of Jazz and Its Makers", *New York Times*, 13 March 1927, p. SM4, 22.

Blues: An Anthology doesn't so much contest Whiteman as ignore him.[138] His name appears just once, in a footnote, where Niles mentions that in his programme notes Whiteman claims that his orchestra is "admitted the equal in discipline of any symphony organization" while "Handy's own theory is that the essence of jazz is spontaneous deviation from the score".[139] None of Whiteman's compositions or arrangements are included, although an extract from Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" appears, Handy and Niles both being on good terms with the pianist and composer, who was open about the ample use he made in his compositions of chords from several of Handy's blues.[140]

Covarrubias's illustrations also served to put forward a vision of jazz very different from Whiteman's. The frontispiece (Plate I) shows a small jazz band (nine or so pieces) in full ecstatic flow, while "Blues Dancing" (making its third appearance as Plate VI) emphasises the intimacy of the jazz cabaret. Covarrubias underlined the importance of that intimacy in his reaction to "Rhapsody in Blue". Gershwin's composition was performed three times in early 1924 by Paul Whiteman's Orchestra: on 12 February and 7 March at the Aeolian Hall and on 21 April at Carnegie Hall. Covarrubias made an engaging, if slight, sketch of the evening at Carnegie Hall in which he and Gershwin can be glimpsed in conversation at the bottom left of the picture. Plate VIII in *Blues: An Anthology* features a blues singer, based on Bessie Smith, in a small cabaret singing to a black audience. As he occasionally did with his drawings, Covarrubias then made a painted version of this blues singer, which he cheekily called "Rhapsody in Blue". This, he seems to be saying, is where you'll find the *real* rhapsody in blue. Even more cheekily, he offered the painting to George Gershwin for $1250 and, when Gershwin demurred, he sold it to Paul Whiteman, who proudly hung it in his

[138] Whiteman's Jazz contains just three passing mentions of Handy, one of which contrives to get his name wrong.

[139] Niles, "Sad Horns", in *Blues: An Anthology*, p. 17n.29.

[140] See Henry Levine, "Gershwin, Handy, and the Blues", *Clavier*, 9 (October 1970), pp. 10-20.

dining-room, oblivious to the irony.[141]

In "Sad Horns" Niles includes a brief section, obviously drawn from his conversations with Handy, on what he calls the "tangana rhythm", otherwise known as the *habanera* or *tango*, which Handy had introduced into some of his compositions. Niles suggests that the justification for its appearance and the explanation for its popularity among black audiences stems from its African origin. The native word is *tangana*, he claims, and it is Spanish only through adoption by the Moors.[142] In *Father of the Blues*, Handy's own two-part account of how he learned to understand the blues and their impact has its parallel in his account of Hispanic influences. He first recounts how when he visited Havana with Mahara's Minstrel Men in 1900 he used to seek out "the small shy bands that played behind closed shutters on dark out of the way streets where the passion flower bloomed in the heart of the night. These fascinated me because they were playing a strange native air, new and interesting to me".[143] Then, nine years later, in Memphis, he observed the "sudden, proud and graceful" reaction of black dancers to the *habanera* rhythm in Will H. Tyers' *Maori*.[144] Intrigued, he incorporated that rhythm into his own compositions, most notably "St Louis Blues".

That rhythmic cell known as the *habanera* (or *tango*) had been added by black musicians to the contradanza music popular in early nineteenth-century Cuba. Tyers had first used it in a composition called "Trocha" in 1896, referencing the fortified military line built to impede the passing of insurrectionist forces to the western part of the island during the first Cuban war of independence (1868–1878) and newly relevant in 1896 at the start of the second war.[145] Connections between New Orleans and Havana were extensive, even before Handy's 1900 visit. The Onward Brass Band may have played in Havana as early as 1884 and they were in Santiago de Cuba during the Spanish-American War as part of the Ninth Volunteer Infantry Immune Band.[146] All this is evidence for what Jelly Roll Morton famously called "the Spanish tinge", the one thing that he and W. C. Handy did agree about: "if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for

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141 See Don Rayno, *Paul Whiteman: Pioneer in American Music, 1930-1967*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012, pp. 180-81. For a warm appreciation of the painting, see Richard J. Powell, "Re/birth of a Nation", in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, Berkeley: Hayward Gallery, Institute of International Visual Arts, and University of California Press, 1997, pp. 14-33.

142 Niles, "Sad Horns", p. 16.

143 Handy, *Father of the Blues*, p. 53.

144 Handy, *Father of the Blues*, pp. 97-98.

145 William Henry Tyers (1870-1924). See Bill Edwards, "William Henry Tyers" (n.d.) <http://ragpiano.com/comps/wtyers.shtml>.

146 See Jack Stewart, "Cuban Influences on New Orleans Music", *The Jazz Archivist*, 13 (1998-1999), pp. 14-23, at 18; and more generally Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004, 323-332.

jazz".[147] Not accidentally, the tango was the dance singled out in the moral panic of the early twentieth century as the most immoral.

The term *tangana* had reached New York via Henry Edward Krehbiel's *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (1914), which quoted information from Albert Friedenthal's *Musik, Tanz und Dichtung bei den Kreolen Amerikas* (1913).[148] Friedenthal (1862-1921) was a Polish pianist, composer, and protoethnomusicologist who travelled widely: he spent considerable time in Africa, China, and South America, and his theories were eagerly drawn upon by those who wanted, for whatever reason, to find an African origin for blues and jazz.[149] In this instance, the rhythmic cell was supposedly African via two possible routes, from Moorish Spain to Cuba or—rather more likely—from Africa to Cuba via the slave ships.

The origin of the word *tango*, presumably linked to *tangana*, is disputed: one theory does claim it as a Bantu word but, although *tangana* is indeed a Bantu word meaning 'Little Pumpkin', the name of a distinguished tribal ancestor, it has no obvious musical reference.[150] More promisingly, the word *tango* appears in eastern Cuba in a musical context in 1856, a letter-writer complaining about the "*tangos* of the negroes whose monotonous uproar begins on the eve and doesn't end until after the fiestas".[151] In Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic "tángana" or "atángana" indicates an uproar or violent discussion, or is an exclamation meaning "what a mess!". As Fernando Ortiz points out, such African or African-derived words relating to music—the examples he gives are cumbancha, changüí, fandango, guateque, zarabanda, jelengue, zafacoca, sambeque, tángana, tajona, timbeque, titingó—all tend to signify 'noise' or 'disruption' in European languages.[152]

Disruptive is exactly what jazz and blues were in the 1920s. Shackled by a concern for respectability, the New Negro movement was could never entirely embrace the

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[147] In Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and Inventorof Jazz*, New York: Duell, Slaon and Pearce, 1950, p. 62.

[148] Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music*, New York: G. Schirmer, 1914, p. 93); Albert Friedenthal, *Musik, Tanz und Dichtung bei den Kreolen Amerika*, Berlin-Wilmersdorf: H. Schnippel, 1913.

[149] 'Tangana' is referred to in Joseph George Jacobson, "The Creoles and Their Music", *The Etude*, 34, no. 5 (May 1916), p. 340, drawing from Friedenthal; and James Weldon Johnson refers approvingly to Friedenthal's theory in his preface to *The Book of Negro Spirituals*, New York: Viking Press, 1925, pp. 11-51, at 9.

[150] Robert K. Herbert, "The Sociohistory of Clicks in Southern Bantu", in *Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics*, ed. Rajend Mesthrie, Claremont (SA): David Philip, 1995, pp. 51-67, at 60.

[151] Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music*, p. 327, quoting in his translation Nancy Pérez Rodríguez, *El carnaval santiagüero*, 2 vols., Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1988, vol 1, p. 79.

[152] Fernando Ortiz, *La africanía en la música folklórica de Cuba* [1950], Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1993, p. 114. See also the entry "Tango" in Fernando Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, Havana, Imprenta "El Siglo XX", 1924, pp. 447-448.

greatest of black cultural innovations. Those who did stand out as pioneers: Langston Hughes, W. C. Handy, Abbe Niles, Miguel Covarrubias.