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Cosmopolitan or Provincial?: Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867-1940

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COSMOPOLITAN OR PROVINCIAL?: IDEOLOGY IN EARLY BLACK MUSIC HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1867–1940

GUTHRIE P. RAMSEY JR.

Eileen Southern, recently called "a quiet revolutionary,"[1] published *The Music of Black Americans: A History* in 1971. The appearance of her book in the wake of the Black Power Movement, the turbulent social upheaval of the late 1960s, links it to an auspicious historical moment. Among other dramatic social changes, the period saw the radicalization of the word "black," a designation standing provocatively, even proudly, in Southern's main title. Furthermore, widespread student protests led to sweeping curricular advances in colleges and universities across the nation, most notably, the addition of courses in black history and culture. Designed to fill a void in the new curriculum, Southern's work broke new ground in its method and scope, inspiring others (both directly and indirectly) to similar inquiry and helping to establish black music as a scholarly specialty. Thus *The Music of Black Americans* stands as an important symbol of the epoch in which it first appeared, even as it filled a glaring lacuna in American musical scholarship as a whole.

Work on black music that followed has featured research rich in variety and scope: musical biography and autobiography, archival and oral histories, systematic research on jazz and blues, the compilation of bibliographies and indices, ethnographic studies, critical editions, and much more. In addition, the recent introduction of contemporary cultural and social theory into the field has pointed out new critical directions, stimu-

1. Samuel A. Floyd Jr. coined this apt portrayal in his essay, "Eileen Jackson Southern: Quiet Revolutionary" (1992), which outlines Southern's early life and scholarly contributions to the field of black music scholarship.

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lating many exciting possibilities.[2] Yet despite its catalytic role and the explosion of literature that followed, *The Music of Black Americans* also belongs to a legacy of previous research that stretches back more than a century.

The black music historiographic tradition began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I will trace the rise of black music research from that time through about 1940, or to the end of what Meier and Rudwick (1986) call the first period of Afro-American historiography.[3] Throughout this period, black musical activity in the United States attracted an impressive array of critics, practitioners, and admirers. From the "origins of the Negro spirituals" debate and the recurring argument, "Is it jazz or isn't it?" to the question of racial "authenticity" in the symphonic and operatic works by black composers, black music has proven itself a fertile subject for commentators from many sectors. (The appearance of rap music suggests that the controversies shall continue to appear.)[4]

Despite this historical interest in black music, its journey to academic legitimization has mirrored the progression of black Americans them-

2. See for example Brackett (1992); Carby (1991); Floyd (1991); Gilroy (1991); Lott (1988); Monson (1994); Taylor (1992); Tomlinson (1991); and Walser (1993 and 1995). Other outstanding efforts in this regard include two book-length studies: Radano (1993), and especially Floyd (1995), which offer an extensive application of contemporary critical theory to black music research. Floyd's groundbreaking work addresses "the absence of a thorough and specific aesthetic for the perception and criticism of black music; suggests a viable, valid, and appropriate way of inquiring into the nature of black music; suggests a basis for discourse among intellectuals on musical difference; and helps break down the barriers that remain between 'high art' and 'low art'" (5). Floyd, Brackett, Monson, and Walser make use of Henry Louis Gates's (1988) theory of Signifyin(g) by extensive and convincing application of his ideas to formal musical analysis grounded in black cultural aesthetics. Other studies that include notable use of critical theory on various aspects of black music include a special issue of *Black Music Research Journal* (vol. 11, Fall 1991; guest editor Bruce Tucker) and Krin Gabbard's (1995a; 1995b) recent collected anthologies on jazz.

3. In a study on the growth of black history and its relationship to the profession of history, Meier and Rudwick (1986, 73) write that Afro-American historiography can arguably be "divided into five periods of unequal length: (1) from the ASNLH's [Association for the Study of Negro Life and History] founding in 1915 and up into the 1930s; (2) the Roosevelt era of the New Deal and World War II; (3) the decade and a half between the war's end and the opening of the 'Civil Rights Revolution' of the 1960s; (4) the brief half-dozen years marked by the apogee of the direct-action phase of the black protest movement; and (5) the climax of scholarship that followed, 1967–80." Each category, Meier and Rudwick observe, is marked by "distinct patterns of socialization that shaped the outlook of the historians who entered the field." Southern's *The Music of Black Americans* appeared in Meier's and Rudwick's last period.

4. On the spirituals controversy, see, for example, Jackson ([1943] 1975); Southern (1972); and Tallmadge (1981). For representative literature on jazz's stylistic debates, see Feather (1987); Gendron (1993); Watrous (1993); and Whitehead (1993). The idea of "race" in classical compositions by African-American composers is discussed in Anderson (1983); Hunt (1973); Smith (1983); and Wilson (1973). For scholarly literature on rap, see, for example, Decker (1994); Dyson (1993); Kelley (1994); Rose (1993); and Walser (1995).

selves into mainstream American life: slow, demanding, and sinuous. Once sanctioned in academic circles, however, the "formal" study of black music has flourished steadily and methodically. The appearance of scholarly journals and dissertations and the growing number of reference works devoted to black music speak to the vitality of the field.[5] The early years of this historiographical tradition, however, are difficult to trace because its historical trajectory has not developed solely within academic disciplines such as musicology. Writers have approached the subject from a variety of different perspectives, methodologies, goals, and motivations.

My goal here is to discuss, in more or less chronological order, some key works in early black music historiography. These include book-length studies, pre-1900s journalism, folklore, work from the fields of history and musicology, and literature from the Negro Renaissance of the 1920s. In addition, I consider in the latter half of this essay some of the dynamic issues raised by early jazz criticism, which I read as an important subfield of black music research, albeit one with its own vital and singular development. Many of the issues raised by early jazz criticism, for example, not only resonated with nineteenth-century black music inquiry, but they have also influenced research activity on black music up to the present. Although all of the literature referred to above cannot be discussed extensively in this context, my purpose in their treatment is to position them within other related discourses: the historiography of African peoples in the United States, the dynamic tradition of black arts and letters in general, and the broad scope of American musical scholarship. In short, this project on black music historiography seeks to draw together common elements in a field that has developed in several disciplines and streams of knowledge.

At first look, the unwieldy nature of early black music research makes the idea of producing a convincing report of all the intellectual issues present appear impossible. But upon closer inspection, distinct patterns emerge so that something of an ideology takes shape in the literature. Black music historiography, for example, seems to have developed from several impulses from outside and within the discursive world of black music-making, including the ideology of race and the attitudes about the art of music in America (such as those reflected in Crawford's "cosmopolitan" and "provincial" model discussed below). Furthermore, the

5. Scholarly journals whose focus is black music include *The Black Perspective in Music* (1973–1990), edited by Eileen Southern; and *Black Music Research Journal* (1980–present), edited by Samuel A. Floyd Jr. For secondary literature on scholarly periodicals, see Byrnside (1986). Important bibliographic and reference works include de Lerma (1975; 1981–1984); Floyd and Reisser (1983; 1987); Maultsby (1975); Skowronski (1981); Southern (1982); and Southern and Wright (1990).

fields of journalism, academic music study, and history and the budding disciplines of anthropology and folklore have also played a crucial role in the development of this literature. The boundaries between these impulses are theoretical; they frequently overlap, and a single document can embody the influences of more than one. Taken together, this varied cluster of discourses forms the ideological basis of the historical study of black music in America.[6]

My work here purposes to uncover—albeit in a preliminary way—some of the conceptualizations that have undergirded the historical study of black musical practice in the United States. Thus, this project in historiography is archaeological in that, like Gary Tomlinson's work on music in Renaissance magic, "it takes us beneath questions of authorial intent and intertextuality to the grid of meaningfulness that constrains and conditions a discourse or social practice" (Tomlinson 1993, x). Preceeding Tomlinson with this line of thinking in the realm of black culture, Houston Baker writes that "as a method of analysis, the archaeology of knowledge assumes that knowledge exists in discursive formations whose lineage can be traced and whose regularities are discoverable." These discourses, Baker argues, are informed by governing statements, which are linguistic and "materially repeatable" gestures and are regulated "by discoverable principles" (Baker 1984, 17, 18).

A most striking quality of early black music historiography ideology is how writers—particularly African-American ones—negotiated the generally accepted "divide" between Euro-based and Afro-based asethetic perspectives. Not simply representing a binary opposition, this tension had deep roots in inherited attitudes about American music-making and race ideology. Richard Crawford (1993, 6–7) has recently written of two "musical ways of life" in eighteenth-century America that have inspired two prevalent tendencies among historians of American music, which he labels "cosmopolitan" and "provincial." Writers in the cosmopolitan school took their creative and intellectual direction from Europe, extending Old World practices, attitudes, and hegemony. The provincial group, on the other hand, "involved those who resisted, or reinterpreted, or, most likely, failed to receive" the pan-European musical model promoted by the cosmopolitan school. Crawford's formulations are useful as a backdrop and as a starting point in this study. But black music research has developed with important divergences from American music historiography, and thus the cosmopolitan/provincial split is less applicable

6. Many definitions exist for the term "ideology"; I use it after Rose Rosengard Subotnik's formulation to describe a "general philosophical orientation," a "specific philosophical viewpoint," and as a "conceptual context that allows the definition of human utterances" (Subotnik 1991, 4–5).

here, primarily because of the ideology of race permeating the literature and complicating this ideological/cultural model.

Race ideology is of singular importance in writings by African Americans, who have provided what has been called a black perspective to the field. St. Clair Drake (1987, 1:1) defines the black perspective as a point of view that represents "reality as perceived, conceptualized, and evaluated by individuals who are stigmatized and discriminated against because they are designated as 'Negroes' or 'Blacks.'" That sense of perception has given the literature a strain of black nationalistic thought, usually expressed around the notion of black social progress and, as historian Sterling Stuckey (1972, 1–29) has noted about nineteenth-century African-American nationalism, in the idea of pan-Africanism. The dynamic relationship of these themes in black music historiography provides a window into the tensions between the "Western" and the "black" of this literary tradition.

Yet, as the final section of this essay will show, race ideology in black music research took on dramatic new dimensions with the appearance of jazz criticism. With white critics from America and Europe championing jazz, the response of black writers—and perhaps, the dynamic aesthetic principles that informed the genre itself—forced a shift in the rhetoric, if not some of the underlying "governing statements," of black music research. In fact, some of the issues that surfaced in the literature—namely, white participation and reception, black "authenticity," the social "pedigree" of jazz, among a host of other important issues—are only beginning to be explained convincingly by contemporary researchers. Together, these shifting ideas about race and Afro/Euro aesthetics provide important ways to understand African-American music both as a Western and as a black enterprise. But most important to the present study, these themes provide a way to talk about the beginnings of ideology in black music historiography. As the first book-length study about black musicians in this country shows, these impulses had already crystallized in the work of a nineteenth-century African-American writer.

* * * * *

When James Monroe Trotter (1842–1892) published *Music and Some Highly Musical People* in 1878, he established himself as America's first African-American music historian. Scholars have noted the book's significance, its position as a landmark study, the thoroughness of Trotter's treatment of black nineteenth-century musicians, and the author's position as "not only the first black but also one of the most provocative, most thoughtful, and most courageous American music historians of any color to date" (Stevenson 1973, 403). In his own words, Trotter wrote *Music and*

Some Highly Musical People "to perform . . . a much-needed service, not so much, perhaps, to the cause of music itself, as to some of its noblest devotees and the race to which the latter belong" (Trotter [1878] 1881, 3).

Trotter's racial agenda is clear: he wanted to chronicle the musical activities of African Americans and instill in his people pride in those achievements. Thus the hagiographic tone of the book served to present these musicians in the best light possible. Trotter hoped his work would serve as a landmark and guide for others and establish between blacks and whites "relations of mutual respect and good feeling" (4). Unquestionably, his concerns were more than musical. Trotter's mandate of racial pride and the central position he gave the Western art music tradition formed the basis for an important ideological dichotomy in subsequent black music historiography, especially in those writings by African Americans themselves. In other words, the collision between Trotter's racial politics and his Euro-based aesthetic perspectives formed an important and persistent tension in future work on black music.

Trotter's qualifications to write this book also deserve attention. Although he lacked professional training as a music historian, Trotter's personal, educational, and occupational background provided him valuable experiences, and he drew on many of them while writing his study. Born at Grand Gulf, Mississippi, Trotter was the son of a slave owner, Richard S. Trotter, and his slave, Letitia. He received "a superior education" in a Negro college preparatory school in Cincinnati, Ohio, and studied music there (Stevenson 1973, 388–389).[7] Trotter held many occupations in his lifetime from the most menial to the most prestigious, including a cabin boy on a riverboat, bellboy in a hotel, school teacher, soldier in the Union Army, manager of opera singer Madame Selika, postmaster of Hyde Park, Massachusetts, and finally, Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia, a relatively high-paying and prestigious appointment that Republican and Democratic presidents had reserved for blacks (Stevenson 1973, 396). Apparently, these occupations permitted Trotter first-hand experience with little-known musical activities among blacks, as the following statement taken from an essay titled "The School-Master in the Army," which Trotter wrote for a contemporary newspaper, shows:

> In quite a number of the colored regiments military bands were formed, and under the instruction of sometimes a band teacher from the north, and at others under one of their own proficient fellow-soldiers, these bands learned to discourse most entertaining music in camp, and often by their inspiriting strains did much to relieve the fatigue. (Quoted in Stevenson 1973, 392; see also Wilson [1890] 1968, 506)

7. See Fox (1971, 3–30) for more information on Trotter's family background. I thank Gerald Gill for this reference.

The content and organization of *Music and Some Highly Musical People* provides a revealing profile of Trotter's musical values. He begins his book with a discussion of the music of ancient Greece, followed by a survey of Western European music through the nineteenth century. Insofar as Trotter believed that this was their legitimate legacy, he gave priority to those musicians and music organizations (such as opera singer Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, pianist Thomas Greene Bethune, and The Colored American Opera Company) who participated in Western art music. Trotter's appendix includes a 152–page collection of thirteen vocal and instrumental pieces by black composers, for which he offers the following philosophical explanation on its opening page:

> The collection is given in order to complete the author's purpose, which is not only to show the proficiency of the subjects of the foregoing sketches as interpreters of the music of others, but, further, to illustrate the ability of quite a number of them (and, relatively, that of their race) to originate and scientifically arrange good music.

Despite Trotter's emphasis on American composers of Western art music, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* failed to have a significant impact on subsequent American music histories beyond the literature by other black authors. The book was referred to in Frédéric Louis Ritter's *Music in America* (1884, 334, 400) but ignored by other early histories of American music (Stevenson 1973, 384).[8]

Because the book was written by a black citizen in the years following the Civil War and during the "Golden Age of Black Nationalism" (Stuckey 1972), *Music and Some Highly Musical People* resonates with the prominent racial and cultural politics of its day. A striking similarity exists, for example, between Trotter's views and those of Alexander Crummell, the nineteenth-century pan-Africanist, founder of the Negro Academy, missionary, and statesman (Gates 1989, 15). Crummell's stated goal for the Academy constituted a "high-brow," though staunchly pro-black stance: "to aid youths of genius in the attainment of the higher culture, at home and abroad" (Moss 1981, 24).

Although Trotter's allegiance to Western art music is indisputable, he does show an openness to vernacular music-making. Trotter discusses the Fisk Jubilee Singers, The Georgia Minstrels, and minstrel singer Sam Lucas in arguing the case of "orally transmitted racial music" (Stevenson 1973, 400). Nevertheless, Trotter apparently believed black participation in Western art music to be a higher calling, arguing vehemently against

8. It should be noted that American music historiography, according to Richard Crawford (1993, 6) has always been marked with a "strain of randomness," a lack of consensus in scope, method, and emphasis.

the hindrance of "the art-capabilities of the colored race" because of "the hateful, terrible spirit of *color-prejudice,* that foul spirit, the full measure of whose influence in crushing out the genius often born in children of [the black] race is difficult to estimate" (Trotter [1878] 1881, 4, 112). In summary, Trotter's *Music and Some Highly Musical People* embodies a blend of uncompromised black nationalistic thought and Euro-based aesthetic sensibility.

Beyond Trotter's book-length study, a plethora of literature produced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought other themes to black music inquiry. Travelogues, diaries, regional and national histories, letters, sermons, and political tracts written before 1860 document aspects of black expressive slave culture. Much of that literature highlights what these observers saw as a hybrid of the emerging African-American folk culture, "an amalgamation of African and European elements, overlaid with a predominantly African tone" (Southern and Wright 1990, xxii, xxiii). From today's vantage point, sources from this period mapped out the acculturation process that produced African-American expressive culture. Furthermore, the dramatic rise of professional American journalism and the accompanying explosion of media publishing during the antebellum era produced a voluminous literature. The black slave received much attention in these writings, particularly the socio-economic and moral matters surrounding the issue of slavery.[9] These writings (along with those found in novels and slave narratives) included descriptions of slave festivals and black church services, which contain a wealth of information on black music. Thus, these historic journalistic activities have proven invaluable to black music research as a discipline. But ultimately they seemed to work against certain assumptions and goals of the strain of black music inquiry pioneered by Trotter.

While Trotter gathered information for his book, for example, other writers were busy collecting materials of their own. The latter work also sought to document the music of black Americans, but not those who sang arias nor those who composed works for the pianoforte. With the rise of journalistic interest in slave culture, there also came a heightened curiosity about black vernacular musical practices. Travelers, teachers, and other collectors gathered the songs of slave culture. What these writers contributed should clearly be considered a forerunner to work conducted later within the disciplines of ethnomusicology and folklore, for these collectors concerned themselves primarily with issues of repertory,

9. In April 1852 John Sullivan Dwight (1813–1893), called America's "first major music critic," founded *Dwight's Journal of Music,* a journal that published such writings (Riis 1976, 156–157). Thomas Riis lists all articles on black music topics that appeared in the journal's almost thirty-year run.

preservation, transcription, and performance practice. And the repertory that attracted most of their attention was the spiritual, on which these researchers conducted, during the years 1860 and 1890, what would today be called fieldwork.[10] The literature abounds with vivid descriptions of these folksongs because the vocal quality and improvisational performance practices held continual fascination for white listeners.

Published collections soon appeared. The first of these to reach press was the landmark *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867) by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison. The book comprises melodies and lyrics of 136 spiritual and secular songs. That James Monroe Trotter avoided reference to this book, one which he would surely have known, should come as no surprise. While *Slave Songs of the United States* and *Music and Some Highly Musical People* both sought to show "the musical capacity of the Negro," as William Allen put it in the introduction to *Slave Songs of the United States*, each took different routes to do so.

Allen, Ware, and Garrison were all graduates of Harvard University, with varying degrees of musical training, and their families were connected with the abolition movement and to various aspects of New England aristocratic culture. The nineteenth-century racialist and Eurocentric language that one might expect does appear throughout the text. These authors believed, for example, that the beauty of the songs in their collection provided evidence that Negroes held the potential to become more like the "cultivated race." Of course, with the anthropology of culture available today, such views should certainly be considered naive, whether they were written by James Monroe Trotter or by William Francis Allen. Instead of spending time upbraiding these authors on political grounds, however, I chose here to concentrate on what they achieved. As Dena Epstein (1977, 304) has argued, the authors of *Slave Songs of the United States* "displayed a concern for a music that they could not fully understand, but that they recognized as valuable, attractive, and eminently worth perserving from the hazards of time and historic change." Furthermore, similar efforts that succeeded *Slave Songs of the United States* led the way for collections of concertized or arranged spirituals, which as we shall see, appeared later during the Harlem Renaissance era. Future col-

10. Southern and Wright (1990, xxiv) note that in the nineteenth century, the *Journal of American Folk-lore* and *Hampton Institute's Southern Workman* published folksongs regularly, with and without extensive comment (see the special issue of *Black Perspective in Music* 4 [July 1976], which reprints some of these articles). Portia Maultsby's (1981) survey of literature on the spiritual identifies four theories with which various authors have addressed the song's origin: (1) imitation of European composition (Wallaschek [1893] 1970; White [1928] 1965); (2) original compositions by slaves (Krehbiel [1914] 1962); (3) African origin (Waterman 1943); and (4) acculturation (Herskovits [1941] 1990).

lectors also included introductions to their anthologies, providing discussions about historical contexts and performance practice.[11]

The tensions surrounding *Music and Some Highly Musical People* and *Slave Songs of the United States* raise important historiographic issues. On one hand, Trotter, an educated black man, believed that putting the race's best foot forward meant proving that they could master the Western art music tradition. On the other hand, the authors of *Slave Songs of the United States* found abolitionist currency in the power of the vernacular spiritual, even though many of its performance traits, as they learned, could not be captured by their transcriptions.[12] The cultural politics of ethnic or racial identity, the idea of what would best improve the collective social position of African Americans, the dynamic aesthetic conventions of black expressive culture, and the idea that these authors believed that music was central to understanding these ideas would become an important theme and creative inspiration in subsequent black music research.

Like Trotter before them, turn-of-the-century African-American journalists usually promoted the advancement of the race. *The Negro Music Journal* (a "Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Educational Interest of the Negro Race in Music") documents such an attitude. The journal's publication run lasted a little more than a year—from September 1902 to November 1903 (Terry 1977, 146). The magazine's editor, J. Hillary Taylor, possessed musical taste embedded in high culture, as the almost evangelistic zeal of his magazine's mission statement attests: "We shall endeavor to get the majority of our people interested in that class of music which will purify their minds, lighten their hearts, touch their souls. . . . It is the music of . . . Bach, Handel, Mozart, . . . S. Coleridge Taylor, Grieg, Chaminade, Saint Saëns, Paderewski, McDowell, Mrs. Beach and others" (Taylor 1902, 10). As Riis (1976, 158) has noted about *Dwight's Journal of Music* before it, *The Negro Music Journal* sought to influence and mold musical taste. But unlike Dwight's readership, Taylor's target was African Americans, whose homes he wanted to become "cultured . . . with only the purest and best in music."

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the academic fields of history and musicology saw developments that influenced how Ameri-

11. See Southern and Wright (1990, xxxiii–xxxiv) for information about other such collections from this period; see also Jackson-Brown (1976) on another early anthology, *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies* (Taylor 1882). Collections of this type continued to be published in the twentieth century; see, for example, Work ([1915] 1969). It is important to note that since the published versions of these tunes were brief, a collected anthology provided a practical way to make a large number of them available to the general public.

12. Radano (1996) provides an astute analysis of the cultural politics of producing nineteenth-century spirituals transcriptions.

can music and African-American culture would be studied in the future. A trend toward the use of scientific (or systematic) methodology can be noted in each of these specialized areas. Scholars began to advance methods of inquiry that not only imposed order on these fields but that also helped them progress toward recognition as legitimate areas of academic study. (Each, however, still struggles in many ways for respect in the academy.) Black music research has strong connections to each of these areas—American musicology and African-American history—and has profited from and contributed to developments within them.

The field of American music scholarship experienced systematic research most notably in the work of Oscar G. Sonneck (1873–1928), called "the first serious student of early music in America" (Crawford 1990, 270). In 1902 Sonneck was appointed Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress. When he had begun his research on early American music two years earlier, "he found himself heir to no strong tradition of historical inquiry" (271). By 1905, when Sonneck published his first books, he launched "a new phase in the writing of American music history" (271). In 1915 Sonneck became the founding editor of Schirmer's *The Musical Quarterly*, America's first scholarly music journal. In 1916 Sonneck delivered an address on American musical historiography to the Music Teacher's National Association, wherein he argued for "more neutral, more impartial, more disinterested—in brief, more scientific" research on American music (quoted in Crawford 1990, 277), echoing similar exhortations in other fields of American studies. Finally, when Sonneck resigned from the Library of Congress in 1917 and joined the music publishing house G. Schirmer in New York as Director of the Publication Department, he ceased his work in "objective" research. Oscar Sonneck played a crucial if not singular role in creating a space for literature by American writers whose concerns went beyond that of music journalism and criticism. Moreover, Sonneck's career had a direct and early impact on black music historiography. Maud Cuney-Hare's treatment of black music in *Negro Musicians and Their Music*, a book I'll discuss more thoroughly later, for example, relies on research conducted at the Library of Congress Music Collection, which Sonneck had established as an important research archive. In addition, *The Musical Quarterly* published articles on black music during its first years (see, for example, Curtis-Berlin 1919a and 1919b).

Systematic research's manifestation in early African-American history is, perhaps, best represented by the groundbreaking work of Carter Godwin Woodson (1875–1950).[13] Like other black writers who preceded him, Woodson's work carried a distinct political import beyond its stated goals

13. Floyd (1992, 14–15) compares the impact of Woodson's scholarly and entrepreneurial efforts in the field of history to Eileen Southern's work in musicology.

of objective, disinterested scholarship. Woodson, the second African-American to earn a doctorate in the field of history, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915 and a year later launched the *Journal of Negro History.* These activities made him almost solely responsible for establishing African-American history as an academic field (Meier and Rudwick 1986, 1). Woodson's goal, the popularization of Negro history, had dual purposes reminiscent of Trotter's earlier sentiments: the building of pride and self-esteem among blacks and the lessening of prejudice among whites. What remains remarkable is that Woodson's scholarly efforts, together with his constant appeals for philanthropic assistance, succeeded during what Meier and Rudwick refer to as "the apogee of popular and scientific racism in Western thought" (2–3). As a rule, Woodson and other members of the black intelligentsia sought to counter racism's effects among African Americans by championing the systematic study of black history. Woodson's and his contemporaries' work took place in the context of other related developments: the professionalization of the field of history and the establishment of graduate departments in history that emphasized scientific method. Thus, Woodson's work represented "the convergence of two distinct streams of historical publication: the long tradition of writing on the black past on the part of black intellectuals and polemicists, on the one hand, and the professionalization of American historical study and the triumph of 'scientific' history, on the other" (Meier and Rudwick 1986, 2).

To summarize, developments in the fields of history and American musicology provided an atmosphere in which serious writing on black music history could take place. These two impulses—the historical and the musicological—are both present in early black music historiography, though none of this literature, I believe, subscribes to either tradition unconditionally. For example, as we have seen, "Afro-American history, almost from the beginning, was an enterprise promoted jointly by those who wrote history and those who viewed the study of history as a way to raise the level of Negroes in American life" (Franklin 1988, 163). As we shall see below, the musical writings of philosopher Alain Locke, pianist/critic Maud Cuney-Hare, and others certainly fit this pattern. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, writers on black culture syncretized their advanced educational backgrounds with their nationalistic political goals. Woodson's most important contemporaries, for example, belonged to "a small band of blacks who were able to obtain doctorates during the 1920s and 1930s . . . [most] at some of the most prestigious graduate history departments" (Meier and Rudwick 1986, 74–75). But given their strong commitment to "the elevation of the race" and to black cultural nationalism, none of these early writers could be

considered neutral, impartial, or disinterested about their subject matter, although many shared Sonneck's "musical patriotism" (Crawford 1990, 279) as well as his belief in systematic scholarship. All of these ideals coalesced into a complex strategy I call the "rhetoric of the New Negro," which was especially prevalent in literature on black music written during the years of the Harlem Renaissance.

The legacy of the rhetoric of the Harlem (or Negro) Renaissance, the literary and artistic movement that arguably reached its height during the 1920s, influenced not only black music inquiry during the early decades of the twentieth century but subsequent work as well. In 1925, Alain Locke (1886–1954) published his important anthology *The New Negro*, and many soon recognized the book as a definitive statement. In this collection, Locke and other Renaissance architects advanced the ideals and goals that characterized their movement—chief among them, economic, social, and cultural equity with white citizens—to be achieved through the creation and dissemination of great works of literary, musical, and visual art. Vernacular expressions such as jazz and blues, however, received little attention from these writers.

> Renaissance leaders aspired to create a "New Negro," one who would attend concerts and operas and would be economically and socially prepared to enter an ideally integrated American society. . . . He would not frequent musical dens of iniquity, for he would then tarnish the image that was to be presented to the world as evidence of his preparedness. So, at first, the "lower forms" of black music were frowned upon by those of this outlook. (Floyd 1990, 4)

Thus, the socio-political views of many Renaissance writers, together with their narrow notion of "great art," prevented them from unequivocally (or perhaps just publicly) embracing the music of the cabarets, theaters, and speakeasies. Nonetheless, such pre-Renaissance black music, as Floyd argues, unquestionably set the climate for the New Negro movement.

The particular strain of black musical nationalism promoted in the New Negro rhetoric participated in the American music nationalism of the 1890s. The Czech composer Antonin Dvorák (1841–1904), as is well-known, inspired the idea of a national school of serious composers in the United States by extolling the use of African-, Native-, and Anglo-American folk music as basic materials.[14] Black writers on music, such as James Weldon Johnson, saw great strategic promise and vindication in Dvorák's

14. Although Dvorák's sentiments have been widely reported in this way, Charles Hamm (1995), in an essay titled "Dvorák in America: Nationalism, Racism, and National Race," argues that the composer was actually referring to what was known as the "popular" music of its day, namely the songs of Stephen Foster.

statements and adopted what they thought his ideals to be into their own philosophies and literature on music. They also continued to build on the work of Trotter as well as nineteenth-century journalism and folklore activities.

James Weldon Johnson's and J. Rosamond Johnson's two collections of concert spirituals, *The Books of American Negro Spirituals* (1925 and 1926; reprinted in a single volume in 1989) offer a good example. In their introduction the authors not only cite *Slave Songs of the United States*, but also offer useful information on the spiritual's history and their views on the aesthetics of these songs.[15] The brothers' arguments about the cultural specificity *and* universal appeal/accessibility of the spiritual show how their ideas embodied the politics of race ideology of this time. James Weldon, for example, acknowledged a noble African origin for the spiritual. By promoting racial pride through "the glories of the racial past" (Meier 1988, 51), Johnson's philosophy resonated with a more militant strain of black nationalism from this period and, consequently, with some of the considerable baggage of this position. When black writers did discuss an African legacy, their work showed how much of the racial pseudo-science of the day they had unknowingly internalized, especially read from a current point of view. In the preface of his compilation of arranged spirituals (which could be considered the New Negro "art song"), for example, Johnson ([1925 and 1926] 1989, 17) states with a mixture of confidence, apology, and what could be read as essentialist rhetoric, "The Negro brought with him from Africa his native musical instinct and talent, and that was no small endowment to begin with. . . . Many things are now being learned about Africa. It is being learned and recognized that the great majority of Africans are in no sense 'savages'; that they possess a civilization and a culture, primitive it is true but in many respects quite adequate; that they possess a folk literature that is varied and rich; that they possess an art that is quick and sound."

Johnson drew scholarly authority and inspiration from music critic and historian Henry E. Krehbiel, whose position is clear from the opening sentence of his influential work, *Afro-American Folk-Songs:* "This book was written with the purpose of bringing a species of folksong into the field of scientific observation and presenting it as fit material for artistic treatment" (Krehbiel [1914] 1962, v). But again, this science carried flaws. Krehbiel, like Johnson and many others, seemed to believe that blacks possessed an innate, natural ability for and love of musical activity. De-

15. On the issue of aesthetics and performance practice, they write: "The Spirituals possess the fundamental characteristics of African music. . . . I think white singers, concert singers, *can* sing Spirituals—if they *feel* them. . . . In a word, the capacity to *feel* these songs while singing them is more important than any amount of mere artistic technique" (Johnson and Johnson [1925 and 1926] 1989, 19, 29).

spite these shortcomings, the rhetoric of "African musical genius" and the linking of those musical gifts to African-American culture served a larger goal for the Johnsons and other Renaissance writers: racial equality through the arts.[16]

The fulfillment of Trotter's hope that *Music and Some Highly Music People* would serve as a guide for future work did not occur until the appearance of another book by a black author which was devoted to African-American music: Maud Cuney-Hare's *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (1936). As revealed by Stevenson (1973, 384–385), Cuney-Hare used Trotter extensively when dealing with pre-1878 musicians; thus, one gets the sense that a formal historiographical tradition in black music begins to emerge with *Negro Musicians and Their Music*. Cuney-Hare's background prepared her well for such a task. A concert pianist, Cuney-Hare (1874–1936) studied at the New England Conservatory. After settling in Boston, she established the Musical Art Studio and served for many years as musical editor of *Crisis*, the primary organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Like Trotter, Cuney-Hare's interests, expertise, and long list of accomplishments extended beyond the musical world. She cultivated an interest in folklore, building an impressive archive of artifacts and materials; she wrote a biography of her father, Norris Wright Cuney, an important nineteenth-century Texas politician; and she was a recognized playwright and also compiled an anthology of poems (Southern 1983a, 444; Cuney-Hare [1936] 1974, xii; Logan and Winston 1982).

Despite Cuney-Hare's debt to *Music and Some Highly Musical People*, at least two facets of *Negro Musicians and Their Music* distinguish it from the former work. Cuney-Hare begins her study with Africa and speculates on the continent's relevance to Western culture. She opens the first chapter with the following statement: "Negro music traced to its source, carries us to the continent of Africa and into the early history of that far off land. We may even journey to one of the chief sections said to hold the music of the past—that of Egypt, for it was the ceremonial music of that land as well as that of Palestine and Greece, which was the foundation of at least one phase of modern musical art" (1–2). Another prevalent theme in the book is Cuney-Hare's hope that an American national symphonic, operatic, and ballet tradition based on black musical idioms would develop in this country; she discusses musicians "working toward this end" (vi). In other words, her outlook was well-formed by her formal musical training

16. James W. Johnson presented this view in his collection of poetry from 1922: "The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art that they have produced. The world does not know that a people is great until that people produces great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior" (quoted in Gates 1989, 33).

and grafted onto the ideals of the New Negro rhetoric: racial equality, black cultural nationalism, and American musical nationalism based on black musical idioms.

In the same year that *Negro Musicians and Their Music* appeared, Alain Locke, a non-musician, published *The Negro and His Music*, advancing many of these same ideas. Like other Renaissance thinkers, Locke shared Cuney-Hare's philosophy about the potential of black folk music and encouraged its use as the basis for "great classical music" (Locke [1936] 1991, 4). Furthermore, he argued for African Americans developing into "a class of trained music lovers who will support by appreciation the best in the Negro's musical heritage and not allow it to be prostituted by the vaudeville stage or Tin Pan Alley, or to be cut off at its folk roots by lack of appreciation of its humble but gifted peasant creators" (4). The vindication of black music and culture remained an important theme throughout all of Locke's writings on music (Burgett 1990, 29).[17] Locke's treatment of Africa in *The Negro and His Music* is especially telling in this regard. It showed his desire (and that of other Renaissance thinkers) to understand their cultural past in more scholarly, scientific terms, on the grounds that better understanding would ultimately lead to the elevation of black citizens' social standing. While Locke recognized in African-American music a "wide and distinct influence of African music especially through rhythm," he also believed that African music begged interpretation through "scientific study rather than by sentimental admiration for its effects" (137). Locke—like Trotter some fifty years before him—still saw limited opportunity as the primary obstacle hampering the progress and future development of Negro music.[18]

By today's standards, Renaissance writers like Cuney-Hare and Locke seem engaged in a precarious balancing act by promoting black achievement and carefully discouraging backlashes from white society, whose negative reactions could collectively frustrate African-American social advancement. Despite any shortcomings produced by the negotiation of this tension, however, the ideals set forth in Locke's *The New Negro* (and other literature) succeeded in defining a Renaissance, a cultural movement, which in the words of Arnold Rampersad (1992, xxii–xxiii), laid the "foundation for all subsequent depictions in poetry, fiction, and drama of the modern African-American experience," including music.

But conformity to New Negro standards necessarily meant an unfa-

17. Burgett (1990, 39) writes that two conflicting forces influenced Locke: his education and "the exigent harshness of the racial experience in America." Locke was twice a Harvard graduate: in 1907, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa honors, and in 1918, Ph.D., philosophy. Locke was also the first black Rhodes scholar to Oxford.

18. For more on Trotter, Locke, Cuney-Hare, and other early writers on black music, see Ramsey (1994).

vorable attitude toward the lifeblood of African-American music-making: blues, jazz, and other vernacular idioms. That attitude manifested itself profoundly in the New Negro rhetoric and literature. Locke, for example, excluded extensive consideration of the blues in *The New Negro,* recommending that composers transform the spiritual more fully into symphonic dress. In an essay titled "Jazz at Home," J. A. Rogers depicts jazz's origins as vulgar and crude. Rogers tersely regards Bessie Smith and other blues and jazz performers as inimitable, inventive, and skilled artists. Throughout the rest of the piece, however, he values their work primarily as source material—as something to "lift and divert . . . into nobler channels" (Rogers [1925] 1992, 224).

There were dissenting voices. Writer Langston Hughes, an important voice during the Renaissance, was one of the few who championed jazz and blues, believing that these vernacular idioms were legitimate expressions in their own right. In his well-known essay from 1926, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes levels red-hot criticism at the "Nordicized Negro intelligentsia" who, while working diligently to dispel prevalent stereotypes about the race, compromised themselves and denied their racial identities. He reserved praise chiefly for "the low-down folks, the so-called common element":

> These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child. They furnish a wealth of colorful, distinctive material for any artist because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations. And perhaps these common people will give the world its truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself. (Hughes [1926] 1972, 168)

Hughes's argument, the de-facto musical preferences of the black masses and to a growing extent the musical tastes of Americans at-large, may have made some, albeit small, impact on writers on black music like Locke and Cuney-Hare. Although neither shunned their Euro-based aesthetics entirely, signs did exist that each writer's position softened. Locke, for example, held firmly to his conviction that he would better serve the advancement of his race by promoting European models of music-making among African Americans. But Locke did discuss jazz and black musical theater in *The Negro and His Music,* albeit with the following qualification: "What we have said and quoted in defense and praise of jazz is by no means meant for the cheap low-browed jazz that is manufactured for passing popular consumption" (94). In a similar light, Cuney-Hare's *Negro Musicians and Their Music* includes a chapter on black musical theater, conceding that a "large number of Negro entertainers in light and popular music, now too many to include in a work interested primarily

in music as an art, are men and women of diverse gifts and of decided talent. They are successful on both the vaudeville stage and the radio network" (154). Apparently, Renaissance writers had to acknowledge that musical success of any stripe could not be ignored in their struggle for racial equality.

Like Langston Hughes, writer and folklorist Zora Neal Hurston fashioned an Afro-based aesthetic response to concertized spiritual collections. Hurston highlights, and even celebrates, improvisation as a distinguishing element of black vernacular music. In that regard, her views are linked with some jazz writers. In her essay "Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals," she differentiates the aesthetic conventions of "authentic" spirituals and pieces based on the spirituals. Included in the latter group, according to Hurston, were the spiritual arrangments of composers Harry T. Burleigh, J. Rosamond Johnson, Nathaniel Dett, and Hall Johnson. While these settings possessed craftsmanship and beauty, Hurston argued that the former were new creations every time, stressing improvisation and "unceasing variations around a theme" (Hurston [1934] 1970, 223–225). While Hurston does not explicitly state that the qualities she valued in authentic spirituals came from an African sensibility, the pan-African theme unifying Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology*, the book in which her essay first appeared, supports that notion.[19]

Renaissance theorists did succeed in some important ways. The rhetoric of the New Negro, as expressed by Cuney-Hare and Locke, sought to elevate the lot of African Americans specifically; it also urged America toward a new spiritual vision through artistic maturity, an American literature, and a national art and music (Rampersad 1992, xxvi). And as Rampersad observes, despite the movement's trappings (such as the Eurocentric notion that African-American culture evolved from infancy to adolescence to maturity), the writers who contributed to *The New Negro*, as well as the musical writings of Cuney-Hare and Locke, managed to mount a frontal attack on contemporary white supremacist pseudo-science:

> For a movement such as the burgeoning renaissance, however, the deepest challenge, in many respects, lay in the poisoned intellectual and cultural climate of ideas in the United States concerning the origins, abilities, and potential of people of African descent. Race, and the idea of white racial supremacy, enjoyed the lofty status of a science at the turn of the century and down into the 1920s. *The New Negro* would have to accept this lofty status even as it sought to dispel the prevailing notion among whites of blacks as not only physically and culturally inferior but without much hope of improvement. (xv)

19. See Watkins (1994, 164–186) for a discussion of what he calls the "Cunard Line."

In summary, the work of the New Negro writers made inroads in the following areas: the documentation of the activities of black musicians, especially those whose bent was toward Western European art music; the promotion and the use of black music as a basis for an American nationalistic school; and exploration of the African sources of African-American music. The presence of Crawford's "cosmopolitan" outlook can certainly be found in these writers' approaches; yet each recognized in varying degrees the merits, power, and success of black vernacular music. Furthermore, insofar as these writers were black, each could "claim a share of common experience with the musicians" they studied (Crawford 1986, 1), and thus, they wrote from perspectives unique to their historical and social positions. From a repertory standpoint, the publication of collections of folksongs and art songs and the discussions they inspired (such as the Hurston essay) set the stage for future scholars of black music. Taken together, these studies helped to establish black folksongs as a distinctive body of song with a dynamic set of performance practices and socio-cultural history that is worthy of serious study in academic disciplines. Moreover, the journalistic and black nationalistic impulses that expounded black social equality successfully grafted the politics of race into the field and became a crucial, and one might argue permanent, factor in black music historiography.

If the literature by early twentieth-century black intellectuals valued the cultural significance of the spiritual,[20] then as a whole, these works were also notable for their lack of serious consideration of jazz and other secular musics favored by the black masses. Nevertheless, jazz made a significant, though perhaps indirect, contribution to Renaissance culture and thinking. As Long (1990, 129) points out, "the development of jazz, the spread of the dance hall, the continual growth of vaudeville (later to be checked by the talking film), and the exploitation of black music by the recording industry" all contributed significantly to the "heightened consciousness of music among the black writers of the Harlem Renaissance." Jazz, for whatever reasons, was problematic for these writers, just as black vernacular music had been for Trotter. But during the 1920s jazz began to attract another group of writers on both sides of the Atlantic who gave the music and its unique qualities their close attention. In fact, the contrast between these writers' interests and those of the Renaissance recalls some of the ideological divisions apparent in *Music and Some Highly Musical People* and *Slave Songs of the United States*. At the same time, however, jazz literature began to amend some of these divisions. It did so

20. W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) carries the first scholarly consideration of the spiritual by a black nationalist. See Radano (1995) for an extensive discussion of Du Bois's treatment of the spiritual.

by arguing for the artistic merit of a music created by black musicians and comprised of obvious African- and European-derived aesthetic principles. Jazz criticism played a crucial role in elevating international perceptions about the value of indigenous American music-making. Moreover, this shift in attitude ultimately helped bring to center stage the role of vernacular music (and issues of socio-economic class) in future discourse on African-American cultural politics.

* * * * *

Early jazz literature, for the most part, developed along its own trajectory from the earlier, more academic strains of black music research discussed above. In America, during the 1920s and slightly before, writers of various stripes—composers, journalists, music critics, musicians—published books and articles about jazz in many magazines. In fact, "between 1917 and 1929," James Lincoln Collier (1988, 10) observes, "leading American magazines . . . [ran] over 100 articles on jazz, only a small minority of them hostile to the music."[21] These early writers include James Reese Europe, Gilbert Seldes, R. D. Darrell, Paul Whiteman, Virgil Thomson, George Antheil, Carl Van Vechten, and Henry Osborne Osgood. Jazz impressed these writers in a variety of ways—some favorably, others not. It is important to remember that in the 1920s the word "jazz" was used to describe what we now consider to be a range of different styles; thus, writers were not always referring to the same thing when they wrote about jazz. Their personal biases notwithstanding, writers of the 1920s made it their business to grapple openly with the aesthetic underpinnings of this music. Most important, Africanisms were discussed in early jazz literature in an unselfconscious way but often from an essentialist perspective.[22]

Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1986, 5) argues that race "has become a trope of ultimate, irreductive difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherences of specific belief systems which—more often than not—also have fundamentally opposed economic interests." Given the historical relationship of African Americans to the United States economic system and the profound influence of jazz, it is not surprising that the nation's racial consciousness has been embedded in American jazz criticism from its beginning. As the social boundaries that had separated black and white citizens by law began to relax, expressive culture (such as jazz)

21. Collier (1988) provides an overview of this body of literature. See also Crawford (1990); DeVeaux (1991); Dodge ([1939] 1985); Gennari (1991); and Welburn (1985, 1987a, 1987b).

22. The term "essentialist" is used here to denote the belief that some things (i.e., races in this case) have essences that serve to define them.

emerged as an area of confrontation, especially to those invested in keeping those boundaries intact. As a conspicuous public activity, jazz emerged as an important arena in which racial ideology was articulated and contested.

A notable point of contention lay both in the jazz aesthetic and the music's formal qualities. Black classical musicians like Roland Hayes, Jules Bledsoe, and Marian Anderson, for example, built successful concert careers and emerged as important symbols of progress for African Americans; but jazz musicians raised the stakes in racial progress. Contemporary reviews for Hayes's, Bledsoe's, and Anderson's concerts often hailed their unique talents but at the same time marveled at their lack of black musical idiosyncrasies. Jazz musicians, on the other hand, featured and even flaunted these qualities as a fundamental aspect of their music and threatened the status quo on many levels (i.e., they asserted the racial aspects of their performances as the strength of the whole enterprise). Therefore, heightened interest in jazz as an artistic pursuit posed a serious challenge to one of the central tenets of America's caste system: racial inferiority. In fact, the politics of race has continually mediated jazz's advance toward international prestige. A few examples will show how the trope of race has shaped jazz writings.

A notable theme in early jazz literature is that a race—not individuals—excelled in jazz, as if playing the music were natural and biological. In "A Negro Explains 'Jazz'" (1919), musician and bandleader James Reese Europe (1881–1919) makes the techniques employed in "jazzing" a piece sound almost like a racially specific primal urge:

> The negro loves anything that is peculiar in music, and this "jazzing" appeals to him strongly. . . . It is natural for us to do this; it is, indeed, a racial musical characteristic. I have to call a daily rehearsal of my band to prevent the musicians from adding to their music more than I wish them to. Whenever possible they all embroider their parts in order to produce new, peculiar sounds. (Quoted in Southern 1983b, 239)

Although Europe's observations may be viewed as an early statement on black aesthetics—a theory that emphasizes culture rather than race—his comments also resonate with theories designed to make distinctions on a racial basis. Perhaps Europe's views represent a survival technique: conformity to white beliefs about blacks. Of course, no one would deny the distinctiveness of the indigenous music by those who "share the juridical characteristic of American citizenship and the 'racial' characteristic of being black" (Appiah 1990, 4). But the statement presents an unqualified essentializing of supposed racial musical characteristics.

Europe's racial essentialism notwithstanding, some African Americans

believed that his musical contributions could serve as a formidable cultural weapon for the cause of racial equality, despite the misgivings by some of the black intelligentsia. As early as 1919, the notion was proposed in a *Chicago Defender* editorial titled "Jazzing Away Prejudice." While reviewing a concert by James Reese Europe's orchestra, the writer links the swing of Europe and his band to progressive social action:

> The most prejudiced enemy of our Race could not sit through an evening with Europe without coming away with a changed viewpoint. For he is compelled in spite of himself to see us in a new light. It is a well-known fact that white people view us largely from the standpoint of the cook, porter, and waiter, and his limited opportunities are responsible for much of the distorted opinion held concerning us. Europe and his band are worth more to our Race than a thousand speeches from so-called Race orators and uplifters. Mere wind-jamming has never given any race material help.
>
> Europe and his band are demonstrating what our people can do in a field where the results are bound to be of the greatest benefit. He has the white man's ear because he is giving the white man something new. He is meeting a popular demand and in catering to his love of syncopated music he is jazzing away the barriers of prejudice.[23]

In his foreword to *So This Is Jazz,* Henry O. Osgood (1926) claims to have written "the first attempt to set down a connected account of the origin, history and development of jazz music." Although other writers were thinking about jazz in the late 1920s, Osgood provides a telling contemporary view of the music. He saw himself as part of a "little group of serious thinkers" taking up "jazz in a serious way," and Africa figured prominently in his concerns. On the compelling kinetic aspects of black jazz players' performances (he called them "contortions"), he writes: "They are purely negrotic in themselves and come direct from the 'ring shout', the dances of religious frenzy or ecstasy, without question of African origin" (11). He also believed that the word "jazz" itself came from Africa. Despite his interest in jazz's roots in black culture, Osgood gives considerable attention to Gershwin, Ferde Grofé, and the merits of symphonic jazz. Nonetheless, he offers a brief, remarkable statement about the character of jazz that continues to ring true more than six decades after he wrote it: "Jazz, in truth, is a wild bird, free to flap its wings in any direction. It defies all attempts to cage it, however liberal in

23. I have quoted this editorial at some length because it is a contemporary written black source that openly supports jazz—and such sources are rare for the time. *The Chicago Defender,* unlike *The New Negro* was designed primarily for a black readership, and it was not above publishing searing commentary on the musical preoccupations of the black middle class. At the same time, however, the newspaper's music columnists wrote more about classical music than other forms until the 1940s when they began giving more attention to jazz and rhythm and blues.

size the apiary. It is the spirit of the music, not the mechanics of its frame or the characteristics of the superstructure built upon that frame, that determines whether or not it is jazz" (26).

In Europe, and especially in France of the 1930s, jazz was noticed by a number of writers. In fact, enthusiasm for jazz in France led to the establishment in 1935 of the periodical *Jazz Hot: La Revue internationale de la musique de jazz.* French interest in jazz coincided with the establishment of the "primitivist" movement there during the first decades of the century. Both Ted Gioia (1988, 19–49) and John Gennari (1991, 465–467) have discussed the "primitivist myth" and argue convincingly that the strain of essentialism present in early French jazz writing influenced later perceptions of the music.

Gioia takes a firm, if somewhat misguided, stand against what he calls the primitivist myth. While discussing the work of three early jazz critics—Hughes Panassié, Charles Delaunay, and Robert Goffin—Gioia (1988, 29) argues that these writers were "limited in their understanding of the musical underpinnings of jazz . . . [and] focused instead on the vitality and energy of the 'hot' soloist. Jazz for them, was an intense experience, and a purely musicological approach to it, they felt, would only confuse matters." Yet Gioia (perhaps unconsciously) endorses the dichotomy early critics created between the intensely emotional aspects of great jazz performances and the intellectual aspects of the art: "[Jelly Roll] Morton, like most of the Creole musicians of his day, was familiar with the European tradition in music, and his own compositions and performances show a sense of balance and formal structure which is anything but primitive" (33). The jazz aesthetic had as much to do with its emotional power and spirit as it did with its "balance and formal structure." What moved these early jazz writers is what still requires musical and cultural explanation: the intellectual rigor involved in being hot, that elusive quality in jazz that places it squarely within the domain of African-American expressive culture. These foreign writers, Hughes Panassié and Charles Delaunay, sought to come to terms with an important issue in jazz music: those qualities informed by its African heritage. So while Renaissance writers seemed more than a little edgy about the ecstatic basis of black vernacular music like jazz, these enthusiasts publicly celebrated its "hotness" as essential to the spirit of the music and as its definitive and most-treasured quality.

In America, interest in jazz produced the first generation of important critics, including Marshall Stearns, John Hammond, Paul Eduard Miller, George Hoefer, and Roger Pryor Dodge. The early jazz criticism of *Metronome* and *Down Beat,* two magazines that regularly featured these writers, has been characterized by Ron Welburn (1987a, 261) as primarily

for a white readership and "by and about white musicians, with a few blacks present here and there." By the end of the 1930s, literary interest in jazz had escalated, and book-length studies by American authors began to appear. As with the French literature, these writers noted Africanisms but with varying degrees of essentialism, cultural insight, methodology, and philosophical motivations.

Winthrop Sargeant's *Jazz, Hot and Hybrid* (1938) stressed the mixed pedigree of jazz. Sargeant wrote in the preface of the third edition that when his book first appeared, it represented "the only serious musicological study of its type," a departure from the "mostly ecstatic" personality- and discography-centered jazz writings (Sargeant 1975, 7). For Sargeant, jazz was neither strictly European—"completely lacking in the intellectual and structural features that sustain the interest of a cultivated 'highbrow' musical audience"—nor African—"very few of these influences can be given documentary proof" (22, 23). Jazz was something unique to Sargeant, and he set out to explain why, using detailed musical analysis.

Sargeant leads his reader through twelve chapters of scalar, rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic analysis of jazz, complete with musical examples. In chapter twelve, titled "Influences from the Dark Continent," he answers an important question posed at the beginning of the book; "Did the Negroes invent jazz?":

> When one examines the musical structure of these arts in detail, . . . it becomes apparent that they represent a fusion of musical idioms in which both White and "African" contributions play indispensable roles. It is safe to say that virtually no Afro-American music today is wholly without White influence; and it is just as obvious that all jazz, from the most primitive hot variety to the most sophisticated, is heavily influenced by Negro musical habits. (211)

Sargeant seems on the verge of grasping an important idea in black music study, one that would begin to blossom in the 1940s, primarily through the work of anthropologist Melville Herskovits: the transformation of African cultural practices into American ones. But not all jazz writers were sensitive to that notion. For example, in *Jazzmen*, authors Frederick Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith only mention that "The Negroes retained much of the African material in their playing" (Ramsey and Smith [1939] 1985, 9). For these two writers the uniqueness of jazz, especially during the New Orleans period, was the result of musical illiteracy, a condition these authors considered a virtue.

Through a survey of jazz literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historian Lawrence Levine has documented the emer-

gence of a cultural hierarchy, a paradigm firmly in place by the 1920s. These fixed "high" and "low" categories point out that, culturally speaking, the United States remained "a colonized people attempting to define itself in the shadow of the former imperial power" (Levine 1989, 8–9). Jazz, positioned at that time in the lowbrow category, was condemned by both black and white writers, including Cuney-Hare, music editor of *Crisis;* bandleader Dave Peyton of the otherwise militant *Chicago Defender;* and the *New York Age*'s Lucian White. In fact, in one place Peyton advised aspiring pianists to "put two or three hours a day on your scale work, [and] stay away from jazz music" (quoted in Levine 1989, 12).

Levine posits that jazz, "a central element in American culture," and Culture, a category used to identify selected expressive cultural endeavors, had a reciprocal relationship and defined one another (6–7). But as jazz began to move laboriously toward acceptance as art, such boundaries weakened. "Jazz musicians," Levine writes, "helped revolutionize our notions of culture by transcending the adjectival cultural categories and insisting that there were no boundary lines to art" (6–7). Thus, jazz played a crucial role in transforming Americans' sense of what constituted art and culture by bridging "the gap between all of the categories that divided culture; [it was] a music that found its way through the fences we use to separate genres of expressive culture from one another" (18), especially after World War II and the appearance of bebop. The dialectic relationship of jazz and the notion of the "high culture" produced an interesting result as jazz crossed the "great divide" separating mass and high culture; the "upward mobility" of jazz ultimately challenged the cosmopolitan/provincial divide.

The ascendancy of jazz raises other questions and points to certain tensions, especially concerning the role of black intellectuals in the construction of the new jazz aesthetic discourse. Of course, identifying who these intellectuals are would be the first priority. One could start with African-American writers; there were no small number of black writers engaged in producing novels, short stories, and essays about myriad topics for a wide array of publications throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, on the surface many of these writers appear largely unconcerned with serious study of jazz—especially the improvised, "hot" variety. Was jazz still somewhat of an embarrassment as it seems to have been among many of the early Harlem Renaissance writers? Why, with jazz's move into the concert hall (certainly a sign of growing prestige), did these writers who were absorbed in the cultural politics of integration not immediately seize the moment and promote jazz enthusiastically? After all, as David Levering Lewis (1989, 163) pointedly observes, when Roland Hayes in

the 1920s took "spirituals into the concert hall, cultured Afro-Americans were suddenly as pleased as southern planters to hear them again."

These questions point to several issues ignored or merely touched upon in jazz literature. Without question, class tensions in the African-American community were partly responsible. For instance, since middle-class jazz musicians like Fletcher Henderson were moderately accepted by Harlem Renaissance intellectuals, what class issues (or better, tensions) among African Americans are suggested by the intellectuals' lukewarm engagement with jazz? Surely, the answer cannot simply be, as LeRoi Jones (1967, 11) once posed it: "Jazz was collected among the numerous skeletons the middle-class black man kept locked in the closet of his psyche, along with watermelons and gin." Du Bois, after all, counts among America's most formidable social thinkers, and his pioneering courage is self-evident. Lewis claims that even Du Bois would occasionally visit the Savoy Ballroom. But he, like many "who felt responsible for Afro-American public behavior could comfort themselves with the fact that success could not have come to a more responsible middle-class musician" than Henderson. "Somehow, under Henderson's baton," Lewis speculates sardonically, "the funkiness and raucousness of jazz dissipated—not altogether, certainly, but enough so that an Afro-Saxon college-trained professional man might leave the Dark Tower and thoroughly enjoy himself at the Savoy without being downright savage about it" (Lewis 1989, 175).

The evidence suggests that many black intellectuals accepted jazz as an art when America at large began to do so. Singer, actor, activist, and "hero of the race," Paul Robeson, like many of the Harlem elite, had generally eschewed jazz. But his biographer states that during the 1940s, Robeson frequented jazz clubs like the Apollo, Cafe Society, and Manhattan Casino "to hear Charlie Parker and get 'twisted around' trying to dance to those 'off beat riffs." "And Thelonious Monk," Robeson once stated, "really floored me." By 1958 Robeson, perhaps reflecting the growing if still moderate acceptance of jazz into the realm of high culture, stated that "modern jazz is one of the most important musical things there is in the world" (quoted in Duberman 1988, 177).

One fact remains clear: early jazz literature shows that writers could not celebrate or criticize this music without coming to terms with the fact that the cosmopolitan/provincial split did not hold up well. It would take a future generation of scholars and critics to develop tools suitable to the musical, cultural, and social content of the genre. Much of this work has brought jazz and black musical traditions in general into the scholarly "mainstream" with work being produced by scholars from a variety of academic fields, including musicology, sociology, ethnomusi-

cology, history, and American studies. The discursive world of jazz, beginning with this early literature and its attendant attitudes, played a crucial role in this cultural shift.

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Early black music historiography forms a scholarly tradition with a cohesive and dynamic ideology. Furthermore, much of this literature—especially the book-length studies and the anthology/collections by African Americans—can be read as a sustained project in canon formation. As Gates and others have observed about black literary anthologies, there was an added goal at work, namely, the "political defense of the racial self against racism" (Gates 1992, 26). The early years of this historiographical tradition culminated in the rhetoric of the New Negro and the "aesthetics of jazz" discourse. These impulses still permeate black music research. Jones's *Blues People* (1963), Southern's *The Music of Black Americans* (1983a), and Floyd's recent study, *The Power of Black Music* (1995), may all be read as reactions to and extensions of works that preceeded them in the field.

Black music historiography helps us understand the historical role of music in the emergence and rise of black nationalism in America. Furthermore, this exploration of black music research's early ideology can, perhaps, play a role in promoting the field's continual growth and future critical directions. For only by understanding the field's history can scholars plan effective strategies and consolidate useful methods that will encourage the academic study of black music. "A scholarly field," as Richard Crawford (1993, 3) argues, "forms a tradition of historical study when earlier writers on the same subject are recognized as predecessors, when their work is studied closely, when the questions they raise are identified, discussed, and debated, and when their findings are assimilated." As we have learned, black music research has through the years developed with an additional political agenda. As this scholary field continues into the twenty-first century and beyond, not only will America's black musical past and present be brought into sharper relief, but we will also understand America's musical landscape as a whole. Moreover, work in this field may become one of the avenues through which we achieve James Monroe Trotter's more humanitarian goals, which seem just as urgent today as when he first wrote them more than a century ago: equality for all and "mutual respect and good feeling" between the races.

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