

**Patchwork Nation:  
Collage, Music, and American Identity**

by

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## Abstract

Collage has emerged as the quintessential art form of the twentieth century through its sustained impact across the arts and through its embodiment of cross-cultural social movements. Drawing on interdisciplinary models that engage with collage's formal, semiotic, and cultural properties, this dissertation proposes a theory of musical collage, and applies this theory specifically to the construction and iteration of American musical nationalism across the twentieth century. Collage captures this dynamic and contentious process by exposing the seams, thus preserving a tension between the whole and its diverse constituent parts. Furthermore, because collage is polysemic, it can resist narrative/ counternarrative and other binary approaches and better attend to the complex power structures that shape American music's diversities.

Balancing a top-down theoretical approach with a bottom-up study of collage as cultural practice, the dissertation comprises five case studies that showcase a diverse array of methodologies, musical genres, and cultural debates. Chapter One illuminates how collage underpins theories of nationalism, and how these theories shaped the reception of Edward MacDowell's, George Antheil's, and Charles Ives's divergent strategies for creating a nascent American art music. Turning to the Broadway stage, Chapter Two examines how Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, and George Balanchine collaboratively staked their own claim of musical nationalism by combining ballet, classical music, jazz, and musical theater in *On Your Toes* (1936). Chapter Three uses Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952) to trace the shifting values of folk music in American identity, from the original 1920s commercial recordings Smith used through the Smithsonian's 1997 reissue of the *Anthology*. Addressing how

collage continues to operate today, Chapter Four examines how collage negotiates between individual, subcultural, and national experiences of AIDS and 9/11 in two musical memorials: John Corigliano's *Symphony No. 1* (1991) and John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002). Finally, Chapter Five demonstrates how multiple collages, including YouTube mashups, hip hop songs, official playlists, and a star-studded Inaugural concert continually reconstructed Barack Obama's image to navigate crucial social and political issues. To conclude, I reflect on the analytical benefits and challenges posed by the malleable nature of collage.

## Introduction

### Hearing Collage

Collage is a demonstration of this process of the many becoming the one, with the one never fully resolved because of the many that continue to impinge upon it. Every entity is potentially relevant to every other entity's existence. This is the relativistic message of collage: the keeping in play of the possibility of the entry of the many into the one, the fusion of the many into the one.<sup>1</sup>

—Donald Kuspit (1989)

E pluribus unum.<sup>2</sup>

—Motto of the United States of America

Last summer, I headed out from my summer sublet in Washington Heights to meet up with a friend and attend a concert in Central Park by the band Pink Martini. Pink Martini is an ensemble of about a dozen performers, and their repertoire is incredibly polystylistic, reflecting the musically and geographically diverse collective of performers they employ. Their concert moved along in an expectedly unexpected fashion, from Brazilian jazz to a movement of a Mozart violin sonata to Turkish folk songs to a pair of original songs that spin Franz Schubert's Fantasy in F minor into a Latin torch song tale of spurned love and then into a big band swing answer song, sung by special guest performer, NPR political correspondent Ari Shapiro. Coming

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Kuspit, "Collage: The Organizing Principle of Art in the Age of the Relativity of Art" in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Out of many, one."

to this concert after a day's work on this dissertation, collage seemed to be inescapable. Even beyond the concert, there was the collage of smells from the multiple ethnic cuisines for sale outside the venue in addition to those that made up our picnic dinner, and the mixture of natural and urban sights and sounds that came from sitting in Central Park. As we left, I was reminded of another collage, a composition composed by Charles Ives a century earlier called *Central Park in the Dark*. Ives depicts the soundscape of a summer night in New York, as the silence of the park is interrupted by music, conversations, traffic, and other sounds. One hundred years later, Ives's depiction still seemed to capture accurately my experience that evening, even if I had traded Ives's ragtime music for a tango-disco version of Schubert.

Ives at one point subtitled his work "A Contemplation of Nothing Serious," which also seemed an apt description of my evening amidst the sounds in Central Park. But as I read more about Pink Martini later that week, I discovered that the concert held more political potential than just Ari Shapiro's onstage banter about NPR. Pink Martini's webpage recounts the inspiration behind the band's formation and repertoire. Bandleader Thomas Lauderdale had been working in politics but found the music at fundraisers "underwhelming, lackluster, loud and un-neighborly." The website continues:

Drawing inspiration from music all over the world—crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop—and hoping to appeal to conservatives and liberals alike, he founded the 'little orchestra Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers and causes such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, libraries, public broadcasting, education and parks.<sup>3</sup>

Maybe my evening in Central Park wasn't a contemplation of "nothing serious" after all. The band's website proclaims, "We're very much an American band, but we spend a lot of time abroad and therefore have the incredible diplomatic opportunity to represent a broader, more

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<sup>3</sup> Pink Martini, <http://pinkmartini.com/about/bio/>.



inclusive America.”<sup>4</sup> Collage emerges as a powerful and political statement of an inclusive American identity, of both national and international diplomacy through sonic representation, and a hallmark of time and place.

My experiences at and after the concert underscored that there are many ways to listen to collage: listening for the twin aesthetic pleasures of surprise and recognition, listening to the collage of urban and natural sounds people might ignore having become so accustomed to them, and listening for the political meanings enacted through the globally polystylistic music of a band. This dissertation sets out, through several case studies, to showcase how collage has made audible—sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly—real political struggles over inclusion and exclusion in American identity over the twentieth century. And so I begin with that key question: what are we hearing when we hear collage?

Answering this is neither an easy nor a solitary venture; scholars across numerous disciplines have debated for decades the definition of collage, its methods, and its meanings. Although the practice of collage has been around as a folk art for centuries, its birth as an artistic practice has been traditionally placed in the visual arts when Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque first pasted fragments of newspaper and wallpaper onto their cubist canvases in 1912. The term “collage,” coined by Wyndham Lewis in 1915, derives from the French *coller*, meaning “to paste.” Since then, collage has made its profound and indelible impact across the twentieth century, from its roots in cubism and dada through the avant-garde, pop, and postmodernism. Likewise, collage has proliferated across the arts, in film, literature, architecture, dance, and music.

Given the breadth of collage as an artistic practice, the ensuing scholarly discourse on collage is too vast to survey completely here, but can be broadly situated on two axes. The first

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

considers how collage is defined as an object of study, ranging from the narrow and technically specific to the broad and metaphorical. The second considers how to interpret what collage means, ranging from its internal and formal meanings to its external, social and cultural meanings.

Defining collage begins with its roots as a visual phenomenon. Art history as a field has sometimes defined collage as a two-dimensional practice where fragments of other two-dimensional objects are cut and pasted onto a canvas. Scholars have differentiated collage from a variety of practices related to the act of multimedia pasting based on materials and actions: assemblage (the sculptural combination of found objects); decoupage (cutout forms, usually paper); *décollage* (layers of material then ripped away to expose what lies underneath); bricolage (the assembly of material at hand); photomontage (composite photographs constructed from many photographic sources); and photocollage (photographic images that combine photographic, typographic, and other visual sources). Other historians have recently given a sweeping historical survey of collage in visual art that implicitly define collage broadly, bringing in this variety of two- and three-dimensional techniques under the single rubric of collage. In 1968, Herta Wescher concluded her study of collage in the early decades of the twentieth century by observing, “At no time in the past have collage and material montage been represented with such diversity in all orientations and tendencies as in recent years.”<sup>5</sup> Since then, collage has seemingly only grown stronger as a force. A quarter-century later, Brandon Taylor suggested that even as the material culture that made up the substance of collage has been increasingly replaced with digital and electronic media, “it is substantially true that collage-*effects* (too often mannerisms)

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<sup>5</sup> Herta Wescher, *Collage*, trans. Robert E. Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1968), 312.

have passed effortlessly into the wider culture... [and that] ‘collage’ has gradually become generic to the fine arts right across the spectrum of media.”<sup>6</sup>

As collage moves to other media, where literal pasting cannot be a criterion, its definition becomes broader and more difficult to agree on. Film studies have sometimes defined collage through the process of incorporating video and other images from pre-existing sources, and sometimes as overlaying images simultaneously.<sup>7</sup> Often filmic collage is separated from the more standard practice of montage—the rapid, sequential juxtaposition of images or shots—although montage has, like collage, also been adapted to other media.<sup>8</sup> Literary scholars have put forth a more unified definition of collage as incorporating quotations, allusions, foreign languages, and nonverbal elements, distinguishing collage from pastiche (a parody of style), montage (a quick succession of ideas), bricolage (using found materials), cento (a poem consisting of lines from multiple authors), and palimpsest (layers of text erased and written over on a single page).<sup>9</sup> In his dissertation on literary collage, David C. Banash strives to differentiate collage from two broader theoretical ideas: Roland Barthes’s concept of intertextuality and Frederic Jameson’s concept of pastiche within his work on postmodern fragmentation. Banash goes on to articulate a theory of collage that, unlike those working in visual arts, distances it from technique and specific material:

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<sup>6</sup> Brandon Taylor *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), 195. For another perspective on the wide-ranging and century-long practice of visual collage, see Diane Waldman, *Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> For two differing definitions of collage, see Steven Blanford, Barry Keith Grant, and Jim Heller, *The Film Studies Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50; and Frank Eugene Beaver, *Dictionary of Film Terms: The Aesthetic Companion to Film Art* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 46.

<sup>8</sup> For examples of other disciplines adopting the use of the term “montage” in a manner similar to “collage,” see Andrew Clearfield, *These Fragments Have I Shored: Collage and Montage in Early Modernist Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984); Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. by Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); and Gregory L. Ulmer, “The Object of Post-Criticism” in Hoffman, 383–412.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), 110; J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 145; and Chris Baldick, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 39.

What defines a literary collage is not its use of parataxis, parody, pastiche, innovative typography or other forms of fragmentation, but the use of materials that have been found already worked over, somehow transformed (cooked) by other hands. The collagist then further transforms these materials through a new arrangement, integrating them into a new context which promises to radically change the significance of these ready-made fragments in any number of ways.<sup>10</sup>

Katherine Hoffman's anthology, *Collage: Critical Views*, is still the most comprehensive and interdisciplinary discussion of collage. It includes entries that survey literature, painting and sculpture, video and film, and architecture, as well as more thematic discussions of collage seen through the lenses of feminism and Latin-American culture. Yet musical collage is absent from this anthology, indeed absent from most interdisciplinary discussions—in Hoffman's book, only John Cage is mentioned by one author, and even then it is Cage the writer, the philosopher, even the mycologist who merits attention more than Cage the composer.

The absence of music within interdisciplinary work on collage is not due to a shortcoming of scholarship—musical discussions of collage have proliferated in recent decades—but it might be due to the fairly self-contained analyses musicologists and music theorists have produced. Many scholars engage collage less theoretically as an individual phenomenon, aiming to understand a single work rather than collage itself. Doing so, scholars have collectively limited their focus to a handful of composers: Charles Ives and several avant-garde composers, such as John Cage, Mauricio Kagel, George Rochberg, John Zorn, and Luciano Berio. The most prominent voice in musical collage has been J. Peter Burkholder, who defines “collage” in *Grove Music Online* as “the juxtaposition of multiple quotations, styles or textures so that each element maintains its individuality.” He differentiates collage from other similar forms by saying that in collage, “the diverse elements do not fit smoothly together.”

These other similar forms include the quodlibet (multiple melodies cleverly combined

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<sup>10</sup> David C. Banash, “Writing Through the Real: Twentieth-Century Literary Collage” (PhD Diss., The University of Iowa, 2003), 68.

successively or simultaneously to fit together smoothly); medley (a formless string of melodies); and centonization (composition that relies on pre-existing units). To this, I would also include the seventeenth century practice of pasticcio (an opera constructed from works of different composers adapted to a libretto).<sup>11</sup> Burkholder's work on Charles Ives, the composer whom Burkholder credits as the originator of musical collage, more closely mirrors the visual arts with its metaphorical invocation of pasting onto a canvas: "in which a swirl of quoted and paraphrased tunes is added to a musical structure." Burkholder again differentiates collage from patchwork (fragments of multiple tunes stitched together), which lacks the "canvas" onto which fragments are added.<sup>12</sup> Several others have echoed Burkholder's work, defining musical collage as music that both incorporates pre-existing material and does so in a discontinuous fashion.<sup>13</sup>

A handful of scholars have begun to offer broader perspectives on musical collage that mirror developments in other disciplines. In *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists*—to date the only large-scale study of musical collage—Glenn Watkins uses collage as "a metaphor [that] typically refers less to thematic recall of familiar tunes than to the assemblage and rearrangement of a rich parade of cultural loans."<sup>14</sup> Throughout his book, Watkins considers various forms of collage, including simultaneity,

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<sup>11</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, "Collage," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root. [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com).

<sup>12</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Music theorist C. Catherine Losada specifically uses Burkholder's definition, even as she demonstrates a deeper level of cohesion underneath the surface discontinuity. See C. Catherine Losada, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Strands of Continuity in Collage Compositions by Rochberg, Berio, and Zimmermann," *Music Theory Spectrum*, 31 (Spring 2009), 57–100. Robert Morgan, in his survey of twentieth century music, places collage and quotation within the same subsection, but reserves his use of collage for "simultaneous strands of diverse music." See Robert Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 411. In her thoughtful reflection on modern uses earlier music, Zofia Lissa links collage to other practices of quotation, allusion, montage, and fragmentation, stressing collage's reliance on both pre-existing artifacts and an aesthetic of disunity. See Zofia Lissa, "Historical Awareness of Music and Its Role in Present-Day Musical Culture," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 4, no. 1 (June 1973), 17–33.

<sup>14</sup> Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). 3.

borrowing, masks, and cutting and pasting, and deftly places them in dialogue with similar techniques in other media. Nicholas Cook, theorizing what he calls the “collage principle,” takes a similarly broad view, extending both surrealist juxtapositions and cinematic montage to music.<sup>15</sup> Both Cook and Watkins include works that Burkholder and others would not consider collages; Cook applies collage to the opening of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 and to Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” Watkins to Alfred Schnittke’s cadenzas for Beethoven’s Violin Concerto and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* (among many others).

My admiration for Burkholder’s attention to formal detail will become quite apparent below, but in terms of defining collage, I share Watkins’s and Cook’s broader and more metaphorical view. Watkins’s virtuosic ability to trace collage through so many contexts provides a strong model for my own work. Many of the works that I examine in this dissertation might not be, at first glance, considered collages; nevertheless, I contend that our understanding of them strongly benefits from asking many of the same analytical questions that collage raises. Returning to the origin of the term “collage”—*coller*, “to paste”—I posit that musical collage constitutes at a fundamental level the placement of two or more distinct, independently meaningful musical objects within a singular presentation. By musical object, I mean any differentiable musical element that carries independent significance, whether an entire piece, or a fragment, such as a quotation from a piece, lyrics, an instrument, a scale, a rhythmic pattern, or a form. By presentation, I strive to move discussions of musical collage beyond the act of composition to recognize the role of collage both in live performances, from improvised quotations and allusions to collaborations and concerts featuring multiple performing forces, and

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<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Cook, “Uncanny Moments: Juxtaposition and the Collage Principle in Music” in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 107–34.

in recorded and technologically-mediated music, from mashups, mix CDs, and tribute albums to shuffled playlists and Pandora stations.

In taking this broader view, I aim to align my work more squarely with developments in other disciplines, and help make music a part of a broader conversation on collage. Indeed, for most of the case studies in this dissertation, music is not the only medium under consideration. Rather, the music under consideration here is often experienced alongside visual, spatial, and textual material. At the same time, it is worth considering the properties that collage specifically in musical form carries. First, the process of cutting and pasting almost always involves what I term “revoicing”; that is, when a musical object is borrowed, its sonic properties are typically altered—reorchestrated, reharmonized, or performed without lyrics or with different dynamics or tempo than the original—something that does not often happen with the visual properties of material objects. Second, when the musical object is pasted, the resulting seams are invisible. This affords creators of musical collage the rare ability to hide the act of collage. Its inaudibility depends on both the creator’s intent and the listener’s familiarity, attention, or expectations. Third, the immateriality of musical collage allows for simultaneity. Whereas visual collage is created through the act of covering up, pasting one element on top of another, musical collage may choose to collage multiple sounds simultaneously and audibly, each again having a potent effect on a collage’s aesthetic and semiotic effect. Finally, the immateriality of music presents challenges in its semiotic character. Put simply, music communicates differently through a medium regarded as partially-representative at best, unlike visual or textual signs, sometimes yielding more ambiguous or complex meanings.

These challenges of musical analysis bring me to the second axis of collage scholarship: the location of meaning in internal, formal properties of the medium, or external, cultural

associations. Again, a cursory survey of scholarship across disciplines is necessary. Within art history, Clement Greenberg's foundational 1959 essay "Collage" asserted a modernist and formalist reading, arguing that its meaning was to call attention to the flatness of the canvas and to the limits of representation.<sup>16</sup> Greenberg's influence was dominant until Robert Rosenblum first alleged in 1973 that formalist readings of collage were "by no means incorrect, but their exclusivity has blinded most spectators to the possibility of additional interpretations that would enrich, rather than deny, the formal ones."<sup>17</sup> Rosenblum called attention to semiotic meanings vis-à-vis Picasso's use of newspaper and text, and in particular to Picasso's fondness for punning on or altering words by cutting them up to form new words. Since then, many art historians have contributed readings of collage's semiotic power that contextualize the artist within broader economic, political, or social movements.<sup>18</sup> Scholars who treat literary and filmic collages have more easily accepted semiotic meaning into their work because of the narrative nature of both media. Sergei Eisenstein's early theory of montage provides a salient corollary, wherein he asserts that montage is both a media-specific formalist device and a semiotic process, believing meaning to be created only through a dialectical juxtaposition of two images, or "ideograms."<sup>19</sup> The act of juxtaposition within montage yielded a central debate among early film theorists whether the operative principle was collision or linkage; this question has continued to occupy those who work on collage across the various disciplines.

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<sup>16</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Collage" in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 70–84

<sup>17</sup> Robert Rosenblum, "Picasso and the Typography of Cubism" in Hoffman, 92.

<sup>18</sup> To take just the example of Picasso, see Patricia Leighton, "Picasso's Collages and the Threat of War," in Hoffman, 121–70; Christine Poggi, "Mallarmé, Picasso, and the Newspaper as Commodity" in Hoffman, 171–192; Lewis Kachur, "Picasso, Popular Music, and Collage Cubism (1911–12)" *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (April 1993) 252–60.

<sup>19</sup> Sergei Eisenstein *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. by Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1977). Other early film theorists have elaborated on montage's uniquely filmic formal properties, distinguishing it from related media including photography and theater. See, for examples, Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 26 and Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 18.



Extending work on semiotics, scholars have begun to note how collage reflects wider cultural, economic, and political practices. Banash's dissertation delineates a connection between literary collage and the rise of mass media and technology from the newspaper to the internet. Similar arguments have been made by Angela Dalle Vacche, who grounds Jean-Luc Godard's filmic collage in pop culture and art historian Christine Poggi, who observes the challenge made to high art's status by Picasso's use of newspaper, which, "perhaps more than any other cultural artifact, embodies the principle of reproducibility in utter negation of the unique or privileged object [and] ... quickly assumes the status of refuse, thereby exemplifying the principle of obsolescence inscribed in the very nature of commodity."<sup>20</sup> Thomas Brockelman's *The Frame and the Mirror: On Collage and the Postmodern* elucidates how collage creates a "play of signifiers" where "the artist is free not only to test the limits of visual syntax but also to do so in producing an endless combination of the elements of signification, a kind of visual free association based upon the possibilities of semiotic articulation."<sup>21</sup> Brockelman maps the polysemic nature of collage onto a postmodern society, which is no longer understood as sharing a single worldview, but separate worlds whose boundaries we regularly traverse. Collage becomes the embodiment of this state:

Collage practices—the gathering of materials from *different* worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element—call attention to the irreducible heterogeneity of the 'postmodern condition.' But, insofar as it *does* bind these elements, *as* elements, within a kind of unifying field,...the practice of collage also resists the romanticism of pure difference.<sup>22</sup>

Scholarship on musical collage has followed a similar path from formalist to semiotic to cultural analysis. Approaching one of the most canonic examples of musical collage, the third

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Four of Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Poggi, 184.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Brockelman, *The Frame and the Mirror: On Collage and the Postmodern* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

movement of Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*, Michael Hicks rightly critiques early scholarship as too content to simply treat the work as a formalist exercise akin to twelve-tone analysis, identifying and labeling the sources and calling it a day. Hicks offers a reading of the collage as a form of text-setting, something David Osmond-Smith does as well in a concurrent analysis of the *Sinfonia*.<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, Burkholder's work on Charles Ives often emphasizes the melodic or rhythmic connections between the collaged elements, and in doing so reads his collages as evocative of the process of memory and biographically or programmatically grounded in the composer's own memories.<sup>24</sup> Taking the broadest view of musical collage, Glenn Watkins also extends the meanings of musical collage furthest beyond the works and authors by tracing the practice of collage from its roots in late-colonialist encounters with Asia, Africa, and the primitive past through postwar migrations and into the globalism and postmodernism of the present.

Formalist and more theoretical approaches to musical collage have advanced as well. Looking to address larger structural questions within musical collage, music theorist C. Catherine Losada has adapted analytical techniques used for modernist works to illustrate how certain avant-garde musical collages maintain a level of formal unity within the collage.<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Cook, meanwhile, considers collage more metaphorically and theorizes a broader "collage principle" based on juxtaposition. Cook does so to address a failure in musical narratology to account for the expressive power of musical moments that arrest the listener with sudden surprises and juxtapositions, from the opening of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto to Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." Neither of these works is, by many definitions, strictly a

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Hicks, "Text, Music, and Meaning in the Third Movement of Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*," *Perspectives of New Music* 20 (Autumn 1981–Summer 1982), 199–224; David Osmond-Smith, "From Myth to Music: Lévi-Strauss's 'Mythologiques' and Berio's 'Sinfonia,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 67 (April 1981), 230–260.

<sup>24</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 380–2.

<sup>25</sup> Losada, 57–100.

collage, but Cook asserts that “such effects are not restricted to overtly collage-based pieces...but are in some sense ubiquitous in music.”<sup>26</sup> Diametric as they might be, both Losada’s and Cook’s approaches to collage are necessary for a complete understanding of collage, recalling Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of montage, Thomas Brockelman’s description of collage as binding heterogeneous worlds into a single unity to create polysemy, and Peter Burkholder’s simultaneous insistence of rupture as central to the definition of collage and emphasis on the motivic unity in his analyses of Ives’s collages.

By placing juxtapositions at the center of my definition of collage, I mean to also place its complex effects—unity, rupture, polysemy—at the center of my analysis. My definition of collage encompasses a wide range of music, which is in keeping with common practice—scholars have used it to describe such disparate aspects of musical works as the textual sources in Handel anthems, lyrical references in hip hop, the structure of Schubert’s “Am Meer,” the dense texture in the opening to Miles Davis’s “Bitches Brew,” and many others.<sup>27</sup> Yet too often “collage” gets used simply as a catch-all description without a serious engagement with the work *as* a collage, thereby explaining away difference into a single label and evading the rich, complex meanings collage can produce. Although I part with scholars who have asserted narrower definitions of collage, their attention to form and detail remains essential for analysis of what is a remarkably malleable art form—indeed, broader definitions of collage make it all the

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<sup>26</sup> Cook, “Uncanny Moments,” 121.

<sup>27</sup> See Ruth Smith, *Handel’s Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103; Reiland Rabaka, *Hip Hop’s Amnesia: From Blues and the Black Women’s Club Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Movement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 152; Lawrence Kramer, “The Schubert Lied: Romantic Form and Romantic Consciousness,” in *Schubert: Critical and Analytical Studies*, ed. Walter Frisch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 204; Lorenzo Candelaria and Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama, Fourth Edition* (Boston: Schirmer, 2012), 246.

more malleable, and therefore a careful attention to its specific presentation is all the more necessary.<sup>28</sup>

In place of the usual theoretical approaches that stress boundaries and definitions, I put forth a number of potential continuums on which we can measure collage in order to accommodate the malleable nature of collage:

- How much is the appearance of the collaged elements preserved or heavily altered?
- How easily do collaged elements fit together?
- How ambiguous is a collage's meaning for the viewer?
- How much are the external and associative meanings of collaged elements retained in the collage?
- How disparate are the sources for the collage's constituent elements?
- How are the various elements placed in position to one another, either sequentially (horizontally) or simultaneously (vertically)?
- Is the label of "collage" applied by the creator (intentional) or the audience (unintentional)?
- If intentional, how easily is the work recognized and understood by the audience as a collage?

These questions are not exhaustive, nor are they necessarily of equal importance to the analysis of any given collage; rather, it is incumbent upon the scholar to select which continuums best

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<sup>28</sup> In his review of Watkins's book, Joseph Auner critiques Watkins for "his reluctance to theorize" or concretely define collage, which makes it "less clear how these insights should change the ways we hear or think about the works" and "ultimately limits his ability to explain the reasons for collage's 'rising tide of glamor' in twentieth-century music or to propose interpretations of the meaning and impact of the cultural phenomena he considers." See Joseph H. Auner, Review of *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 162–3 and 167.

reveal a collage's meanings. Collage can sustain more than one reading, and as different criteria come to the fore in other analyses, new meanings emerge more clearly.

This complex network of potential meanings created by the act of cutting, pasting, and juxtaposing is precisely the power of collage. Analyses of collage, then, should treat collage less as an objective phenomenon and more as a subjective experience, as much process as product.<sup>29</sup> Collage benefits from an awareness of the complex social actions and interactions that underpin its creation, particularly because the artist/composer is not solely responsible for providing the material. Expanding attention from collage as a noun to include collage as a verb underscores how collages are both fixed works of art and the manifestation of three principle actions—cutting, pasting, and reading—which unfix their meanings.

To examine cutting requires, of course, a careful attention to the process of manipulation (or lack thereof) each object undergoes from its original source to its presentation within the collage. But cutting opens up the question of agency as well—who is manipulating, whose music is being manipulated, and what is their relationship? To help theorize the act of cutting, and the attendant power dynamics involved with this act of appropriation, I have turned to literature on musical borrowing. J. Peter Burkholder has provided the most thorough theorization of musical borrowing as a practice, combining detailed analysis that demonstrates the effect that specific formal arrangements can have on meaning with sensitivity to intersection of musical and extramusical connections.<sup>30</sup> Complementing Burkholder's formal attention, David Metzger takes a more contextual approach through examples whose diversity illustrates how each instance of

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<sup>29</sup> My work here draws particularly on Christopher Small, who redefines music as a verb in his book *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* thusly: "To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing." Small goes on to acknowledge those who institutionally help set up, operate, and even clean up these events. See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 9.

<sup>30</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field," *Notes* 50, no. 3 (March 1994), 851–70 and Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing*.

cultural appropriation is distinct, and rightly argues that any act of quotation “draws upon not only a melody but the cultural associations of that piece.”<sup>31</sup> To these authors, I add work on musical exoticism, postcolonialism, and postnationalism where the issue of borrowing and appropriation is paramount. Timothy Taylor, Ralph Locke, Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, and Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid provide provocative examples that offer thorough historical and cross-cultural context and span a wide variety of musical genres and forms of appropriation.<sup>32</sup>

Pasting extends the practices of borrowing because the recontextualization of all appropriated objects further alters their meaning. In her essay “Decoding Collage: Signs and Surfaces,” Wendy Holmes illustrates how the act of pasting itself alters meaning:

In a book of samples, a piece of wallpaper or oilcloth does not normally exemplify “wallpaper” or “oilcloth” or “wallpaper/oilcloth sample” (or size or shape) but only a specific pattern and coloration. As a part of an artistic configuration, a piece of wallpaper or oilcloth does become a sample of a sample and exhibits its “wallpaperiness” in an entirely different way; a property that was semiotically inert is activated in the new context of painted or drawn shapes.<sup>33</sup>

Extending Holmes, the juxtaposition of elements not just with painted or drawn shapes but also with other collaged elements further alters its semiotic properties. Thus, any musical object in a collage—a sample of an Indian tabla drum in a hip hop song or a snatch of ragtime in a Charles Ives work—can suggest a number of comparisons, including the divergent racial aspects of each

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<sup>31</sup> David Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid, *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution, and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Wendy Holmes, “Decoding Collage: Signs and Surfaces” in Hoffman, 200.

object, the aesthetic similarities of the percussive foundation shared by a tabla and a hip hop drum machine, and the rhythmic complexity shared by ragtime and modernist art music.

The third action, reading, is the most central to meaning making and the most diffuse. Whereas the author controls cutting and pasting, it is the audience that ultimately chooses which connections to make, which semiotic properties take precedence. In reading the semiotic properties of musical collage, I have been guided by scholars who have adopted Charles Peirce's work on semiotics to music.<sup>34</sup> Peirce's more fluid conception of what a sign could be and his recognition that its possible meanings are contingent upon the interpreter and social context easily accommodate musical analysis. Stuart Hall's influential 1980 essay "Encoding, Decoding" offers a formative model for how author and audience navigate social hegemonies through cultural products.<sup>35</sup> Building on Hall's work, the burgeoning field of popular music studies has proven especially attentive to the role of audiences in co-constructing musical meaning, and provides additional theoretical tools for analyzing collage.<sup>36</sup>

All three of these actions demonstrate that music carries with it traces of social and cultural contexts that produce new and often potent meanings when subjected to the process of collage.<sup>37</sup> The sustained vitality of collage in the twentieth century is arguably attributable to

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Thomas Turino, "Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircian Semiotic Theory for Music," *Ethnomusicology* 43 (Spring/Summer 1999), 221–255.

<sup>35</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 90–103.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990); David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Nicholas Cook has adopted a similar approach to examine the social meaning of art music in both production and reception. See Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> Here, I seek to nuance my work on collage from Frederic Jameson's influential treatment of postmodern pastiche. Jameson considers pastiche the artistic apotheosis of the late stage of capitalism, yielding a state where previous styles are recycled and consumed indiscriminately into a state of "blank parody," leading to a point where history itself is effaced by a collection of self-referencing modern cultural markers of historicalness. See Frederic Jameson,

how it embodies the twentieth century's broader social movements that shaped their cultural products.<sup>38</sup> The practice of cultural borrowing has marked the twentieth century, as centuries of Western colonial encounters have given way to globalization, producing complex, hybrid identities through post-colonial independence movements, diasporic migrations, multiculturalist and pluralist societies, and multilateralist power structures. These changes have been aided by rapidly advancing technologies that have disseminated cultural products around the globe with increasing speed and distance, from the cinema and recorded sound to the internet and the iPod Shuffle. Today, the evidence of collage is everywhere: the global rise of hip hop, the new Musée de Quai Branly in Paris, fusion cuisine, YouTube mash-ups, and the Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008).

The field of American music offers a particularly fruitful area to examine how collage as an artistic form has both overtly and covertly served social goals. In particular, I focus on how

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*Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 18. Postmodernist pastiche is a form collage can take, but not the only viable form; collage can still create moments of purposeful rupture and juxtaposition that invoke pointed historical referents. In this way, I also distinguish myself from Daniel Albright's Jamesonian treatment of postmodern *bricolage* and polystylism in the introduction to his anthology on music and modernism. Albright defines the two quite similarly to collage, and interprets them as announcing, "art history is wholly flattened, denarratized: the passage of centuries shows no progress, development, or flowering of art, only a steady accumulation of shiny, familiar junk." See Daniel Albright, introduction to *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 12. The collages under question in my dissertation are neither dehistoricized nor accumulations of junk, but telling assemblies that can both underscore and challenge boundaries, cultural and aesthetic alike. Unlike Albright and Jameson, who view postmodernist pastiche and *bricolage* as epitomizing the failure of the present to communicate meaningfully about the past, I instead focus on how collage communicates very powerfully about the present—not as a moment of nostalgia but as a moment of transition.

A second distinction is worth making vis-à-vis Jameson, namely the role of the audience. As I have stated, I seek to broaden my focus to include issues of reception, where the meaning of collages are created by audiences as well as by creators. This ceding of control from creator to audience is generally considered another hallmark of postmodern culture. See Bjorn Heile, "Collage vs. Compositional Control: The Interdependency of Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches in the Work of Mauricio Kagel," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, ed. Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner (New York: Routledge, 2002), 287–302. As such, I agree with Mike Featherstone's critique of Jameson as too generalized in his view of capitalist culture as a social practice wherein consumers exercise a form of agency. See Mike Featherstone, "Postmodernism, Cultural Change, and Social Practice" in *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique* ed. Douglas Kellner (Washington: Mouton de Gruyter, 1989), 117–38. This debate is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>38</sup> At the outset of her anthology, Katherine Hoffman states, "Collage may be seen as a quintessential twentieth-century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to a variety of forms and realities and to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities." See Katherine Hoffman, "Collage in the Twentieth Century: An Overview" in Hoffman, 1.



collage has articulated and negotiated national identity within music of the United States, engaging recent scholarship that critiques models of diversity. In their recent work, Josh Kun and Charles Hiroshi Garrett have both called for studies of American music to reflect not simply the diversity it encompasses, but the power structures that shape that diversity as well.<sup>39</sup> Collage does this by neither removing, nor equalizing, nor heightening difference, but by preserving the tensions and power relationships between constituent elements while binding those elements into a whole, suggesting that the whole is not simply made up by the sum of its parts, but by the tensions and occlusions, symmetries and resonances created by bringing those parts together. Because collage renders its process visible by exposing its seams, thereby preserving a tension between unity and disunity among its constituent parts, I find it provides a fruitful tool for examining issues of diversity, power, and representation within American music. As the quotations placed in the opening epigram to this introduction suggest, theories of collage already intersect with the U. S. motto “E pluribus unum,” or “one out of many,” and the many metaphors, from a melting pot to a bowl of gumbo, a tossed salad, a mosaic, a quilt, or a kaleidoscope, that have tried to capture the essence of American national identity. Furthermore, because collage remains polysemic and can resist any easy, single interpretation, it moves beyond the problematic binary constructions like black/white, central/marginal, highbrow/lowbrow, and narrative/counternarrative.

I do not mean to suggest that collage is inherently or exceptionally American; rather, I find collage an instructive framework through which to explore questions raised within American musical scholarship. I do so through a set of focused case studies that collectively showcase the complexity and versatility of collage while exploring the diverse perspectives on

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<sup>39</sup> Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

and challenges to American identity. My methodology brings together a top-down theoretical approach with a bottom-up approach to collage as cultural practice. This model cannot account for a broad, comprehensive treatment of either collage or American music, if such a thing were even possible. But by treating each example in such depth, I demonstrate that collage rewards sustained attention and analysis with an illumination of the broader cultural issues at stake in the numerous ways of constructing and reading collage. In particular, my dissertation builds upon past models of musical collage, but deliberately moves away from approaches that privilege the object or the author and suggests a model of collage as a process of creating multiple meanings by foregrounding the act of reception.

My five chapters serve to illustrate the rich interplay of social factors that have shaped music in the United States, American national identity, and the versatility of collage as a methodology. While the dissertation is organized chronologically, the chapters are meant neither to offer an encompassing survey nor to convey a particularly historical narrative; as I have argued, collage resists narrative analysis. These examples are, however, meant to resonate with one another. Throughout, I return to various cultural questions that actively shaped the production and reception of collage, including the evolution of technology as a means for disseminating cultural products, the flexibility or inflexibility of racial categories, and the economic structures that afforded or limited artists' artistic freedom. I examine primarily mainstream examples of collage, not to deny the power of those marginalized in American history, but to demonstrate that the debates being waged on the margins informed as well the choices of those working in a privileged position, complicating narratives of power and resistance through the open-ended nature of collage's meanings.

I continue this introduction's work on theorizing collage in Chapter One by demonstrating how theories of nationalism adopt the language of collage, particularly in the act of "pasting" a folk past into a cosmopolitan present. Applying these theories to music, I examine three composers who adopted different forms of collage to assert different answers to the question of how to develop a nascent American art music. I read Edward MacDowell's cutting and pasting of Native American melodies into two piano works within the broader cultural concept of the "vanishing Indian," which provided the United States with an imagined past that had to remain chronologically and ethnically distant, rendering it unusable. Conversely, George Antheil's early piano compositions suggested a very different sort of collage, based on jazz, machines, and Parisian cubism. Through Antheil's letters and his reception, I trace how this form of collage was ultimately regarded as European rather than American because of its lack of concern with displaying American roots. In this regard, Antheil's "European" modernism contrasts with the more "American" work by contemporaries in literature and painting, including William Carlos Williams, John Dos Passos, Arthur Dove, and Stuart Davis. Finally, I consider Charles Ives's recognition as both the inventor of musical collage and the grandfather of American classical music and how these two titles may be related. Ives's song "Old Home Day" demonstrates how Ives's collages created the requisite balance between the historical folk past and modernity for its audiences, as prescribed in theories of nationalism.

Chapter Two also considers the creation of American musical nationalism, here presented on the Broadway stage. Richard Rodgers's and Lorenz Hart's 1936 musical *On Your Toes* was notable for its interpolation of two full-length ballets choreographed by the modernist choreographer George Balanchine, but Rodgers goes further by crediting *On Your Toes* as pivotal in development of the Broadway musical as a form of American opera. In this light, I

investigate how *On Your Toes* staged contemporary debates about American musical nationalism by collaging classical music, ballet, jazz, and musical theater. After noting the ways the musical satirizes WPA-era efforts at cultural uplift, I examine the production and reception of each ballet in detail. The first ballet, meant as a parody of Fokine's *Scheherazade*, revealed anxiety about ballet's foreign, elite, and feminine status while satirizing American aspirations toward high culture. The second, a jazz ballet "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" billed within the show as a vernacular work of American art, produced divergent opinions in print media and contradictory recollections in oral histories from cast members on whether the ballet was supposed to be a serious vernacular work of art or a comic satire on jazz-based modernism. This divergence reflects a broader disagreement about the role of vernacular culture in American musical nationalism. Finally, I analyze a particular moment, a sight gag based on European and American practices of blackface, to reveal complex questions about black, white, and Jewish participation in creating American musical nationalism. I conclude that the work mirrors Rodgers's ambitions and strategies for gaining cultural acceptance as a composer.

The subject of Chapter Three is a very different form of collage: Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*, an assemblage of eighty-four commercial recordings released between 1926 and 1932, anthologized by an avant-garde artist and record collector named Harry Smith, and released by Folkways Records in 1952. I begin by situating the anthology's source material within the broader racial, ethnic, and geographic frameworks that shaped the practices of performance, folk collecting, commercial recording, and marketing in the early twentieth century. Whereas scholars have largely argued through close readings that Smith erased these boundaries, Smith's use of collage more accurately unsettles them, reflecting points of cross-cultural contact, suggesting new boundaries, and reifying forms of geographic and racial

essentialism in other respects. Turning to the present, the Smithsonian's process of reissuing the *Anthology* underscores the role of collage as a process for engaging history. Whereas Smith sought to unsettle and critique the past through a process of collage, economic and institutional demands repeatedly impelled the Smithsonian to treat the *Anthology* as a fixed object of cultural heritage fit for preservation. Archival records from the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage chronicle many of the decisions and edits that shaped the final product, including the marketing, cover design, liner notes, and sound remastering of the reissue, and present a troublingly uncritical and purposefully uncontroversial view of American history.

To understand its continued significance to national identity in contemporary times, Chapter Four examines how collage actively shapes the process of memorialization in two musical memorials for recent national tragedies: John Corigliano's *Symphony No. 1* (1989), a work inspired by AIDS, and John Adams's 9/11 commission *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002). After a brief explication of the forms of collage used in each composition, I theorize how collage mirrors processes of traumatic experience and healing, loss, and memory. Rosalind Krauss's work on collage and absence provides a theoretical framework to demonstrate how memorials similarly use collage to both acknowledge and cover up the absence of human lives. Turning to questions of identity, collage breaks apart the unitary, dominant national identity often put forth in times of national distress. The recent adoption of collage by memorials provides a more honest and reflective account of multiple sites of identity in a post-national world by engaging a more democratic process of commemoration, encouraging dialogue between different perspectives and demands for the memorial, and fulfilling what Judith Butler labels the "ethical responsibility" of mourning. Drawing on surveys I conducted at performances of *On the Transmigration of Souls*, I observe that the public engages with memorials in

compelling and often contradictory ways and suggest that musical memorials could do more to encourage participation and thereby foster a more productive sense of local and national community.

Finally, Chapter Five looks at the intersection of mediated and performative collage within Barack Obama's 2008 electoral campaign and Inaugural weekend. In particular, I demonstrate how Obama's iconicity was unfixed, a "collage of many stories," in the words of one reporter. I explore how this collage of Obama's identity was constructed by his own campaign, by other candidates, and by amateur and professional musicians. To reflect the modern ubiquity of collage, this chapter surveys several forms of collage that appeared throughout the election: commercials and user-generated mashups posted on YouTube, campaign playlists, hip hop songs responding to Obama, and finally the Inaugural weekend concert held at the Lincoln Memorial, titled "We Are One." Collectively, these collages suggest how the many musical attempts to define Obama reflect larger discourses of race, gender, age, and political beliefs within contemporary articulations of American identity.

## **Chapter One**

### **Bringing Forth a New Nation:**

#### **Modernism, History, and Collage in American Musical Nationalism**

In a 1989 interview with Elliott Carter, one of America's most venerable modernist composers, Enzo Restagno begins by asking about Carter's hometown, New York. Carter fondly remarks on its mélange of architectural styles, finding in it a perfect metaphor for American music:

The problem was one of reconciling the various architectural styles learned in Europe with the necessity that dictated the building of skyscrapers; it had to be confronted and solved somehow. Hence that freedom and the strange overlapping of styles we were talking about. I don't think the situation was that different in music.<sup>1</sup>

In this exchange, Carter captures what he considers the crux of American identity, and identifies what might be called a collage as the American solution, or at least the visible—and audible—results working through the problem.

Carter finds his strongest musical parallel to the cityscape in the music composed by Charles Ives: “he glimpsed a new musical vocabulary, but he was also aware of the need to reconcile it with what he had learned at Yale, and I think he spent his entire life dealing with this problem.”<sup>2</sup> Ives recurs prominently throughout the interview, in part because Ives was an early mentor for Carter, but also because Ives serves as a founding father for American composers more generally. Few if any American composers have been as thoroughly studied, analyzed, or

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<sup>1</sup> Elliott Carter, *Elliot Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre musica 1989*, trans. Katherine Wolfthal, (Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1991), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

mythologized as Ives.<sup>3</sup> He has been hailed as a pioneer, founder, or grandfather of American music and compared to a range of America's most preeminent intellectuals and statesmen such as Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Thomas Jefferson.

Ives is doubly fitting for this position because he has also been credited with the invention of musical collage, parallel to Picasso and Braque. Ives scholar J. Peter Burkholder, in his entry for "collage" in *Grove Music Online*, writes that "the first fully developed collages occur in a handful of works by Charles Ives (although he did not use the term)," going on to note their effect similar to "involuntary leaps of memory or dreams... [was] perfectly suited to pieces based on remembered or imagined events."<sup>4</sup> While Burkholder takes a more circumscribed view of collage than I do, as discussed in the introduction, Ives's music doubtless remains a paragon of musical collage. Ives's collage practices can be centrally located in two practices that parallel other arts. First, Ives's extensive use of musical quotations, akin to cutting and pasting in visual collages, is one of his most identifiable stylistic markers. Ives was not only remarkable for the extent of his borrowings, but for the breadth of sources he borrowed from, including hymns, fiddle tunes, patriotic songs, Stephen Foster songs, European composers, and Tin Pan Alley songs—a wide-ranging sonic reflection of America's musical diversity as Ives encountered it. Second, Ives's compositions often feature simultaneous and independent layers of music as collages layer paper, or more precisely, as a palimpsest layers images or text. Ives used this technique sometimes in the abstract, as in *The Unanswered Question* (1908), as well as programmatically, such as his depiction of multiple bands playing at a celebration in *The Fourth of July* (1918), a musical reimagining of a real-life soundscape.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Gayle Sherwood Magee *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008) and Richard Crawford, "Sonneck and American Musical Historiography," in *Essays in Musicology: A Tribute to Alvin Johnson*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Edward Roesner (Philadelphia: American Musicological Society, 1990), 266–83.

<sup>4</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, "Collage," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root. [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com).



That Ives, given his stature, should be placed front and center in a dissertation on collage and American identity is perhaps inevitable. But Carter's remarks suggest that the relationship between American identity and collage offers more than has been said and extends beyond the iconic work of Ives. Many composers around the turn of the twentieth century faced the same difficult charge of crafting a distinctly American approach to composition, having to contend with the dual burdens of tradition and reinvention, of emulating European music and breaking from it, and often in doing so, come to terms with the possibilities and politics of musical borrowing, of musical inclusions and exclusions, within an American music. Rather than privilege Ives to their exclusion, I believe applying a framework of collage more comprehensively to this period yields a richer understanding of the choices composers had to make when faced with the concept of a modern, emergent American identity and how their works continue to bear the traces of such decisions.

This chapter provides both a theoretical model for how collage aids the formation of national identity, as it has been understood by scholars, and a broader history of collage within the early stages of American musical nationalism at the start of the twentieth century. Before examining Ives in more detail, I explore the use of collage by Edward MacDowell and George Antheil, two composers who offered divergent definitions of American national identity through their music by adopting two very different forms of collage. MacDowell's collage emphasized American history, and used a concrete model of collage that recognizably cut and pasted Native American music into his own compositions; Antheil's collage projected instead a modern, industrial America by adopting the abstract modernist tactics from painting and literature that interrupt, fragment, repeat, and restructure defamiliarized elements. Viewed in tandem, I suggest that a carefully managed balance of nostalgia, modernism, tradition, and reinvention was central

for national identity formation in the United States, and that this balance is achieved in Ives's collages, explaining why Ives's music has emerged as so particularly and potently American

## Nationalism and the Necessity of Collage

The arrival of Antonin Dvořák to New York in 1892 catalyzed the debate over musical nationalism in the United States. Dvořák, a renowned Czech nationalist composer, had been hired by Jeanette Thurber explicitly to teach the nation how to develop a national style. Like many Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dvořák’s approach was rooted in Romantic nationalism, which draws its power from claiming and preserving a shared folk culture and heritage. Sociologist Anthony Smith identifies five “fundamental features of a national identity,” among them, “an historic territory, or homeland,” “common myths and historical memories,” and “a common, mass public culture.”<sup>5</sup> Smith’s emphasis on the term “common,” appearing in four of the five features, underscores the importance of a shared, collective identity with equally collective ownership of its cultural symbols. Folk music is frequently listed among these symbols, yet it should be noted that music is a particularly powerful symbol and different from textual or visual symbols in key ways. Lacking any singular, modern source, folk music is broadly understood as historical yet still vibrant in the present, passed down through tradition, and communally composed and communally owned. That ownership is also embodied through communal performance, particularly of folk songs, allowing citizens to actively engage in the preservation of this tradition, and in doing so perform—literally give voice to—their identity. Furthermore, folk songs don’t simply kindle images or sounds of a shared past, but are taken as living relics. Unlike paintings, monuments, or legends, which present the past as past and allow

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 14.

us merely to reimagine, folk music is understood as authentic, a surviving relic from history; the folk music heard and performed today is not understood as a recreation of historic tradition, but rather as the very same music as one's ancestors had heard and performed. Music is thus similar to an object in a museum, except that music is not confined to the passivity of a museum display but is very much active, part of modern life as well: through its modern performance, the past and present are rendered continuous, understood as simultaneously present in the music.

While nationalism requires an implicit validation of a historical folk culture serving as the foundation of the nation, scholars of nationalism rightly point out that conceptions of the folk can be as much fiction as fact. Smith writes, "Nationalism demands the rediscovery and restoration of the nation's unique cultural identity; and this means returning to one's authentic roots in the historic culture community inhabiting its ancestral homeland."<sup>6</sup> But Smith is equally clear that the purpose of this return to the past is not an end, but a means to shaping the future: "the past and present culture of the 'folk' provided the materials for a blueprint of the 'nation-to-be.'"<sup>7</sup> As part of this modern reinvention, Ernest Gellner notes in his landmark book *Nations and Nationalism* that popular culture of the folk is transformed through an imposition of high culture, even though "this is the very opposite of what nationalism affirms and what nationalists fervently believe."<sup>8</sup> Examining nationalism in literature, Anne-Marie Thiesse similarly sees nationalism as "a construction elaborated by writers, aiming mainly to renew high culture. Although it borrowed elements from actual popular culture, it transformed them for appropriation by the social elite."<sup>9</sup> Whether folk culture was rediscovered and transformed via high culture, or

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 33–4.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945*, ed. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Anne-Marie Thiesse, "National Identities: A Transnational Paradigm," in *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes*, ed. Alain Dieckhoff and Christophe Jaffrelot (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 126.

entirely reinvented by high culture, its desired effect was to convey to audiences a feeling of folkness and shared heritage while maintaining the authority of high culture and the state to convey folk culture and thus to define the nation.

For composers, it was no different. Folk music could not simply be assumed to exist, but had to be collected and published for citizens to read. In some locations, when folk songs could not be found, folk music had to be newly written, invented, and published as folk music. When folk music was collected and printed it was essentially distilled into an extant art tradition, turned from an orally-transmitted music to a written one, fit into a Western tonal system, given regular meters, and sometimes even classically harmonized. From there, folk tunes could be readily adapted to art music genres, whether the *lied*, the opera, or the symphony. In turn, these art forms became national symbols themselves, rather than replacing the orchestra with a folk ensemble.

Examining musical nationalism requires the recognition of its inherent contradictions: while the rhetoric and beliefs of nationalism rely upon images of the historical and the communal, its practice relies on its reinvention by a modern, elite culture. I contend that it functions as a well-hidden collage: a carefully-crafted array of historical, folk culture markers, markers which have been cut or otherwise altered, arranged upon a modern, high culture background. This model places the bucolic simplicity of folk songs, dances, tales, and costumes upon the cosmopolitan finery of the modern, urban concert hall or opera house stage. Such a pairing does not and should not strike the audience as incongruous in practice, though; on the contrary, nationalism relies on its congruity, on the effacing of the boundaries of its modernity and manufacture and the creation of continuity between old and modern. Yet as with any collage, the juxtaposition unlocks new potential in each through this encounter. Folk culture is elevated to the national and afforded new potency in its ability to signify, but in doing so opens itself up to

being controlled by the elite rather than communally held. Similarly, elite culture gains new expressive power and relevance while sacrificing at some level its privileged position of authority and its ability to include or exclude selectively. This not to say the two categories are merged or leveled, merely that the boundary between the two is permeable.

In the United States, however, the hidden collage of national identity formation became more overt. The United States was, comparatively, a modern nation populated primarily of immigration with borders that continually expanded throughout the nineteenth century. As a result, collage took on new roles of symbolically reflecting the heterogeneity of its population and expressing the modernity of its image. When multiple regionally or ethnically defined musics exist as *possible* sources in lieu of a single, communally owned, *definitive* folk material, the politics of borrowing are understandably more pronounced precisely because the materials used are not communally shared. Collage explicitly acknowledges the act of borrowing as a cut-and-paste operation, appropriating music from its original context and owner and inserting it within another. As various musical borders—old and modern, European and non-European, white and non-white, high and low—are crossed or delineated, the music also negotiates social boundaries in deciding who is included or excluded, who speaks for the nation, and in turn who is being spoken for.

When Dvořák arrived in the United States, he applied his European strategies and produced his Symphony No. 9 “From the New World,” a popular work today, but it met with controversy when it premiered in 1893. Because much of European musical nationalism attempted to define itself through contrast to Germanic universalism, Dvořák grounded his American sound in the music that appeared to him to be the most distinct from European music: Native American music and African-American spirituals. Dvořák’s public statements that a

national style should, or even could, use these musics as its foundation drew a wide variety of responses. In one article, published in the *Boston Herald*, ten notable composers and performers conveyed their thoughts. Their responses ranged from a dismissal of nationalism altogether, preferring a more “universal” approach to music, to sympathetic—but limited—agreement. Those who agreed in the cause of musical nationalism found value in Dvořák’s strategy of basing a national style on folk music, but could not find a common folk source that was agreeable to all. For many at the time, folk culture and its emphasis on shared ancestry became tools for idealizing racial purity and, among Anglo Americans, for policing racial boundaries in the United States.<sup>10</sup> A number of respondents to Dvořák thus directly or indirectly labeled African-American musics as excluded from possibility, just as others would elsewhere single out Jewish, Irish, or Asian Americans as unwelcome musical influences. Instead, they suggested that composers look elsewhere to find America’s folk sources, including Anglo-American folk music, Civil War songs, Stephen Foster ballads, and psalmody.<sup>11</sup> Even among those who accepted African-American and Native American music as sources, the project of nationalism accomplished through musical composition still reinforced exclusionary racial power structures, as evidenced by Henry Krehbiel’s comments in a column in the *New York Daily Tribune*. When asked, “Can we accept as a national music a product of African or American Indian melody when the interpreter is pure Caucasian?” Krehbiel responded, “If he means the composer, who goes to African or Indian themes for suggestion or inspiration, the question becomes almost silly. Certainly. White men are to form the American school, not black or red.”<sup>12</sup>

While some composers sought folk music that could serve as a national symbol, others found promise not in turning to folk music, but in turning to the vernacular music of the modern

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<sup>10</sup> The subject of folk music and its connection to racial boundaries is treated more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

<sup>11</sup> “American Music. Dr. Antonin Dvorak [*sic*] Expresses Some Radical Opinions,” *Boston Herald*, May 28, 1893.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Krehbiel, “Musical Comment” *New York Daily Tribune* December 27, 1897, p. 7.

day, thereby adopting in their own fashion Dvořák's model of asserting an American identity as distinct from Europe. This had already been exploited to great effect in literature, as Leo Marx has demonstrated by tracing how authors from James Fennimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne to Mark Twain and Henry James all defined Americans through "a drama of cultural contrast. What gave their work its American stamp was their vivid awareness of certain cultural differences."<sup>13</sup> In particular, Marx points to the growth of a native vernacular as the basis for a national style. Composers also used modern vernacular musics, yet this proved problematic for two reasons. First, many of the modern popular musics in America were racially marked, from minstrel tunes to ragtime and jazz, prompting debates similar to those raised by Dvořák's use of spirituals. And second, the culture of classical music in the United States was conservative at the time, run largely by European conductors and musicians, and funded by Americans who found America's lack of a cultural history a blemish to be refined rather than a source of national pride. Indeed, the hiring of Dvořák, a European, to demonstrate American nationalism may be one of the more extreme examples of this Eurocentric logic.

Composer Amy Beach acknowledged that no single source could speak for the entire nation and, explicitly including African Americans, advocated that "in order to make the best use of folk-songs of any nation as material for musical composition, the writer should be one of the people whose songs he chooses, or at least brought up among them."<sup>14</sup> Others went further to suggest that the heterogeneity of the American population itself could be the marker of difference from Europe that was needed. While music theorist Carl Dalhaus describes eclecticism as a tell-tale sign of a lack of national identity among European composers, Carol Oja concludes in her study of American music in the 1920s, "For American modernist

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<sup>13</sup> Leo Marx, *The Passenger and the Pilot: Essays on Literature, Technology, and Culture in the United States* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 3.

<sup>14</sup> "American Music. Dr. Antonin Dvorak Expresses Some Radical Opinions."



composers, increased pluralism expanded the repertory of available sound sources, and their ‘eclectic breeding’—to call up a phrase of Virgil Thomson—inspired a challenge to long-standing European-based values.”<sup>15</sup> Eclecticism becomes a form of American exceptionalism and serves as a proxy foundational myth required by theories of nationalism. This foundational myth of difference through variety served the nation throughout the twentieth century, as Elliott Carter’s comments about New York reveal.

Regardless of which music, or musics, composers based their efforts of musical nationalism on, collage is invariably at work. The role of collage extends far beyond the its most overt features, for collage is a complex, versatile, and adaptable tool suited to the many contradictory challenges posed by nationalism in the United States. Because collage is complex and stresses points of congruity and incongruity alike as sites of expressive and semantic importance, it is not enough to simply identify its component parts. Attention to its arrangements and edits are crucial. The music of Edward MacDowell, George Antheil, and Charles Ives presented in this chapter provide a compelling glimpse into the multiple ways collage allowed composers to continue or break with European traditions, construct American histories, and define the modern nation. Their success or failure to sustain their definitions of America with the public further highlights the complexity of national identity formation and the necessity of collage to operate in multiple ways simultaneously.

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<sup>15</sup> Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 314.

## Native Strains

As the nation's most esteemed composer at the turn of the century, Edward MacDowell took an active presence in the debates over American music. MacDowell expressed skepticism at Dvořák's model, and was wary throughout his career of overt attempts at nationalistic music, or any music whose creation was governed by external, nonmusical concerns. Nevertheless, MacDowell did compose a handful of works on explicitly American subjects, including a few works that took up Native American themes.<sup>16</sup> At a casual glance, these might appear to adhere to Dvořák's suggestions, but MacDowell's endeavor differed in significant ways. Dvořák took his inspiration from European-American reinterpretations of Native American culture—Henry Longfellow's epic poem *Song of Hiawatha* and staged Wild West shows.<sup>17</sup> From there, Dvořák reinterpreted himself, writing "in the style of" Native American music. MacDowell, on the other hand, quoted directly from a published anthropological collection of Native American musical transcriptions made by Theodore Baker.<sup>18</sup> MacDowell shared Baker's concern that Native American culture was on the verge of extinction and that its music ought to be preserved. MacDowell's interest in their preservation was guided by his belief that these melodies

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Crawford explains the relationship between universalism and nationalism in MacDowell's music in greater detail in "Edward MacDowell: Musical Nationalism and an American Tone Poet," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1996), pp. 528–560.

<sup>17</sup> Dvořák's experiences with representations of Native Americans is chronicled extensively in Michael Beckerman's *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer's Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Baker's collection was taken from field research among the Seneca tribe in New York, undertaken for his dissertation, and published; see Theodore Baker, *On the Music of the North American Indians*, trans. Ann Buckley (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977). It is considered among the first major studies of Native American music.

possessed a universal quality.<sup>19</sup> MacDowell was not, it should be stressed, interested in ethnomusicological work here. MacDowell's view that Western art music could be universal belies a European-American bias and runs counter to the specific and specifically tribal meanings these songs held to the Native Americans themselves—meanings whose erasure had begun in Baker's transcriptions and were buried furthered in MacDowell's composition. At the heart of these works, then, is a conflict of interests—to document and preserve and to universalize and aestheticize in doing so. MacDowell's quotation of Native American melodies within a Western universalist art music setting provides the friction in which the music's nationalist potential is forged.

MacDowell composed three works that explicitly deal with Native American subjects: two brief piano works, and an orchestral suite. Most famous of these works is his Suite No. 2, "Indian" (1891–5), a five-movement orchestral tone poem incorporating a variety of Native American melodies and other Indianist tropes. Like Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, MacDowell's *Indian Suite* has its roots firmly in the nineteenth-century symphonic form, instrumentation, harmonies, and so forth. But MacDowell stressed instead the difference between his suite and standard art music, finding the suite to be decidedly un-European on account of its savagery and was often dissatisfied with performances he felt were too genteel.<sup>20</sup>

Musicologists have drawn different conclusions the juxtaposition of the two musical traditions within the work. Richard Crawford, elucidating MacDowell's own position on nationalism, finds in the use of Native American music a specifically American source for writing universalist music. Tara Browner, taking MacDowell to task for his borrowing strategies, insists instead that the Western music supplies the universalism, and that "his cut-and-paste

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<sup>19</sup> Alan H. Levy, *Edward MacDowell: An American Master* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 120.

<sup>20</sup> Crawford, "Edward MacDowell: Musical Nationalism and an American Tone Poet," 551.

adaptation of the song nullifies any innate anguish it might possess.”<sup>21</sup> Kara Anne Gardner offers a compelling reading of MacDowell’s *Indian Suite* as featuring a broader interplay and strain between the two voices with unsettling implications, embodying “simultaneous desire and repulsion” towards Native Americans.<sup>22</sup> In particular, Gardner notes the implicit battle set up between Native American and European-American cultures, foreshadowed in the first movement, fought in the third, lamented in the fourth, and finally unsettled in the fifth, which closes the work with a celebration which “most reflects the jumble of confused emotion MacDowell feels for the Native Americans who are the subject of his piece.”<sup>23</sup> And in his comprehensive study of musical representations of Native Americans, Michael Pisani shifts attention from the role of quotation to what he calls “intonation,” specifically noting how elements of harmony and structure adopted folkloric, exotic, and archaic tropes to complete the signification of Indianness.<sup>24</sup>

Examining MacDowell’s Indianist piano works for what they might offer an emerging nationalistic musical idiom, I find Gardner’s and Pisani’s approaches particularly useful because they position Western music as an active force in the construction of national, rather than simply a universal, identity. Browner’s adoption of the “cut-and-paste” metaphor further suggests that collage is the operative method here, which supports Gardner’s reading that the relationship between Western and Native American traditions is complex and unsettled, allowing for sympathetic resonance, colonialist domination, and cultural contrast to exist simultaneously.

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<sup>21</sup> Tara Browner, “‘Breathing the Indian Spirit’: Thoughts on Musical Borrowing and the ‘Indianist’ Movement,” *American Music* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 270.

<sup>22</sup> Kara Anne Gardner, “Edward MacDowell, Antimodernism, and ‘Playing Indian’ in the *Indian Suite*,” *Musical Quarterly* (Fall 2004), 376.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 401.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 198–9.

In contrast, the two small character pieces for piano, “From an Indian Lodge” in MacDowell’s collection *Woodland Sketches* (1896) and “Indian Idyl” in *New England Idyls* (1902), have garnered little scholarly attention. While the pieces exhibit similar friction between Native American music and Western classical music as found in the *Indian Suite*, the dynamics here require a different approach than any of those taken with regard to the *Indian Suite*. Gardener’s reading is particular to the active, epic storytelling of the tone poem; here, MacDowell portrays the Native American within an intimate, small-scale work as part of the pastoral, more akin to the subjective nationalism Crawford attributes to “To a Wild Rose,” another of MacDowell’s piano pieces in *Woodland Sketches*. Yet because these works so prominently borrow from Native Americans, a simple designation of subjective nationalism renders the Native American akin to landscape features and dismisses the cultural and racial tensions implied in this musical encounter. Browner’s approach serves as a necessary rejoinder, yet the differences between borrowed Native American melodies and their newly composed Western setting are not as stark as Browner’s analysis of the *Indian Suite* describes, requiring a more attentive examination how collage reshapes both elements.

Both works share a similar and clear form: a rounded binary or ABA. In each, the central B sections are quotations of Native American melodies, while the outer A sections feature newly composed music, creating a very simple form of collage: the pasting of foreign objects, the quoted Native American melodies, into new art music settings.<sup>25</sup> Like many visual collages, the pasted Native American objects in MacDowell’s works are altered in their transference in significant ways that reflect their new background. Musicologist Alan H. Levy, observing that

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<sup>25</sup> Poet Harry Polkinhorn has alleged similarly that “for Stravinsky to ‘quote’ Russian folk tunes in *The Rite of Spring* is as much collage as is Pound’s unacknowledged use of (poorly) translated Chinese material in the *Cantos*. Harry Polkinhorn, “Space Craft: Collage Discourse” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 216.

“Indian Idyl” “has the clearest form of any of the *Idylls*,” sees form as simply accommodating the contrast of emotions within it.<sup>26</sup> I take issue with Levy’s characterization of the split in purely formal terms, partly because I disagree with his characterization of the middle theme as “pensive” or “mournful,” and partly because I do not believe purely formal or abstract reasons can account for the contrasts. Of paramount importance is that MacDowell prominently uses Native American melodies taken from Baker’s transcriptions as the central B section in both and musically distinguishes the Native American quotation from its surrounding newly-composed material through metric, textural, and harmonic contrasts. Treating these not as mere formal conventions, or as the dialectical sides of a battle as Gardner does, but as collages offers a fuller account of the tensions and interplay between the Native American and Western musical traditions contained in each piece, what is lost and gained in transcription and transfer. Collage allows us to recognize the extent to which the musics of both traditions have been altered by this interaction while simultaneously acknowledging their ultimate incongruity. Each rubs off on the other, the art music portions take on subtle vestiges of Indianist tropes, while the comparatively simpler and unadorned Native American songs are adapted to fit tonal and formal implications of art music.

Before analyzing the pieces in detail, I want to elucidate further the broader cultural constructs surrounding European-American fascination with Native Americans that most likely guided the composition of these works. Baker’s transcriptions were part of a broader cultural interest in Native American culture in both Germany and in the United States. MacDowell’s interest may have also been transatlantic in origin, having studied in Germany. The relationship between German *Indianertümeli* and American interest in Native Americans is strikingly similar.

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<sup>26</sup> Alan Levy, 178. This form is more common in *Woodland Sketches*, but none of the substructures are as contrasting as in this movement.

Both Harmut Lutz, examining Germany's uses of the Native American, and Shari Huhndorf, examining America's, find that the Native American served several shared purposes: national unification and nation-building, a release from the pressures of a regulated and competitive modern capitalist society, and most importantly, an alleviation of the racial guilt over colonialism.<sup>27</sup>

While Baker produced his work in Germany, MacDowell's Native American-themed piano compositions were located squarely within an American landscape. As such, the proximity and immediacy of a European American's relationship with the Native American is a crucial distinction that renders its use of the Native American for nationalist purposes uncomfortably ironic. Huhndorf has traced the shifting views of Native Americans from a savage threat to the "noble savage" captured in the image of the "vanishing Indian." She links this shift to a crisis in American identity, including geographic diversity from expansion, class conflicts, Civil War, and a rising tide of immigration, after which the "vanishing Indian" provided a symbol of history previously lacking.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the Indian's vanishing was the result of an American bid to emulate other European powers through colonial expansionist aims. White Americans increasingly began to empathize with the "vanishing Indian", to "play Indian" to use historian Philip J. Deloria's term, and in doing so, further fought to erase not simply the racial guilt of colonialism but their own direct complicity in the deaths of Native Americans—the same "vanishing" they now mourned.<sup>29</sup> In a compelling study of early twentieth century literature in the United States, Walter Benn Michaels advances the racial importance of the myth of the

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<sup>27</sup> Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Hartmut Lutz, "German Indianthusiasm: A Socially Constructed German National(ist) Myth" in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, and Projections*, ed. Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Huhndorf, 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

vanishing Indian by examining it in conjunction with theories of racial and national identity. Michaels, like Huhndorf, argues that the Native American provides a model of Americanness: “It is because the Indian’s sun was perceived as setting that he could become... a kind of paradigm for increasingly powerful American notions of ethnic identity.”<sup>30</sup> Michaels finds the vanishing Indian model especially powerful because their vanishing is “a mark of his racial integrity—better death than cross-breeding” at a time when white anxieties about racial purities, cross-breeding, and assimilation ran high.<sup>31</sup>

Turning to MacDowell’s music, I find that the racial and national implications of the “vanishing Indian” mythology inform how we should hear these two piano pieces. Baker and MacDowell proclaimed an interest in collecting and preserving music from Native Americans before it disappeared, suggesting they too shared the belief that the Native American was indeed vanishing. While Native Americans were continuously murdered and marginalized throughout the nineteenth century, the “vanishing Indian” mythology, and its musical manifestation here, accepts the Native Americans’ death with passivity as a natural phenomenon and grants tacit approval.<sup>32</sup> In response to Dvořák’s theories, MacDowell commented, “What Negro melodies have to do with Americanism still remains a mystery to me. Why cover a beautiful thought with the badge of slavery rather than with the stern but at least manly and free rudeness of the North American Indian?” With this division, slavery remains a blight on the national character while the brutal military campaign against the Native Americans has been erased along with the

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<sup>30</sup> Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. Michaels connects this racial integrity to another group believed to have died out, namely the Nordic race. In light of this, Gardner’s reading of MacDowell’s *Indian Suite* as a battle between the Nordic and Indian takes on a more complex racial character and even further fatalistic undertones.

<sup>32</sup> This myth was very pervasive in constructions of the nation, in both Germany where Baker was working as well as in America. For more detail about the racial implications of German nationalist use of Indians, see Lutz. Kara Anne Gardner has effectively tied MacDowell’s *Indian Suite* to the act of “playing Indian” and its role as a social release from modernism; see Gardner. My contention is that the “vanishing Indian” myth plays a central role in MacDowell’s two piano works, and as such the subtler roles of racial and national identities cannot be denied.



savageness of the Native American. Doubtless this nostalgic view of the Native American as vanished shaped his musical treatment of the subject. In both works, the Native American melody is given a central location, yet the musical framing of the quoted melody in new music frames it, like a diorama in a natural history museum, preserving a relic of the Native American past for the white, modern audience to enjoy. The piece is meant to be understood and judged on Western or, as MacDowell would call it, “universal” terms. Furthermore, that Native American relic—the melody—has been subtly altered through MacDowell’s compositional hand.<sup>33</sup> The musical revisions tame the irregularities of the Native American melody and make it easier to fit into a Western piece, just as the “vanishing Indian” myth tames the savage view and allows the Native American to fit into a national narrative rather than stand in opposition to it.

Both piano works reflect this myth but in different ways, and a close analysis suggests MacDowell took two different approaches regarding his Native American subjects. “Indian Idyl” presents a nostalgic reverie of an imagined, idyllic view of the Native American’s life, made evident from the outset where MacDowell instructs the performer to play “Lightly, naively” (Example 1.1). A breezy, almost laughing four-bar phrase is heard at the opening. Initially, the phrase is harmonized with a cadence inflected by chromatically harmonies, which lends it the feeling of a parlor song. The theme is repeated, reharmonized with secondary dominants more redolent of Romantic classical music. Finally, the idea is expanded into an eight-bar phrase with even more chromaticism, moving from F to A minor before a half-cadence at the end on the dominant of F. The first hint of collage appears when this cadence is broken off sharply by a

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<sup>33</sup> This process begins, actually, with the act of transcription performed by Baker. According to Robert Stevenson, Baker borrowed the melody that MacDowell used in *From an Indian Lodge* from *Indian Melodies. By Thomas Commuck, a Narragansett Indian. Harmonized by Thomas Hastings, Esq.* Furthermore, Stevenson adds, the tune was originally called “Old Indian Hymn” by Commuck, who claimed that the Indians knew the tune before white settlers arrived, singing it as a hymn. While MacDowell would not have known this, it remains fitting that he saw fit to use a tune that had been misappropriated multiple times, and functioned as a white American hymn, for a piece that programmatically describes the act of whites appropriating Indian culture. See Robert Stevenson, “English Sources for Indian Music Until 1882” *Ethnomusicology* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1973), 412–3.

two-bar unison phrase centered around the open fifth of E-B, akin to the unison statement that opens the other Indianist works, after which the quoted Native American melody is collaged in.

Acknowledging rhythmic and tonal forecasting, MacDowell heightens the collage effect through tonal and textural contrast (Example 1.2). The tonal shift from F major to A major creates a sense of distance, while the hints of A minor in the preceding section make this distance feel somewhat familiar and accessible. The accompaniment reduces to a drone of open fifths across two registers, rhythmically placed in a hemiola to create a contrasting duple-meter feeling like the mimicking of an even drumbeat, while the melody's dotted rhythms recall the opening phrase from the previous section. The registral space and the use of damper and soft pedals held throughout the quotation further lend a hazy distance to the tune, as if Native American melodies are being recalled from the past rather than living. Most telling of all, the end of the quotation is given the directions "gradually dying out" and "with pathos," rather overtly expressing emotion to the dying out not just of the music, but of the whole Native American culture it has come to represent.

Following the quotation, a variation of the opening theme begins in A, but is undercut by harmonic instability, climaxing at an interrupted cadence that introduces an arresting C-natural.<sup>34</sup> After a fermata, the opening idea is heard again without any harmonic surprises. While its lighthearted character seems to freely dismiss whatever had happened before it, the C-natural and the sudden turn to minor are too jarring, emphasized by the fermata, to be forgotten so quickly. They continue to resonate, hinting that with the death of the Native American, something has been irrevocably lost; a note of sadness has permanently entered and changed this idyllic

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<sup>34</sup> I find this cadence resonates with what Gardner calls the "tragic" conclusion of Legend. See Gardner, 382.

# VI. INDIAN IDYL.

Alone by the wayward flame  
She weaves broad wampum skeins  
While afar through the summer night  
Sigh the wooing flutes' soft strains.

EDWARD MAC DOWELL.  
Op. 62.

Lightly, naively. (♩ = about 69.)

*mf* *With pedal.* *pp*

*mf* *pp*

*mf* *broader* *lightly* *mf*

*broaden* *f* *ret.*

Example 1.1: "Indian Idyl" (1902), Edward MacDowell

*slightly slower*

*ppp throughout*

*Both pedals without change to*

*gradually dying out*

*mf*

*with pathos*

The image displays four systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked 'slightly slower' and 'ppp throughout'. It features a melodic line in the treble with triplets and a bass line with sustained notes. A pedal instruction 'Both pedals without change to' is written below the first system. The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system is marked 'gradually dying out' and shows the music fading. The fourth system is marked 'mf' and 'with pathos', featuring a more expressive melodic line in the treble and a bass line with a fermata. A small asterisk is placed below the final bass note of the fourth system.

Example 1.1 continued

First system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains a melodic line with dynamics *p* and *mf*, and a *ret.* marking. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with a *p* dynamic.

Second system of musical notation. The treble clef staff features dynamics *pp*, *ppp*, and *p*. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with a *p* dynamic.

Third system of musical notation. The treble clef staff includes dynamics *ppp*, *mf*, and *p*. The bass clef staff includes dynamics *mf* and *pp*.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble clef staff features dynamics *ppp*, *ret.*, and *ppp*. The bass clef staff includes a *ret.* marking.

Example 1.1 continued

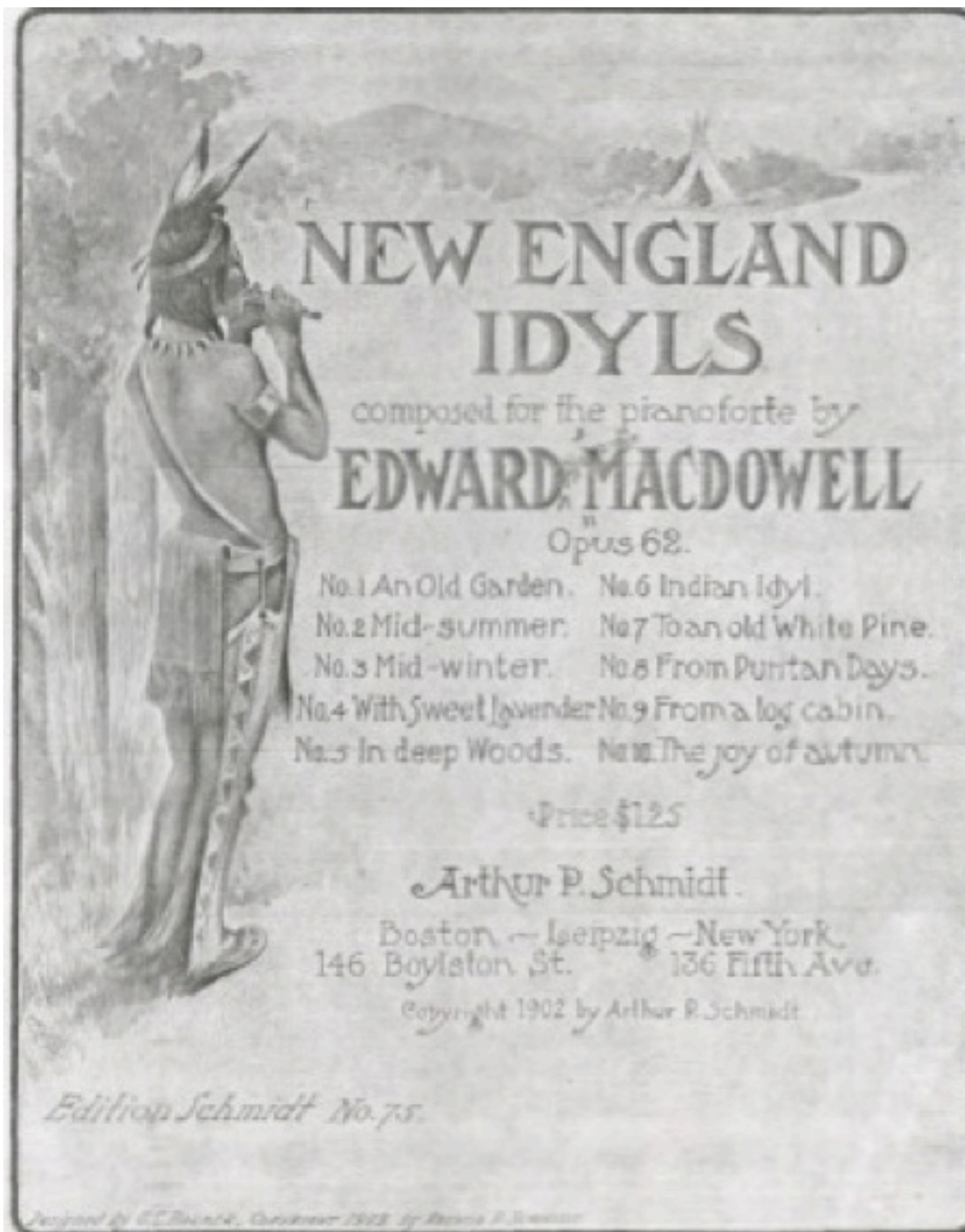


Figure 1.1: Cover for *New England Idyls*

*Andante con moto.*

XII. 

Shi ce shi ce shan te ma shi cā shi  
 ce la ka shi ce na pi ma yu zā - - - ä!  
 ä - - - ä shi ce wan ci ya ke shni shi  
 ce shan te ma shi cā shi ce la ka shi ce na  
 pe ma yu zā - - - ä!

**Example 1.2: “Dakota Night Song,” Native American melody quoted in “Indian Idyl,”  
 transcribed by Theodore Baker**

world.<sup>35</sup>

MacDowell’s portrayal of the Native American as naïve and pastoral is aided by literary and visual cues beyond the music. MacDowell chose to accompany his musical portrayal with poetry—Western verse on a Native American subject, rather than native writings—that reinforce the sense of nostalgic, pastoral distance. Indeed, these lines also gender the subject of the work as feminine, a more naïve and simple alternative to the “male rudeness” found elsewhere. The cover art to the collection of *New England Idyls* further underscores the revisionist treatment of

<sup>35</sup> This moment is reminiscent of Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s discussion of the Chopin *Prelude in A Major* in her book *Deconstructive Variations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) in that the moment serves as a turning point, and a reading could focus instead on the return of familiar music and the act of closure. Such a reading would suggest a more trouble-free, naïve treatment of the Indian’s vanishing rather than a sense of loss.

Native Americans, featured prominently in the scene (Figure 1.1). The male Native American figure is rendered nonthreatening and passive, turned away from the reader, playing his music (perhaps the same “wooing flutes’ soft strains” from the poetic epigram) and gazing presumably off into the distance. The rest of the image is one of nature, a pre-civilization America, which subtly incorporates the Native American as part of the landscape. The shape of the teepee in the distance echoes the distant hills, while the Native American in the foreground is coupled with the tall trees, while the fringe on his clothing blurs indistinctly into the tall grass. The depicted Native American, as it were, is literally disappearing into the landscape. The conflation of Native Americans with the American landscape was a central part of the “vanishing Indian” mythology, and European Americans who sought to “play Indian” frequently did so through back-to-nature activities, such as the Boy Scouts, as if the Native American spirit was to be found in the landscape. Writing about the mythology of the West in American art music, Beth Levy notes that composers would continue a longstanding tradition of treating Native Americans and nature

as a single entity—an unspoiled geography to be admired or a fearsome obstacle to be conquered. Their fascination with Indian tunes was genuine, but their music also encoded a celebration of westward expansion and the supposed disappearance of Native American life in the face of white civilization. No less than Buffalo Bill, they could celebrate Indian heroes without disrupting the tragic trajectory of the “dying race.”<sup>36</sup>

MacDowell’s inability to liken the fate of Native Americans to slavery confirms he too celebrated them in this manner. By including the “Indian Idyl” within the collection *New England Idyls* (and likewise “From an Indian Lodge” among his *Woodland Sketches*), MacDowell perpetuates this elision of the vanishing Indian with the landscape. But unlike the composers Levy addresses, MacDowell further alters the image of Native America by specifically making it a New England landscape. MacDowell moves the image of the Native

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<sup>36</sup> Beth Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 15.



American from the West to New England, and in doing so MacDowell removes the image of the frontier, with the Native American as savage other, and places it in just the opposite, the seat of America's longest-standing settlements and history.<sup>37</sup>

In some ways, "From an Indian Lodge" presents a very different portrait of the Native American than "Indian Idyl," but it nevertheless participates in the same mythologies and actions (Example 1.3). Whereas "Indian Idyl" presents the listener with a removed, idyllic view of Native American life, "From an Indian Lodge" addresses the death of the Native American rather than its life. MacDowell directs the performer to play "sternly, with great emphasis" at the outset and "mournfully" during the quotation. These directions suggest a somber mood and mourning presumably the disappearance of the Native American race, an attitude confirmed by his wife, who wrote that MacDowell considered the work a dirge.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the dynamic trajectory of the work—opening *fortissimo* and dropping to *piano* for the quotation—suggests that the Native American melody is perhaps an object of quiet reverence, or heard at some distance, before the conspicuously loud crash of the *fortissimo* final chords insists upon the finality of the Native Americans' death.

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<sup>37</sup> Alan Trachtenberg has argued that "Eastern preemption of the West became a powerful nationalizing force." In these collections, the Indians are grouped with the Puritans and the tales of Uncle Remus as part of a broader foundation history. See Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), xii.

<sup>38</sup> Pisani, 223.

V.

# From an Indian Lodge.

EDWARD MAC DOWELL.

Op. 51.


Sternly, with great emphasis. (♩ = 66)

The first system of the musical score is written for piano. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Sternly, with great emphasis. (♩ = 66)'. The dynamics are marked 'ff broadly'. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines with accents and slurs.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. It features dynamic markings of 'ff', 'mf', 'ppp', and 'p'. There are 'hold.' markings above the notes in the final two measures. The music is characterized by a mix of chords and melodic fragments.

Mournfully. (♩ = 84)

The third system of the musical score is marked 'Mournfully. (♩ = 84)'. It features dynamic markings of 'pp' and 'p'. A note with an asterisk (\*) is marked in the first measure. The text 'The accompaniment detached throughout' is written below the bass staff. The music is primarily chordal with some melodic lines.

\*) The low notes of the octaves carry the melody  etc.

P.L.J. 403 r

Assigned 1899 to Arthur P. Schmidt.

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Example 1.3: "From an Indian Lodge" (1896), Edward MacDowell

*gradually retard.*

**Broadly.** *hold.*

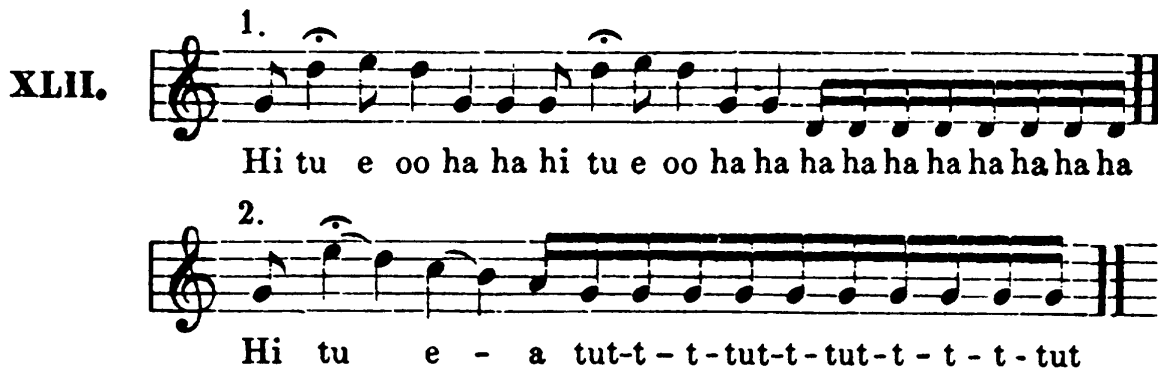
\*) The upper notes of the octaves carry the melody etc.

P.L.J. 403 e

Example 1.3 continued

**XXXVII.** 

**Example 1.4a:** “Song of the Walla-Walla Indians,” Native American melody quoted in “From an Indian Lodge,” transcribed by Theodore Baker

**XLII.** 

1.  
Hi tu e oo ha ha hi tu e oo ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

2.  
Hi tu e - a tut-t - t-tut-t - tut-t - t - t - tut

**Example 1.4b:** “Song of the Brotherton Indians,” Native American melody quoted in “From an Indian Lodge,” transcribed by Theodore Baker

In some ways, the formal distinctions between the A and B sections are more explicit here: the slow chordal progressions are undeniably cadential and mark the borders of the collage quite clearly. But in subtler ways, the musical contributions of the Native American quotation and MacDowell’s own composition are more similar than in “Indian Idyll,” their collaged juxtaposition softened by purposeful similarities. The Native American-derived melody is rendered in octaves against a droning fifth in the bass that sounds on the second beat of every

measure (Example 1.4a). The harmonization is simple, limited to chords that color the tune on the second beat that oscillate between tonic and dominant for the first phrase, a series of diminished seventh chords for much of the second, and return to the tonic-dominant oscillation for the final phrase. This internal rounded binary form is aided by MacDowell's stretching of the final beat in each phrase from a half-note to a dotted half-note tied to a half-note to make each phrase eight bars long, which both observes classical phrase structure and makes each phrase's end sound more cadential than the original Native American melody did. Furthermore, MacDowell ignores the repeat and changes the rhythm of the antepenultimate measure of the song to preserve the rhythmic ostinato in the melody at the close of the final phrase. The result: a classicized Native American melody, possibly chosen precisely because of its regularity and tonal implications.

Just as the Native American melody absorbs elements of the Western music, including the form and cadential feeling, MacDowell's musical frame suggests tropes common to Indianist music. The piece begins with a declamatory melody, which was also taken from a Baker transcription, and rendered in octaves like the second Native American quotation that follows (Example 1.4b). It outlines an open fifth, similar in its call to attention as the "savage" opening to his *Indian Suite*, which was also taken from a Baker transcription. The original melody is transcribed in G major, but MacDowell harmonizes the melody in C minor, changing the original B (a major third) to an Eb (a minor third). The shift to minor registers the work as more serious and theatrical, while his decision to retain the major sixth in the opening provides a hint of exotic modality in the melody, another signifier of a folk melody, rather than the lowered sixth the minor key would suggest.

The newly composed chordal progressions that make up the rest of the outer parts both echo the chordal accompaniment of the central section and seem to function apart from the quotation. They are theatrical gestures, the center of attention rather than accompaniment, with their loud statements and left-hand tremolos, as if to give the melody something of an introductory overture after which the Native American tune is presented in a tableau, and then closed by a similar cadential chordal progression, lowering the curtain on the scene. This theatricality is fully in line with the work's programmatic title. Indian lodges were fraternal organizations that had been around since the early nineteenth century but grew in popularity at the end of that century among middle class males, with up to one-fifth of all men belonging to a fraternal organization.<sup>39</sup> The organizations provided a sense of unity for white males beset by changes in a modern America; playing Indian provided a model of manliness and, somewhat ironically, racial purity by hearkening to an idealized America of the past, as in the literature discussed by Michaels. MacDowell's music resonates with this practice. Whereas the florid, chromatic, and naïve "Indian Idyl" portrayed a female Native American, "From an Indian Lodge" with its stern, stoic nature of this "mournful" dirge presents a stereotypically masculine sentimentality. Its simple, unadorned presentation is akin to the back-to-nature basics espoused by these organizations. And the theatricality of the musical frame suggests the same sort of performative ritualized aspects of these groups undertook in playing Indian.

Viewed another way, the simplicity and centrality of the quotations come across as evidence of MacDowell's efforts to preserve Native American culture. The descriptions of "mournful" and "gradually dying out...with pathos" similarly might close off an analysis of these as evocations of the Native American's past. But the subtle conflation of past and present,

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<sup>39</sup> See Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1; and Huhndorf, 65–78.

Native American and Western, in these works positions them as more than musical settings and reminds us that they are precisely a form of “playing Indian”—literally so, as MacDowell was a gifted pianist. And just as MacDowell indulges in the prevalent practice of playing (and composing) Indian, the audience is permitted the same license, to hear in these works a reimagining of the vanished Native American’s ways. These two piano miniatures offer bookending accounts of how nineteenth century white Americans in search of a national culture, drew upon the Native American for images of gender, history, geography, and race necessary to defining America. Analyzing them as such must acknowledge the discomfort and inequality of the encounter between the European and Native Americans, and how that discomfort becomes rewritten into a collage-like partnership to create a national musical identity, in effect rewriting both America’s past and its future.

Following MacDowell’s premature death in 1908, his place within American musical history faded in subsequent decades, due in part to the way the next generation of American modernists feminized and infantilized his image.<sup>40</sup> No doubt part of MacDowell’s lack of appeal to that generation was his perceived conservatism and appeal to the European standards of high culture. In other words, MacDowell did not offer a sufficiently modern blueprint for the United States to build on, and his treatment of Native American music confirms this. The selection of Native American culture was not itself to blame; indeed, modernist writers like William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane repeatedly drew connections to the Native American past, while Elizabeth Hutchinson has demonstrated that modernist artists collected, drew inspiration from, and taught about Native American art, “legitimizing an interest in formal abstraction and

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<sup>40</sup> E. Douglas Bomberger, “The Curious Reception History of Edward MacDowell,” presented at the annual meeting of the Society for American Music in Little Rock, AR, March 8, 2013.

contributing to emerging notions of artistic creativity.”<sup>41</sup> But by insisting upon treating the Native Americans as a securely vanished past, MacDowell could not provide a shared and useful history for future Americans. Understood in this way, the Native American music achieves a final resonance with the European music it is collaged with; both musics looked resolutely backward to the past.

Both “Indian Idyl” and “From an Indian Lodge” engage with contemporaneous fantasies about the “vanishing Indian” and share similar musical strategies and forms. Nevertheless, the two works project markedly different images of their Native American subjects, and in turn project different images of America. While there are advantages to considering Indianist compositions collectively, the differences between the two serve as a reminder that attending to collage means not simply attending to what is cut and pasted, but how. Materials pasted in must be carefully studied to reveal how the acts of cutting and pasting circumscribe or alter its content, how the background or other materials accommodate, mark off, or intersect with the pasted material, and how all elements change in their new environment as they are understood in relation to each other. This also accounts for why the various readings of the *Indian Suite* could not fully account for the works considered here; no act of quotation or collage is quite like any other, even when all the elements involved are remarkably similar.

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<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009) 3.



## Collage and the Necessity of Nationalism

In 1915, two decades after Dvořák left the United States, the French modernist Edgard Varèse made a similar voyage to the United States, which resulted as well in a new work: *Amériques*. *Amériques* paints a picture of the United States vastly different from Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony. Rather than seek out history through folk songs, Varèse immersed himself in the bustling, industrial here-and-now of New York City. He claimed *Amériques* was more evocative than programmatic, meant to symbolize “discoveries—new worlds” in general rather than a specific place.<sup>42</sup> Certain passages reveal Varèse’s Parisian roots, recalling the opening of Claude Debussy’s *Prelude de l’après-midi d’un faun*, Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps*—two pivotal modernist work—and even Camille Saint-Saëns’s faux-Arabian *Bacchanale*, which reinforces the exoticism composers frequently employed in turning to foreign lands. Nevertheless, the work’s use of a different form of collage, namely the simultaneous layers of multiple sound worlds and brash juxtaposition of ideas, lends itself rather easily to metaphorical comparisons with New York City. Varèse’s tone poem requires significant orchestral forces, including instruments playing off-stage orchestra, implying an unbounded space, and mechanical percussive instruments that Varèse had encountered in New York City, such as a steam whistle and a New York Fire Department siren. The thick textures of percussive instruments and brass fanfares befit the crowded bustle and noise of New York City, and the sheer volume of the many

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Laki, “The Orchestral Repertory” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed. Colin Lawson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 63.

climaxes rivals the city's skyscrapers in sheer immediate impact in terms of scale.<sup>43</sup> The effect is a view of the city as a collage of people and machines competing for the same space.

While Varèse worked in New York, the American composer George Antheil made a name for himself in Paris, composing modernist works that embraced mechanical energy as well. Antheil's early works in the 1910s and 1920s adopted collage as an abstract, modernist practice—layering simultaneous musical ideas and rupturing his pieces through fragmentation and sharp contrasts. Antheil's early career poses the question: can modernist collage be American? His failure to secure a public in America suggests not, but the success of other American modernists—composers as well as painters, poets, and authors—complicates this answer, requiring a closer look at how Antheil and others sought to portray this form of collage as American.

Although not officially hired to promote nationalism through teaching, Varèse nevertheless played a crucial role in shaping the American musical landscape. Varèse was an ardent organizer for new music in the United States, founding the International Composer Guild in 1921, which gave young American composers a forum to have their works performed alongside American premieres of modern European music. Other organizations soon followed: the Pro Musica Society, originally the Franco-American Musical Society, founded to promote new French and American composers internationally; and the successful League of Composers, who split from the ICG in 1923. All three stressed an international rather than national approach to modernism. Other organizations placed an emphasis on American composers specifically,

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<sup>43</sup>Denise von Glahn has written more extensively about the spatial implications of the work in *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 127–141. Critics found similar associations between Varese's soundscape and America; such comparisons were at work a year earlier at the premiere of *Integrales*, of which Paul Rosenfeld said in May 1925: "He has come into relationship with the elements of American life, and found corresponding rhythms within himself set free." Quoted in J. H. Klarén, *Edgar Varese: Pioneer of New Music in America* (New York: CC Birchard & Co., 1928), 14.

including the Pan American Association of Composers, which Varèse founded in 1928 after disbanding the ICG, and the Copland-Sessions concerts begun the same year. In the same vein, the American Music Guild had been active since 1922, but its promotion of nationalism meant a more limited embrace of modernism. Their first concert featured both the ultramodernist Leo Ornstein as well as the conservative Edward MacDowell.

As these differences in programming indicate, modernism and nationalism were sometimes competing goals. On the one hand, modernism provided a new path for many composers seeking an American musical nationalism. It solved, or at least disregarded, the problem created by America's lack of a long-standing history and a common folk source, and projected a confident national image of a modern America, bustling with industrial energy and ready to compete as a global power equal to, rather than indebted to, Europe.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, many European artists and composers in the 1910s and 1920s viewed New York as the new center of the modern art world and traveled or immigrated there. European critics hailed the work of American modernists and found in them a distinct American identity. On the other hand, most Americans—performers, critics, and audiences—remained rather conservative, particularly in their musical tastes. Modernism met with popular disapproval, with audiences and critics reserving their praise and approval for established and heralded European composers like Stravinsky and Varèse rather than American upstarts—further evidence of an ingrained Eurocentric and conservative attitude. American artists too continued to turn to Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century, training, touring, and in some cases emigrating, there. Rising nationalist and nativist sentiment left modernism open to xenophobic attacks, as

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<sup>44</sup> This equating of America, machines, and modernist piano writing was also widespread in the reception of Henry Cowell, as noted by Christine Fena in her paper "The 'Piano Technician' and his 'Unfortunate Piano': Henry Cowell in the Machine Age," presented at the annual meeting of the Society For American Music in Denver, CO, March 20, 2009.

Americans associated it, and the cosmopolitan urban centers it evoked, with growing numbers of immigrants, particularly Jewish ones, evidenced by charges raised against the 1913 Armory Show by critic Royal Cortissoz, who degraded it as “Ellis Island Art,” and anti-Semitic attacks made on photographer Alfred Stieglitz.<sup>45</sup>

American nationalists who pursued modernism thus paradoxically faced a skeptical, even hostile public who considered modernism as un-American, an unlevel playing field that favored Europeans, and still a need to distinguish themselves somehow as Americans. The early years of composer George Antheil serves as a prime example of the difficult decisions and contradictory pressures facing an American composer who aimed to synthesize modernist techniques with nationalist goals. Antheil expressed an interest in modernism as early as January of 1922 in a letter to his patroness, Mary Curtis Bok. He described himself as “a modern young man, tender and sensitive to the present every day life with its new machineries, its great skyscrapers, its hurry, its condensing of everything to its essence.”<sup>46</sup> This affirmation of machine music is reiterated several times in his correspondence with Bok, and Antheil called it his only nationalist quality in a letter from November 15, 1924: “My new works (quartet, ballet) are however, totally unphotographic, totally unnational...except perhaps by induction...for the music is mechanical and dynamic...my new music...and may therefore be called American...indicative of our skyscrapers.”<sup>47</sup> Antheil’s nationalism seems almost incidental here, aligned exclusively with his view of America as a land of machines and newness.

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<sup>45</sup> Charges of “Ellis Island Art” are found in Erika Doss, *Twentieth Century American Art*, 56. Attacks on Steiglitz are recounted in Dickran Tashjian, *William Carlos Williams and the American Scene 1920–1940* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 102.

<sup>46</sup> Box 1, Folder 2, Letter dated January 14, 1922. All letters unless otherwise noted are from the George Antheil Collection, Library of Congress.

<sup>47</sup> Box 1, Folder 5, Letter dated November 15, 1924.

In expressing his modern vision, Antheil found a kinship with Picasso, declaring “We of the future find our sense of organization from Picasso rather than Beethoven or Stravinsky for that matter.”<sup>48</sup> Antheil was a frequent participant among Stravinsky’s Parisian modernist circle, conversing with and planning to collaborate with luminaries such as James Joyce, Pablo Picasso, and Fernand Léger at various points. He proudly counted them, as well as Man Ray, Jean Cocteau, Francis Picabia, Ezra Pound, among the audience at one of his concerts.<sup>49</sup>

Antheil’s affinity with both machines and Picasso can be seen in some of his earliest piano works, which he performed in Europe. His *Airplane Sonata* (1921) is cast in two movements, the first marked “To be played as fast as possible,” putting him in line with the futurist zeal for the machine age (Example 1.5). The music evokes machines largely through its ostinatos, repeating in exact rhythm. Following a dreamy, ametrical glissando, a sudden jolt of energy brings the work to mechanical life. The pianist plays two three-note arpeggios in strict alternation in the left hand, with only one rhythmical hiccup in the second measure (perhaps the effect of a machine starting up). The right hand repeats a single note, an E, against a jauntily syncopated, fragmentary melody. These are the central elements of the work, serving as motives for variation in the movement.

A modernist collage sensibility can be seen at work in the structure of the piece in several ways. First, the layering of ostinatos and different rhythms suggests a vertical form of collage. Second, the abrupt shifts of meter and motive are suggestive of some form of horizontal collage akin to montage, or as if phrases are cut off by the layered arrangement of other phrases. The effect is thus simultaneously one of mechanical repetition and that of a modernist interruption and reorganization. Third, the repetitions and variations of motives are similar to the dissection,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Box 1, Folder 4, Letter dated October 1923.

cutting, and splicing that occurs on a Picasso canvas, suggesting these materials can be cut up, pasted, reorganized, and repeated. Antheil's music echoes comments made by American artist

**Second Sonata**  
"THE AIRPLANE"  
PIANO SOLO  
I  
1st Movement (To be played as fast as possible)  
(No triplets )

By GEORGE ANTHEIL

**Lent**



Example 1.5: Opening of *Airplane Sonata* (1921), George Antheil

Louis Lozowick, who spoke of the need for American artists to embrace rather than fear their newness and capture their modernity. “The history of America is a history of gigantic engineering feats and colossal mechanical construction,” he wrote, suggesting artists capture the “rigid geometry of the city,” its “precision,” “rhythm,” and “pattern of contrast and harmony.”<sup>50</sup> Those terms—precision, rhythm, and contrast—summarize perfectly Antheil’s collage approach to the machine in his music.

These early piano works formed the first seeds of Antheil’s best-known work, his *Ballet Mécanique* (1925). Antheil borrowed both specific musical elements—its main theme is taken from the piano sonata *Death of the Machines* (1923)—as well as the same general principles of collage-like organization, operating mainly through large- and small-scale repetitions, dense layering of simultaneous ideas, and juxtapositions of various contrasting material. He conceived *Ballet Mécanique* in visual collage terms, describing it as a “canvas” to explore ways of reorganizing “time-space.”<sup>51</sup> The work also takes his interest in machines from the figurative to the literal; the score includes an expanded percussion section to include sirens, three propellers, and player pianos. In an essay on *Ballet Mécanique*, Carol Oja explores the multiple transatlantic artistic movements that Antheil borrowed from, including primitivism, futurism, cubism, and especially dadaism. Oja concludes, “Pasting together the transatlantic migrations, Dada connections, hyperspace imaginings, and compositional advances of Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* yields a collagelike historical profile as richly chaotic as Dada itself.”<sup>52</sup> My goals are similar, but I focus more squarely on Antheil’s American connections, and contextualize Antheil not within

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<sup>50</sup> Louis Lozowick, “The Americanization of Art” in *Modern Art in the USA: Issues and Controversies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Patricia Hills (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 48–50.

<sup>51</sup> Box 129, Folder 56, Letter dated July 21, 1936.

<sup>52</sup> Carol Oja, “George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* and Transatlantic Modernism” in *A Modern Mosaic: Art and Modernism in the United States*, ed. Townsend Ludington (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 193.

the circles in which he moved, but within contemporaneous artists in the United States who shared interests in machines and modernism, who employed collage prominently, and who found greater success at home. Doing so, I consider in what ways modernist collage as a form could or could not participate in the process of American nationalism.

Antheil's success as a distinctly American composer had already been confirmed in Europe. An undated review of his *Symphony for Five Instruments* (1923) that Antheil included in a letter he sent in November 1925 heralded, "America's sky-scrapers found their musical expression in Paris yesterday... Paris critics see in him the composer who, for the first time, has broken with European traditions and created an American national music."<sup>53</sup> His place was secured with the *Ballet Mécanique*, which debuted in Paris on June 19, 1926 and was an immediate *succès de scandale*. Fernand Léger began planning a Dadaist collage film that would accompany the work. Antheil hoped to reprise his success with a New York debut the following April, but it failed miserably. Antheil's works had largely not been heard in America, and in his debut with *Ballet Mécanique*, American critics condemned him as merely an imitator of Stravinsky, the latest outrage of European modernism, no better than the "Ellis Island Art" at the Armory.<sup>54</sup> The reasons for this appear to be many, including the performers' inability to operate many of the new instruments properly, such as the siren and propellers, and the carnivalesque nature of the proceedings, which was augmented by a cartoonish and sexually-charged backdrop of an African-American couple dancing while holding an American flag.

Antheil's form of modernist collage was in vogue in Paris, where his collaborations and friendships with Stravinsky, Picasso, and Léger brought Antheil into the artistic vanguard. And yet European critics saw in him a fresh American voice that was distinct from Europeans, giving

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<sup>53</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, 1925.

<sup>54</sup> See Rita H. Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925–1936: The Society, the Music Editions, and the Recordings*, 39.



voice to the skyscrapers and machines of the modern American city. Unlike the forms of collage discussed in the previous section, modernist collage was abstract enough to be open-ended about its national possibilities, allowing it to be heard as indicative of American industrial energy in Paris and Parisian modernist aesthetics in America. Yet other composers, including Henry Cowell, John Alden Carpenter, and the European émigré Edgard Varèse, had all succeeded in creating machine-oriented works that some Americans accepted as American. One crucial factor may have been Antheil's decision to live and work abroad; Antheil's friend, the modernist collage poet and expatriate Ezra Pound, shared a similar fate. Antheil had been encouraged to tour Europe as a pianist-composer, just as MacDowell had, to ensure his standing at home. At some point, however, Antheil's continued livelihood in Paris proved more of a hurdle to his nationalist qualities. Meanwhile, Antheil continued to insist in his letters to Bok that he was the country's greatest composer because of his success in Europe. The criticisms of New York critics suggest a shift in American thinking, a growing desire to base national identity through distance from Europe rather than a form of artistic apprenticeship.

A more forceful reason for Antheil's failure to be seen as American seems to be Antheil's own complicated and contradictory stance toward America itself, evident even before his premiere of *Ballet Mécanique*. His correspondence with Bok serves as a guide to these somewhat unsteady emotions. In 1922, having traveled to Europe to make a name for himself as a pianist and composer, Antheil wrote somewhat cryptically that he felt "the spirit of America—not spredeaglism—but of a deeper quality."<sup>55</sup> He did not elaborate, but noted that Americans had a poor reputation abroad as backwater, which had repeatedly impeded his work. By August of that year, however, he distanced himself from nationalism, preferring individualism, although his suspicion of Europeans (i.e., Varèse) helping Americans to find nationalism suggests the topic

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<sup>55</sup> Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated June 1922.

remained important to him. By the end of the year, Antheil had re-embraced modernism and Americanism in his first symphony. Responding to Dvořák's nearly 30-year old claim, he asserted, "America is a larger and newer country and needs new musical tools that do not fit any of the European models. ... We of America are of the age of machinery.... The artist who conquers America's soul... will not be of the Indian, or of the negre, but of the New Yorker, Philadelphian, and Trentonian."<sup>56</sup>

In 1923, Antheil became more self-confident, citing again his success in Europe as evidence of his status as America's leading composer and grandly declaring "I am ever so much more important to America" and that he was "RECOGNIZED BY THE GREATEST CRITICS AND GENIUSES OF THE TIMES," by which he meant European critics and modernists.<sup>57</sup> Bok rather presciently cautioned him about the fickleness of public praise, wary perhaps of the reputation of European modernists in America. Having begun the ballet by 1924, Antheil reaffirmed his belief that "the deeper America that DOES exist will appreciate me" in a letter to his agent Martin Hanson, and cites his ballet specifically as evidence.<sup>58</sup> In a letter from November 15, 1924, he criticized Cowell and Varèse and claimed a more moderated stance toward nationalism.<sup>59</sup> A few weeks later, Antheil began to moderate his modernist stance as well, insisting that America was deficient in the basics, comparing himself to Beethoven to say that he "never" wrote in a modern formula, only to return by the end of the year to his previous stances, affirming his "unquestioned" patriotism and his love of machine advertisements, which adorned his room.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated August 1922. The cities of New England proved a double asset for Antheil in this work, who positions them as the cite of American modernity and industry while connecting them back to the region's position in America's history and founding.

<sup>57</sup> Box 1, Folder 5, Letter dated January 1, 1924.

<sup>58</sup> Box 1, Folder 5, Letter dated May 31, 1924.

<sup>59</sup> Box 1, Folder 5, Letter dated November 15, 1924.

<sup>60</sup> Box 1, Folder 5, Letter dated December 1924; Letter dated December 30, 1924.

In July 1925, Antheil fired off three letters in a row to Bok. The first lamented, “I am an American problem....or I must become a French one....like Strawinsky [*sic*].... with his French passport...his French manners...and his new (and bad) French music...but the artist does not know or acknowledge morality, nationality, or any ‘ality.’ He is himself.”<sup>61</sup> In the second, he began to reaffirm his nationality, quoting briefly Karol Syzmanowski as calling him the only American composer to be taken seriously.<sup>62</sup> By the third letter, nationalist feeling had returned full force in perhaps its fullest statement. He began directly: “I am,...just George Antheil. I was born in Trenton, N.J. America....can Bloch, Ornstein, Stokowski say that? Or Varese? Or anyone else who is worth half a moment’s reflexion [*sic*]...anyone who is not a complete imitator of things so old,” and continued by recounting tales of his childhood—the YMCA, baseball, high school, his aviation exam, his musical training in Philadelphia. Here, Antheil’s bid for nationalism is one of both birthright and nostalgia. He goes on to reconcile this with his modernist style:

if I am revolutionary...IT IS BECAUSE I MUST BE SO. No one could have been more normally American, and from the best type of American [...] no one is more fitted to express America than I. And some day you will all see that it was America that I am now expressing [...] I have never had to wave the American flag, AS HAS EVERY OTHER AMERICAN COMPOSER. In fact my very Americanism has been against me here.”

Apparent again is the attempt to address the distance between Antheil’s modernism and the conservatism of American taste.<sup>63</sup>

These views are complicated by a set of contemporaneous letters sent to his childhood friend Stanley Hart. To Hart he offered little positive about America, issuing a litany of complaints. In one letter he despaired, “Is there anything interesting in America?”<sup>64</sup> In a second,

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<sup>61</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, Letter dated July 7, 1925. Ellipses appear in the original

<sup>62</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, Letter dated July 8, 1925. Ellipses appear in the original

<sup>63</sup> Box 3, Folder 11, Letter dated July 9, 1925.

<sup>64</sup> Box 3, Folder 11, Letter dated [1925?]

he feigned disinterest at anything said about him in America.<sup>65</sup> In yet a third, he proclaimed America to be the “GREATEST MASTURBATING NATION IN THE WORLD” but reaffirmed his love of machines independent of this.<sup>66</sup> All of this occurred before the disastrous New York premiere of *Ballet Mécanique*, after which he understandably bore an evident, albeit short-lived, grudge towards America. Antheil’s correspondence with Hart suggests that his own claims of nationalism may be overstated in his correspondence with Bok. He did waver at times, but it seems that the correspondence with Bok being largely pro-nationalist, while the Hart correspondence is just the opposite is hardly coincidental. It may be that Antheil felt pressure to downplay his nationalist feelings with Hart, but more likely is that he felt pressure to build them up with Bok. Just as he continually stressed his poverty to Bok, his source of income, while simultaneously claiming to live more than comfortably in his letters with Hart, Antheil’s letters to Bok were never fully confessional. She was his benefactor, and playing up the nationalism of his works appears to have helped convince her to continue funding him. Antheil would later quickly distance himself from *Ballet Mécanique* after its failure in the United States, insisting it was European, a formal exercise. Such a response was likely designed to quell any fears Bok, who noted on several occasions that she was not a fan of modernism, might have had about Antheil’s viability in the American music scene. For a committed modernist, nationalism was nothing short of a necessity in the United States.

Regardless of whether or not Antheil desired to be nationalist in his music, Antheil’s failure to make his music be American for an American public is enlightening. It should be noted that Antheil’s public persona—an expatriate living in Europe, devoted to Stravinsky, and increasingly antagonistic toward his American contemporaries—doubtless made perceiving him

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<sup>65</sup> Box 3, Folder 11, Letter date August 4, 1925.

<sup>66</sup> Box 3, Folder 11, Letter dated March 4, 1925.

as American difficult, but this cannot completely account for his failure. Antheil's strongest connection to nationalism for Americans was not his interest in machines, but his appropriation of the language of jazz, whose emphasis on simultaneous improvisation and rhythmic disjunctures provided a plausible parallel for Antheil's musical collage. European and American modernists exuded enthusiasm for jazz's modern and specifically American possibilities as well as for its ability to reach audiences. This last point—its popular accessibility—is particularly crucial. Given that nationalism as an ideology necessitates a foundation on something commonly shared, a vernacular culture such as jazz could ostensibly serve. Indeed, the discourse around jazz paradoxically invoked two broad ideas: first, that it was modern and therefore spoke to the current nation, and second that it had folk roots and could therefore provide a sense of common history.

Antheil himself laid this claim, although as with his stance on nationalism, he issued contradictory statements about his interest in jazz. His earliest engagement with jazz came around 1922, with the *Sonata Sauvage*, whose first movement is titled “a la nègre” and intersperses syncopated ragtime-like melodies and stride-like piano vamps with tone clusters and ametrical melodies above swirling arpeggios, and the *Jazz Sonata*, which similarly mixes melodic fragments and syncopated vamps with more mechanical ostinatos. More or less contemporaneously, Antheil first mentioned jazz to Bok in a letter dated November 9, 1922. Antheil began by calling it a folksong, but quickly apprised its modern qualities in a way that aligned it specifically with American musical nationalism:

it is now the latest fashion also among the young composers in Germany to actually write Jazz as we know it, in such a matter-of-fact stupid way that I was amazed. ... They do not seem to know that it belongs solely to our neurasthenic people and is the cubistic folksong of a people that can live only in cities with the most marvelous cubistic lines and developments of any other city in the world, and is only ONLY the crude material [*sic*], the banal musical fragments, for reorganization. ... I mean that America is a larger

and newer country and needs new musical tools that do not fit any of the European models.<sup>67</sup>

Yet this enthusiasm for jazz seems to have run out by 1925, possibly due to the poor review of his *Jazz Sonata* given by Aaron Copland. In his response to the review, Antheil touted his European (rather than American) credentials and claimed to have abandoned that style. Letters to Bok and Hart that year confirm Antheil's distaste for jazz and America, one of the rare points on which the two sets of correspondence agree.<sup>68</sup>

Antheil's earliest comments about jazz align it with cubism and collage, a common attitude across the arts. For modernist painters in the 1920s, including Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth, and Arthur Dove, jazz inspired a synesthetic response, allowing them to lay claim to an American source for their abstract paintings. Dove's jazz paintings rank among his most abstract; his *Rhapsody in Blue, Part I* collages an actual metallic spring onto an abstract painted background. The title alone diminishes the abstraction—Dove's aim by invoking the famous composition—as the spring could serve as representative of the machine age, or perhaps echo in its three-dimensionality the towering iron skyscrapers of the day, or even visually translate in its smooth, sinuous curve of the iconic clarinet glissando that opens Gershwin's work.<sup>69</sup>

Antheil seemed to have a similar approach in his conflating the mechanical with the jazzy, but never achieved the same success as Dove and others. His Carnegie Hall debut concert put forth a decidedly nationalist image with his *Jazz Symphony*, a work originally commissioned for Paul Whiteman but performed by the W.C. Handy orchestra, and his *Ballet Mécanique*, a work that drew directly from earlier jazz-inspired piano compositions. Antheil's nationalist intentions toward the *Ballet Mécanique* are difficult to read. It was composed during a period

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<sup>67</sup> Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated November 9, 1922.

<sup>68</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, Letter to Bok dated November 1925; Box 3, Folder 11, Letter to Hart dated [1925?]

<sup>69</sup> Donna M. Cassidy, "Arthur Dove's Music Paintings of the Jazz Age," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1988), 10–11 and 20.

when Antheil disavowed jazz and nationalism. As mentioned, the ballet was called “unnational,” and in many of his statements about the work he concerns himself more with abstract and formal properties. Comments long after the work tended to avoid nationalistic implications; he made only aesthetic comments in his memoirs, while a late letter insisted that the work was Arabian in its origins.<sup>70</sup> He connected the *Ballet Mécanique* with cubist collage, which he had also linked to jazz. Nevertheless, during the two-year gestation of *Ballet Mécanique*, Antheil repeatedly emphasized a conscious nationalism at the heart of this work. In a letter to Mary Curtis Bok, he claimed, “This is by far my most radical work. I believe, however, that it is by far the sincerest expression of America that has ever come out of America.”<sup>71</sup> By writing “however,” Antheil recognized a division between radical modernism and nationalist music, that modernist music is not necessarily or even easily seen as American, yet assured Bok that the two are not mutually exclusive. He also emphasized its Americanness through its connection to jazz. The work culls its material from several of Antheil’s earlier mechanical piano works, works he acknowledged having a jazz influence, and Antheil claimed that the ballet was “one of the first authentic attempts to synthesize one of our most difficult national mediums,” meaning jazz.<sup>72</sup>

By accentuating modernist collage in his interpretation of jazz, Antheil attempted to align himself with the rougher energy and strong rhythmic syncopation of hot jazz, suggested as well by Antheil’s insistence on the “authenticity” of his approach despite not knowing jazz himself. In doing so, Antheil was reacting against the sweet, symphonic jazz of Whiteman, Gershwin, and others. That Antheil’s music failed to gain status as American is due to a variety of factors

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<sup>70</sup> Letter to Peggy Bates, Dated November 6, 1954. Box 1, George Antheil Papers, Columbia University. Arabian most likely means North African, where Antheil had traveled frequently.

<sup>71</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, Letter dated August 13, 1925.

<sup>72</sup> George Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1945), 194. In a letter, Antheil writes that the *Ballet Mécanique* is “symbolic of New York crushing our negro.” See Box 1, Folder 6, Letter dated October 19, 1925. Carol Oja has uncovered further evidence of Antheil’s connection of the *Ballet Mécanique* to African-American, African, and primitive music. See Oja, “George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* and Transatlantic Modernism,” 194.

involving his heavy reliance on a modernist collage aesthetic for doing so. Antheil's treatment of jazz emphasized its "savage" African-American roots, made all the more rough and abrasive through his collage aesthetic, which made many reject this music as reflective of America. This was no doubt heightened by Antheil's rhetoric of critique. Antheil would claim that the *Ballet Mécanique* was "symbolic of New York crushing our Negro"—a view that aligns the racial discrimination embodied in his controversial use of jazz with a class discrimination embodied in his use of machinery and industrial energy as a theme.<sup>73</sup> Of course, Antheil's position is problematic as a critique, as he had little contact with either group's experience, which undercuts his assertion of authenticity and authority, and problematic as a nationalist statement, as this criticism was directed against the American public he hoped to win over.

A second, more direct reason why Antheil's jazz or machine music was never received as authentic or American by American audiences was simply that it did not sound enough like jazz or machines and sounded too much like abstract collage. Here, I cast a wider net to investigate more fully in what circumstances collage could elicit Americanness across the arts. For Dove, Pound, and other painters and writers, jazz was a means of inspiration, their abstract collages rendered more accessible for their sources by tying visual or written abstraction to a modern

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<sup>73</sup> Box 1, Folder 6, Letter dated October 19, 1925. This view was shared by a number of modernists. Ezra Pound expressed his racial concerns about jazz to Antheil in a letter praising the Fred Astaire film *Shall We Dance*: "Gershwin is full of the softest and palest baby shit that ever shat itself into America BUT the damn kike has pulled off a ballet mechanic in I WANNA dance wiff YEW... that film [Shall We dance] is GOOD in the engine room and Hollywood is balls for NOT USING MORE NIGGERS MORE OFTEN and that film is shitsoft in the other crooning wail and why don't you meet Ginger or Astaire I suppose Hopkins can't tap dance?" (Box 172, Folder 52, Letter dated January 8, 1938, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Library of Congress). Pound's letter confirms an interrelationship between jazz, African Americans, and machinery as worthy of support. In addition to Pound, John Dos Passos notably collaged elements of black popular culture as part of a broader critique of capitalism. See John Trombold, "Harlem Transfer: Claude McKay and John Dos Passos" in *Juxtapositions: The Harlem Renaissance and the Lost Generation*, ed. Lesley Marx and Loes Nas (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2000), 4–20 and John Trombold, "Popular Songs as Revolutionary Culture in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* and Other Early Works," *Journal of Modern Literature* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1995), 289–316. In Dos Passos's case, collage takes an especially prominent role through the use of ironic contrast between the story of the novel and the various other media—newspaper headlines, newsreels, and popular songs—that Dos Passos alternates with textual passages in order to provide commentary.



musical genre.<sup>74</sup> Antheil could not simply claim his work was jazz-like or a translation of jazz because jazz was a musical style; to be jazz-like, music had to sound like jazz. This meant a comparison to jazz was made at face value; Antheil's shortcomings were quickly discovered, and his claims of a jazz-based nationalism were called into question. Collage occupies a liminal space between representational and abstract, and forms meanings by two processes. First, by fragmenting its constituent elements, those fragments can erase meaning by significant fragmentation and continue to signify meaning through their ability to represent the larger, original source and the broader cultural associations they carried. Second, by reassembling these fragments, collage has the power to form new meanings out of this representation. Thus, the open-endedness of collage allowed painters like Arthur Dove to allude to a new, American idea—jazz—through this second process, connecting the title of the whole “Rhapsody in Blue” to the reassembly of images and objects collaged together. Antheil, however, had to retain the Americanness of jazz in the first process, by using elements of jazz in his work—but he either abstracted too far or did not sufficiently understand jazz. Antheil could not produce jazz through the second process because collage is so definitively medium-specific. That is, by collaging sounds, Antheil's music draws attention to the ability of those sounds to signify, and if the sounds themselves do not convey jazz, then an audience will have a difficult time accepting the whole arrangement as somehow conveying jazz. Likewise, an artist like Dove cannot convey the sound of jazz in painting directly, but can use the process of collage to elicit parallels to a different medium.

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<sup>74</sup> Dove had noted particularly the effect of jazz in his work as allowing abstractions to become more concrete. In a letter to Stieglitz, he writes, “They have waxed enthusiastic over a “thing” of mine being done from Gershwin's “Rhapsody in Blue” not as yet completed, but I feel it will make people see that the so called “abstractions” are not abstract at all....It is illustration.” Quoted in Cassidy, 13.

A similar argument can be made for Antheil's appropriation of the machine as a form of musical nationalism. Again, Antheil's machine music failed to elicit connections in American audiences to the skyscrapers or industrial energy of the United States. In the *Ballet Mécanique*, Antheil's title mentions machines but the use of a French title undercut its nationalist potential. And while Antheil may have felt a connection between machines and the pounding ostinatos he composed, or the use of player pianos, electric propellers, and sirens, audiences did not share these associations, either because the instruments failed to work properly (the propellers simply blew wind into the audience, while the siren never sounded until after the performance had ended) or simply blended into the noise and carnivalesque atmosphere of the premiere. Again, Antheil's collage approach remained too abstract because it ultimately did not sound like machinery and therefore failed to principally suggest American industry through its representation. As a point of contrast, Frederick Converse's *Flivver 10,000,000* debuted to much success in Boston only five days after *Ballet Mécanique*'s Carnegie Hall concert. Converse's work contained "tortured harmonies and more than a hint of jolting, rattling metal, or crash and of continued life" as well as a Ford automobile horn, which provoked laughter. Its program describes the labor of America's workers, the adventure of driving, a collision, and concludes with "Phoenix Americanus, the hero righted and shaken, proceeds on his way with redoubled energy, typical of the indomitable American spirit."<sup>75</sup> Converse's use of humor mixed with modernism and a programmatic narrative allowed his collage of mechanical sounds and modernist tactics to articulate an American story through collage's ability to function representationally.

When American painters turned to urban landscapes, they tended to dampen their modernist abstraction and turn more toward literal representation. The result was a marriage of

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<sup>75</sup> "'Flivver 10,000,000' Played By Orchestra" *The New York Times* April 16, 1927, p. 13.

modernist or cubist sensibilities with a more straightforward approach to landscape painting where icons like the Brooklyn Bridge, most famously depicted in a series of modernist paintings by Joseph Stella, were transformed yet remained instantly recognizable (at least, with the aid of the title), made even more iconic and modern through the visual style. Arthur Dove's collages from the 1920s, for instance, found many ways of signifying Americanness through their collaged elements. A painted segment of a flag and a sheet of music from the American hymn "Shall We Gather at The River" in *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry* help to set the New England scene depicted. *The Critic*, a satiric portrait of conservative art critic Royal Cortissoz, is constructed largely from newspaper, and Dove creates the image with newspaper fragments that reflect contemporaneous debates over the direction of American art.<sup>76</sup> On a more subtle level, these techniques have been also connected with American folk practices, where collaged elements reflected the artist's local environment, suggesting that collage could doubly serve as a folk art and a modern art and that these works reflected a vernacular sensibility required for nationalism.

The newspaper, which Waldo Frank observed was America's "dominant folk art," became a crucial element of modernist collage.<sup>77</sup> Newspapers were undeniably vernacular and characteristic of the modern age: mass-produced, up-to-date, and meant to be consumed and discarded. At the same time, newspapers came to be seen as an archive, capturing a local history. William Carlos Williams found in the newspaper the perfect medium of poetry, and used it to great effect in his epic poem *Paterson*, which collages found material such as newspaper

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<sup>76</sup> This is no different than Picasso, whom Patricia Leighton has noted frequently selected his newspaper clippings to convey an anarchic political message. See Patricia Leighton, "Picasso's Collages and the Threat of War," in Hoffman, 121–70. In this instance, Dove represents a way of taking European methods and reinterpreting them to a specifically American end.

<sup>77</sup> Waldo Frank, *The Re-Discovery of America: An Introduction to a Philosophy of American Life* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1929), 116.

clippings, advertisements, letters, and geological charts into his verse to craft a history of the town of Paterson, New Jersey.<sup>78</sup> In *Paterson*, as in its predecessor *In the American Grain*, the form of collage was put to work crafting an alternate American history, one that severs ties to Europe. Williams had been heartened by efforts of visual artists like Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler, whose paintings of urban subjects he admired, and whom Williams hoped would use the tools European modernism to craft something distinctly American.<sup>79</sup> According to literary scholar Stephen Fredman, Williams and other poets did just that through verse by adapting collage in an anti-European fashion: crafting their own order from the collaged elements rather than relying on a “resonant background of tradition as an inexhaustible material upon which to work ever-new inventions.”<sup>80</sup> Waldo Frank similarly draws a distinction between Europe and America, characterizing America as a land of “buried” European traditions, “denatured elements of a transplanted world” ripe for reordering through collage.<sup>81</sup>

The process of collage itself could signify and stress modernity in a work. It could also disrupt or reappropriate European traditions and transform them into something American. Lacking a single folk source or narrative, America could be given a history, collaged together through newspapers, letters, accounts, people, and places; America’s diversity could be managed and historicized. But while collage could create something distinctly American, it could not itself signify America. For that, the work required more direct forms of representation recognizable in the fragments themselves, whether visual, literary, or musical—something Antheil’s collages lacked. It is this point that may account most prominently for the failure of Antheil to emerge as

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<sup>78</sup> Margaret Lloyd Bollard, “The ‘Newspaper Landscape’ of Williams’ ‘Paterson,’” *Contemporary Literature* 16, no. 3 (Summer 1975), 318.

<sup>79</sup> Tashjian, 14–5.

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Fredman, “Williams, Eliot, and American Tradition,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 1989), 240.

<sup>81</sup> Frank, 74.

a nationalist composer, and for the eventual success of Charles Ives in that role. Like MacDowell, Antheil was ultimately too European, touting his success there as credentials at a time when modernists in America were using art to differentiate themselves from Europe. Unlike MacDowell, Antheil's music offered only a vision of the modern. It could not communicate to American audiences any sense of a common history or anything distinctively local or vernacular. The twin failures of MacDowell and Antheil demonstrate the importance of shaping both a common history and a common future to musical nationalism—neither works alone. Nationalism requires both.

## The Case for Ives

Enzo Restagno concludes his interview with Elliott Carter as Carter is leafing through a book called *Western Art and the New Era* and recalling his interest in certain artists and trends—John Marin’s watercolors, American cubists, casually remembering George Antheil among them. Restagno asks Carter about Joseph Stella, who had been a friend of Varèse, and whose paintings of the Brooklyn Bridge echoed Hart Crane’s poem *The Bridge*, which in turn had served as a programmatic basis for Carter’s *Symphony of Three Orchestras*. Carter’s approach in this work owes much to Ives’s pioneering work of layering different sonorities as well as Ives’s repeated invocation of multiple musical groups all performing at once. But Carter returns to Ives with a different painting, one by the early American folk painter Edward Hicks. Carter admires its naïve simplicity for its “truth” and agrees that Ives had a similar spirit:

Ives gives the impression of writing nostalgic music because he was convinced that modern life was false and devoid of authenticity. He probably would have liked to go back to the America that existed fifty years before his birth. Naturally these retrospective visions were colored with great optimism. He believed the ideals whose loss he mourned were still alive at that time.<sup>82</sup>

Whether Ives truly had such beliefs is questionable, but that Carter would be so convinced by it speaks to the power of Ives’s music to project the existence of such an American past. Carter’s view is all the more powerful once we take into consideration Ives’s very progressive and modern techniques, which Carter found influential in his own works.

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<sup>82</sup> Carter, 96.

These dual images of Ives as modernist and nostalgist are nearly ubiquitous. Critic and composer Virgil Thomson claimed Ives's current popularity was based on

the direct expressivity of certain works. *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, for instance, is an impressionistic evocation, an orchestral landscape piece about a river, that even Europeans can enjoy. Longer works such as the Second (or "Concord") Piano Sonata and the Fourth Symphony, though actually structured for holding attention, are seemingly improvisational (even aleatoric) in a way that today's youth finds irrepressible for effects of grandeur and chaos. And the jamborees of patriotic marches and evangelical hymns that climax *Putnam's Camp*, the Second Symphony, and many another calling forth of early memories are so deeply nostalgic for Americans that the California critic Peter Yates could sum them up as the only American music that made him cry."<sup>83</sup>

Thomson suggests in addition to the modern/nostalgic divide, Ives appeals across European/American and art/popular divisions as well.<sup>84</sup> Henry Cowell, one of Ives's close friends and colleagues, likewise praises Ives simultaneously for being "the father of indigenous American art-music, and at the same time is in the vanguard of the most forward-looking and experimental composers of today." Cowell elsewhere comments that Ives was the first to devote himself to the vernacular and practically unique in his nostalgic attitudes in a country that refuses to look backwards.<sup>85</sup>

These attitudes can be traced back to the earliest reviews Ives's music received, many of which cited his work as the forefront of modernism. Some linked this modernism to a decidedly national characteristic, finding his works "carry no letters of introduction from Messrs. Brahms, Tschaikowski [*sic*] or Strauss" and praising an independence, physical energy, and freshness in his technique that "delineates contemporaneous national life."<sup>86</sup> Others drew parallels to

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<sup>83</sup> Virgil Thomson, *A Virgil Thomson Reader* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 462.

<sup>84</sup> All of these divisions figure heavily in discussions of nationalism at the time. By focusing more on the division of the modern and the nostalgic, I do not mean to say the other divisions are less important, but instead seek to address the division least discussed within extant scholarship on Ives and musical nationalism.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Cowell, "Who Are the Composers in America" found in Scrapbook 6, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.

<sup>86</sup> The first quotation comes from José Rodríguez, "An Old Lady Gets Three Shots In The Arm" *Los Angeles Herald* December [29 or 30], 1932, Box 54, Folder 3, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University; the second comes from [?]

European modernists—Debussy, Schoenberg, and especially Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps*—or in at least one case to Picasso, finding Ives’s *Three Places in New England* to be “modern in the exact manner of those painters whose canvases—so redolent of this chaotic age—are a patchwork of jagged fragments overlapping, dovetailing, with an added complexity which painting cannot rival, namely that of a bewilderingly crowded simultaneity.”<sup>87</sup> Still others saw in him a man turning away from the urban modernism that dominated the musical landscape to an American past, turning his attention “not only fieldward but to the past... he describes rural America years ago.”<sup>88</sup> Comments on Ives’s nostalgic tendencies almost universally carry nationalistic undertones even if some found his use of popular musics and hymn tunes daring, while others found them comforting. Paul Rosenfeld’s 1939 review of the Concord Sonata readily accepts all of these trends as he extols Ives’s modernism as surpassing Ornstein and Cowell, compares him favorably to Europeans from Beethoven to Schoenberg, and places centrally his Americanness, writing that Ives “comprehends his relationship not only to the present life of his group, race or nation, but to its very past. Imaginatively he grasps the forces and values of the individuals who existed on his soil before him, the forces and values of the group, race or nation incarnate in them.”<sup>89</sup> This attitude toward Ives suggests that Ives manages to collage the past and present into a coherent, single vision. Indeed the ability of collage to sustain multiple readings accounts for how Ives’s music could be heard as both modern and nostalgic by different listeners. The combination of the two interpretations is critical in the

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Henderson, Untitled Article, *New York Evening Sun* January 29, 1927, Box 54, Folder 2, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.

<sup>87</sup> S.S., Untitled Article, *Boston Herald* January 26, 1931, Box 54, Folder 3, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.

<sup>88</sup> Winthrop P. Tyron, “Freischütz at the Metropolitan—Other Music of a New York Week” *Christian Science Monitor* March 19, 1924, p. 10, Box 54, Folder 2, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Rosenfeld, “Ives’ Concord Sonata,” *Modern Music* (Jan–Feb, 1939), Box 54, Folder 5, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.



construction of Ives as an iconic American composer, but this is not the only way in which the music of Ives has been aligned with theories of nationalism.

The project of nationalism has largely been undertaken by scholars and critics, rather than by Ives himself. Like Antheil and MacDowell, Ives was skeptical of nationalism. On several occasions, he rebelled against the differentiations between “local,” “national,” and “universal.”<sup>90</sup> For Ives, a conscious effort to make music national was ineffective. For a music to be national, it required the composer to be deeply steeped in the music’s spirit: “If local color is a natural part (that is, a part of substance), the art-effort cannot help but show its color—and it will be a true color, no matter how colored.”<sup>91</sup> He goes on to respond to Dvořák, admitting that African-American and Native American musics could form the basis of a national music, provided that the composer feels a spiritual connection to that culture (i.e. “substance”), before turning to an example closer to his own life:

if the Yankee can reflect the fervency with which “his gospels” were sung...he may find there a local color that will do all the world good. If his music can but catch that spirit by being a part with itself, it will come somewhere near his ideal—and it will be American, too—perhaps nearer so than that of the devotee of Indian or negro melody.<sup>92</sup>

In this respect, there is a crucial difference between Ives and MacDowell and Antheil. MacDowell’s interest in Native American music and Antheil’s in jazz were not what Ives would consider substantial. Ives, by contrast, borrowed from an assortment of traditions he had grown up with: formally trained at Yale under Horatio Parker as well as encouraged to experiment with polytonality, quartertones, and other modern techniques by his father. He played in his father’s local band, played ragtime piano at Yale, and played the church organ on Sundays.

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<sup>90</sup> Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, The Majority, and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 42, 77–80.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–1.

It was not simply Ives's familiarity with these traditions that mattered in terms of nationalist potential. Rather, it was the combination of Ives's and his audiences' familiarity with these same traditions that allowed for the music to convey meaning most clearly, what Ives may have had in mind when suggesting this music would be "nearer" to the national ideal than Native or African-American-derived music. A nationalist meaning relied in part upon shared experience of these various musical traditions, such that Ives became positioned as something of an ethnographer.<sup>93</sup> Just as Dove's techniques fused folk art and modernism, Ives's use of polytonality and other experimental techniques became symbolic of both modernism and the musical practice of real life—amateur singers, bands, and fiddlers, or competing sounds in natural space—assisting audiences in hearing his modernist musical evocations as familiar. To that end, Ives frequently takes as his subjects elements of American history, the same subjects Anthony Smith labels as part of the performance of nationalism in the United States' "'secular religion'—saluting the flag, celebrating public holidays, the cult of the Constitution and the founding fathers, commemorations of the glorious war dead, and so on."<sup>94</sup> Ives's music frequently describes or draws from public displays of music-making, whether at a church meeting, a patriotic holiday, a memorial, a baseball game, or elsewhere, allowing the musical reconstruction to blur personal memory and collective experience.

Ives's eclecticism produces a collage of musical sources that departs from the typical use of folk music within nationalism. Usually the folk is distilled into a high culture usage and believed to be commonly shared, promoting national unity within. Here, though, the eclecticism

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<sup>93</sup> See David C. Paul, "From American Ethnographer to Cold War Icon: Charles Ives Through the Eyes of Henry and Sidney Cowell," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 399–457.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 42. Like folk culture, Eric Hobsbawm identifies these patriotic rituals as "invented traditions." See Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" and "Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914" in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14 and 263–307.

serves only to make the music appear all the more American. In his discussion of nationalism, Ives calls eclecticism a duty of the composer, an acknowledgement of the country's diversity.

Critics have read his music in similar terms. In a rhapsodic review of his *114 Songs*, Paul Rosenfeld said they

must rank with *the American* books. Certainly the Americanism of the extraordinary variety of songs included in it is not confined to the texts and subjects underlying them; largely as these reflect an American experience and concern with American political and cultural affairs. Nor is it due to the Americanism of the folk-tunes and street-songs incorporated in the original music; even though the knowledge of and in particular the feeling for these popular expressions, manifest in the songs, do communicate the fruit of a long domestication on the soil which produced them. It is quite the fundamental quality of the music itself; touching us partly through the haunting New England eeriness and refined sensuousness of much of it, partly through the homeliness, the raciness, the humor and the spirituality peculiarly mingled in the animating spirit. One even finds the spirit of American life expressed in the form of the collection itself, a miscellany in which simple street songs in march and waltz time, redolent of undergraduate days, rub shoulders with delicate impressionistic and atonal lyrics.<sup>95</sup>

What Rosenfeld describes is collage, and that very act of collage—allowing the classical and vernacular songs to “rub shoulders”—is noted as especially American. Indeed, other compositions purposefully rub divergent musical traditions together, ragtime with church hymns in the First Piano Sonata, or the variety of musics and peoples Ives describes milling about in his New York City memory piece *Central Park in the Dark*.<sup>96</sup> The result is somewhere between fact

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<sup>95</sup> Paul Rosenfeld, “Two Native Groups” *The New Republic* July 5, 1933, Scrapbook 3, Charles Ives Papers, Yale University.

<sup>96</sup> Ives describes the program of *Central Park in the Dark* as “a picture-in-sounds of the sounds of nature and of happenings that men would hear some thirty or so years ago (before the combustion engine and radio monopolized the earth and air), when sitting on a bench in Central Park on a hot summer night. The strings represent the night sounds and silent darkness—interrupted by sounds [the rest of the orchestra] from the Casino over the pond—of street singers coming up from the Circle singing, in spots, the tunes of those days—of some “night owls” from Healy’s whistling the latest or the Freshman March—the “occasional elevated”, a street parade, or a “break down” in the distance—of newsboys crying “uxtries”—of pianolas having a ragtime war in the apartment house “over the garden wall”, a street car and a street band join in the chorus—a fire engine, a cab horse runs away, lands “over the fence and out”, the wayfarers shout—again darkness is heard—an echo over the pond—and we walk home.” The music layers these sounds simultaneously, capturing the diversity of a single spot, both in terms of demographic, but also the blend of nature and urban life and modernism and nostalgia in this parkscape.

and fiction, depicting a society negotiating particular musical and cultural tensions, albeit in ways that have allowed listeners to celebrate the pluralism in addition to these tensions.<sup>97</sup>

A subtler form of collage is at work in Ives's mixture of modernism and nostalgia. Nationalism must reconstruct an image of the past while making that past serve the present and future of the nation. And so it is that Ives's technique of collage, the fracturing and layering of musics, serves to evoke that very process of memory reconstruction while marking the music as modern (and modernist). The goal in Ives is not to recapture the past, but to recapture its spirit. Larry Starr, analyzing Ives's songs concerning memory, notes the importance of the journey and growth in Ives's songs, which "are concerned with the ongoing processes of an active existence whose ultimate goal is spiritual growth. Forms engendered by stylistic juxtapositions are obviously well suited for such processes."<sup>98</sup> Ives himself offers an extended story on the power of music and memory in his *Essays Before A Sonata*. He describes a boy who hears a band in his formative years and has a vision of life's probabilities:

Later in life, the same boy hears the Sabbath morning bell ringing out from the white steeple at the "Center," and as it draws him to it, through the autumn fields of sumach and asters, a Gospel hymn of simple devotion comes out to him—"There's a wideness in God's mercy"—an instant suggestion of that Memorial Day morning comes—but the moment is of deeper import—there is no personal exultation—no intimate world vision—no magnified personal hope—and in their place a profound sense of a spiritual truth.<sup>99</sup>

This same belief is at the heart of Ives's song "Old Home Day" (c. 1920), one of his most overt attempts to convey musical nostalgia (Example 1.6). Ives had originally titled the work "Old Home Town," suggesting an immediate sense of place, perhaps a nostalgic return, or maybe a feeling of settled tradition. The subsequent retitling of "Old Home Day" suggests not only place

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<sup>97</sup> See, for instance, Lawrence Kramer, "Powers of Blackness: Africanist Discourse in Modern Concert Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 53–70 and Chapter One of Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>98</sup> Larry Starr, *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 58.

<sup>99</sup> Ives, 30.

but time as well. “Day” is rather unspecific, yet it lends the song a feeling of a holiday, an observance in celebration of that particular—and yet general, for “home” could be anywhere—place. This song effectively reproduces for the listener the act of remembering.

“Old Home Day” begins with a single note in the piano line, a B, then joined by an open-spaced chord of C# and F#, neither dissonant nor distinctly tonal, a soundscape slowly conjured out of this note. The singer enters on that same B, intoning a chant-like call that suggests a key of F# minor. The piano spins hazy arpeggios underneath, taken from the whole tone scale centered on C# plus a G#. The text comes from a paraphrase of Virgil: “Go my songs! Draw Daphnis from the city.” These words suggest Ives grants music the power to move the listener physically as well as mentally. Coupled then with the “old home” title and small town memories that follow, it would seem that the opening is rather self-referential, entreating the listener to leave the modern city and return through the song to the memories conjured up. Indeed, the song’s inscription makes this more explicit. Taken from the eighth of Virgil’s *Eclogues*, a set of pastoral poetry that alluded directly to contemporaneous society, the text entreats, “Draw home from the city, my songs, draw Daphnis home.”<sup>100</sup> In his introduction to an edition of the *Eclogues*, Robert Coleman notes that in Virgil, “the myth of the pastoral is brought close to the present day. For although the poems are often set in the past, it always seems a recent past, so that we have the persistent illusion of a world that is permanently ‘there’, [*sic*] timeless and unchanging.”<sup>101</sup> The alignment of “home,” the past, and the pastoral maps neatly onto theories of nationalism that similarly place the concept of homeland in a pre-modern landscape is located not in the city but in the pastoral countryside, a place that served as an allegory for a recent, accessible past. In both Virgil’s and Ives’s hands, the modern city is contrasted with an idealized, pastoral, and historical

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<sup>100</sup> Charles Ives, *129 Songs*, ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2004), 213.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Coleman, “Introduction” to Vergil, *Eclogues*, ed. Robert Coleman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 7.

77. OLD HOME DAY

"Ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnim"

[Charles Ives]

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a vocal line in 4/4 time, marked "Slowly" and "mp", with the lyrics "Go, my songs!". The piano accompaniment features a triplet in the right hand and a 10-measure phrase in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Draw Daph-nis from the ci-ty." and includes piano accompaniment with "LH" markings and a 10-measure phrase. The third system shows a change in time signature to 3/4 and 5/4, with piano accompaniment marked "mf" and "ff".

\*[Ed.] This Latin caption is from Virgil (70-19 B.C.); literally, "Draw home from the city, my songs, draw Daphnis home."

Example 1.6: "Old Home Day" (c. 1920), Charles Ives

7

pp mf LH

10

Moderately and with even rhythm

mp

1. A  
2. A

p mp

14

mi- nor tune from Todd's Op- era House Comes to me as I cross the  
cor- ner lot, a white pick- et fence, Dai- sies al- most ev- ery-

17

square; there We boys  
-where; there We boys

Example 1.6 continued

19 *f* *p*

used to shout the songs that rouse The hearts of the brave and fair,  
 used to play "One old cat," And base hits the filled the air,

22 *poco rit.* **March time** **CHORUS**  
*mf*

of the brave and fair. As we  
 filled the sum-mer air. \*As we

Obbligato ad lib. (fife, violin, or flute)—  
 only with 2nd stanza

25

(CHORUS)

march a- long down Main Street — Be- hind the vil- lage  
 march a- long on Main Street — Of that "Down East" Yan- kee

Example 1.6 continued



28

band, The dear old trees With their arch of leaves Seem to  
town, Comes a sign of life From the "3<sup>rd</sup> Corps" fife: Strains

37

grasp us by the hand. While we step a-long  
of an old break-down. While we step a-long

34

To the tune of an I- rish song, Glad but wist- ful sounds the old church bell, For  
To the tune of its I- rish song, Comes an- oth- er sound we all know well; It

Example 1.6 continued

37

un-der-neath's a note of sad-ness: "Old home-town," fare-  
takes us way back, for-ty years: That lit-tle red school-house

40

1. (For repetition of the CHORUS in each stanza) | 2. (For return to  $\Phi$  and stanza 2 after repetition of the CHORUS)

-well. bell. As we well.

44

3. (For conclusion, after repetition of the CHORUS in stanza 2)

bell.

\*[Ed.] Presumably, the diagonals in measures 37-40 and 44 indicate tremolos and/or flutter tonguing.

Example 1.6 continued

home, and “Old Home Day” vividly depicts both while inviting us to, like Daphne, retreat from the modern world and return home to the past.

The present-day modernity of the city is figured in a unmetred, atonal passage which seems to offer a slow descent into reverie: a climax at m. 7 hits a high F and descends chromatically to an Ab, with the inner voices similarly moving in descending semitones. A melody enters just before the singer, who identifies it as “a minor tune from Todd’s opera house.” In the piano, it is unformed, played alternatingly in C minor and C major, accompanied in B major, chromatically altered, as if still taking shape in the singer’s memory. The voice’s entrance solidifies the tune, identifies it (somewhat, as best the singer can remember), and begins the trip down memory lane—or more specifically, down Main Street. Again music is the agent here: a tune is the first thing remembered, perhaps the impetus for remembering.<sup>102</sup> The next line continues the musical association: “We boys used to shout the songs that rouse the hearts of the brave and fair,” with “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” quoted, literally recalling those songs. This section ends with an echo of that last line, unsettling the cadential stability of the quotation and setting us adrift again. The issue is left hanging as the music is suddenly snapped to attention with simulated drum beats, and with that we are transported to a parade, a parade remembered but also perhaps a parade of memories. The music strikes up a march rhythm as the singer describes marching down Main Street, envisioning the “dear old trees with their arch of leaves,” visual cues that suggest a small town. The band continues, breaking into a jig at the mention of “an Irish song.” The first verse ends with a quotation of Annie Lisle, originally a song about a young girl who dies of tuberculosis but since adopted by many schools as an Alma Mater tune. The lyrics convey a similar sense of longing at hearing the church bell chime: “for underneath’s

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<sup>102</sup> While the tune from Todd’s opera house is unidentified, perhaps of Ives’s own invention, he uses it in his tone poem “The Fourth of July,” suggesting the tune carried some personal, and possibly patriotic, meaning for Ives.

a note of sadness, ‘Old Home town’ farewell.” The connection between an alma mater and a hometown is quite clear: both are destined to be left but remembered fondly and perhaps returned to years later.

Whereas the first verse relies prominently on aural cues of memory, the second verse depicts the town in more visual terms: “a corner lot, a white picket fence, daisies” and a baseball game. The chorus changes slightly; the “village band” becomes more specifically a “Down East’ Yankee band, the visual cue of trees becomes the aural cue of the “3<sup>rd</sup> Corps fife,” and the church bell becomes the “little red schoolhouse bell.” In addition, an obbligato line for violin, flute, or fife is added for the second chorus, which plays a pastiche of quoted melodies: “Arkansas Traveler” and “The Girl I Left Behind Me” for the marching, “Garryowen” and “St. Patrick’s Day” for the Irish song, and “Auld Lang Syne” against “Annie Lisle.” This last one builds on the nostalgic sense, the sense of loss, but the other tunes only strengthen the memory’s hold. With the addition of a separate instrument recreating these melodies, the memories of the band become all the more palpable, no longer just suggested but physically presented on stage as if the power of memory had managed to conjure up a flutist all on its own.

This song is one of Ives’s most nostalgic, and Ives himself seemed to consider it on the verge of being too much so. He included it in a list of songs he termed a “backwards slump,” only to cross it off later with no explanation. Ives also published it in a collection of “Five Street Songs.” This grouping contains two marches, “The Circus Band” and “Son of a Gambolier,” a satirical take-off on a Tin Pan Alley, “In the Alley,” and a hymn setting “Down East.” It fits well with this grouping—certainly with the other two marches, but it shares an affinity with “Down East,” which begins with the simple exclamation “Songs!,” echoing the imperative from “Old Home Day.” The “songs!” function similarly, drawing the singer and listener back into memory,

starting with a modern, atonal opening that melts into the familiar strains of a hymn, where a few modernist inflections elicit a certain unclarity of vision, like a haze of distance or forgetting. The original opening line to “Down East” underwent a similar change as “Old Home Day” as well, as Ives replaced “Visions of my childhood/day” with “Visions of my homeland.”

History in Ives’s songs is rarely explicitly nationalist, but is easily taken as metaphorically so. “Old Home Day” waxes nostalgic not simply for the sights and sounds of the singer’s home but for its patriotic celebrations. Musically this is achieved through the act of collaging quotations of or allusions to fiddle tunes and marches. The former evokes the nation through its folk character, the latter through its connection to the military, particularly the brief snippet of “Reveille” at the end. The textual imagery is equally redolent of nationalist symbols, from baseball, the “national pastime,” and the parade to the subtler foundations, the twin bells of the church and schoolhouse, and Main Street foster ideas of tradition and values, stemming not just from any one man’s past, but from a whole community. The town is metonymic for the nation.

Ives also often signifies the nation through the metonym of family, something Anthony Smith, a prominent theorist of nationalism, has noted nationalism often adopts by drawing a connection between literal and imagined ancestral folk lineage.<sup>103</sup> Ives hints at this connection in his song “The Things Our Fathers Loved (and the greatest of these was Liberty).” He opens by again invoking the power of music to induce local and familial memories, citing an organ on Main Street, “Aunt Sarah humming Gospels,” and “The village cornet band playing in the square.” The next phrase denotes a patriotic event, describing the town as “all Red White and Blue.” The song concludes with a command: “Now! Hear the songs!/ I know not what are the words/ But they sing in the soul of the things our Fathers loved.” Ives depicts the music as

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<sup>103</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 76.

forgotten both lyrically and through a collage process similar to “Old Home Day” that makes the memories fragmentary, never quite remembered. But these songs are nevertheless a part of the modern singer, passed down generationally, part of the same shared, common culture that nationalism requires. The invocation of “Fathers” is particularly rich, as it could denote forefathers, or perhaps the Founding Fathers, or perhaps a more personal association for Ives, given the importance of his father in his own musical life, or even more broadly conjuring up images of families, as with the earlier lines about Aunt Sarah. In a collage, the polysemic term allows multiple meanings to coexist as the family (father), like the town, to elide easily with the concept of the nation (Founding Fathers).<sup>104</sup>

Collage often operates through metonyms, where the fragmented elements signify larger sources, and Ives’s effort to signify the national via the local and the familial produces two different visions of American identity, both crucial to Ives’s success. Ives’s metonyms extrapolate, of course, Ives’s own position as a white, European American, with means and access to these cultural references as indicative of the American population. Family ancestry had been a central method for proving Americanness, how long a family had been in the country, and for marginalizing or excluding certain white immigrant or non-white ethnicities from the United States. Likewise, Ives’s small New England towns conjure up for audiences an imagined past of racial homogeneity in contrast to the ethnic diversity found increasingly in the cities (even as Ives’s own writings paint a more heterogeneous portrait of Danbury). Ives’s ability to suggest a familiar, shared, and demonstrably white American musical and cultural heritage profited from an audience that largely shared his background. The second way of reading Ives’s metonymic

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<sup>104</sup> Ives’s location of the nation in familial memory extends a discursive tradition literary scholar Amy Kaplan describes as “manifest domesticity.” Kaplan argues that nineteenth century writers used metaphors of the home to affirm national identity in a violent age of expansion and domination. See Chapter One of Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U. S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

depiction of the nation focuses on the eclecticism and crossing of various boundaries through collage. His collage provided a model for further, more progressive challenges to a single national perspective. Unlike MacDowell's appropriation of Native American music or Antheil's appropriation of jazz, Ives held a personal connection to the music he borrowed, what he called the "substance" of music. Ives makes this more explicit by contextualizing his borrowing practices as personal memories from local, and at times more specifically in the familial, sources. Collage's ability to keep multiple meanings in play allowed Ives to be heard as white by those seeking to define America in a racially homogenous way, while others could herald Ives's eclecticism and personal approach as a precursor to the cultural pluralist models that emerged more prominently later in the century.

Equally important was how Ives constructed his collages not only to permit simultaneous readings of nostalgia and modernist, but shaped the collages to suggest continuity between the two. Memory serves as an affirmation of the present rather than a retreat from it, and music is used for progression rather than regression. Ives repeatedly structured his music around the act of remembering, rather than displaying a pre-formed memory to be savored. The primacy of the act of remembering is reiterated in many ways in Ives's music. The "cumulative form" Burkholder has identified as central to Ives's Americanness echoes the process of remembering, although, as in the memory piece *From Hanover Square North, At the End of a Tragic Day, The Voices of the People Again Arose*, the emergence of the theme often does not conclude the work, but rather is superseded by a murkier, more modern soundscape.<sup>105</sup> Cumulative form also mirrors collage because both rely on fragmentation and restructuring yet ultimately produce a larger whole out of the fragments. In songs like "Old Home Day" and "Down East," memories exist as a collage of

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<sup>105</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 419.

fragments, taking time to crystallize: the tune from Todd's opera house or the hymn tune "Bethany" slowly come into focus out of the modern (and modernist) sound world that opens each song. Others acknowledge forgetting, like "The Things Our Fathers Loved (and the greatest of these was Liberty)" shift from memory to memory, only to awaken at the end. Ives's contrasts the memory, which is crystallized in his command "Now! Hear the songs!" with the act of forgetting—"I know not what are the words"—and concludes by affirming their continued purpose of these memories in the present: "But they sing in my soul of the things our Fathers loved." A similar path is at work in "Memories," where one memory of the opera house ("Very Pleasant") is left unfinished when the curtain rises, and the listener is catapulted into a second, more personal memory ("Rather Sad") of a tune the singer's uncle used to sing. The singer fondly remembers this before dropping off before the final rhyme is complete and merely humming (they know not what are the words?) to conclude the song.

This lack of closure is a crucial aspect of collage, where the constituent elements are fragmented both by cutting and by pasting and layering fragment on top of fragment, much the way Ives's musical memories move from one to the next without finishing. Indeed, Ives had a strong aversion to any form of closure, revealed in many of Ives's more sardonic takes on nostalgic and sentimental ballads, which mock the harmonic and formal closure of these regular song forms and their lyrics. A parody of Tin Pan Alley sentimental songs, "On the Counter" recalls "Tunes we heard in '92/ Soft and sweet/ Always ending "I love you"/ Phrases nice and neat" while "Romanza di Central Park" assembles a textual collage made up of only the rhyming words from the lyrics of a sentimental love song into a campy, over-the-top song. Ives's alignment of musical and lyrical forms of closure with the song's cloying, "nice and neat" aspects—something Ives railed against more broadly in American musical culture—suggests that



Ives's use of collage to prevent closure to his musical memories reflects a more deliberate stance about progress in modern American identity. The use of collage in "Romanza di Central Park" underscores its striking ability to call attention to elements, in this case closure and pat rhymes, through fragmentation and juxtaposition, essentially sapping them of their nostalgic power through Ives's parodic treatment. This is a very different approach than Ives takes in his more "serious" songs that construct the process of more meaningful memories. Collage is an adaptable form, and Ives a versatile composer, yet the various methods of collage Ives used all aid in the construction of American identity by attending rather openly to the use of history to create a modern, present-day perspective.

The act of remembering from the present that Ives captures through collage is critical in the process of forming a national identity, and in the success of Ives's music in that process in the United States. What Ives captures is something in between what literary theorist Svetlana Boym calls reflective and restorative nostalgia.<sup>106</sup> In most regards, Ives fulfills the qualities of reflective nostalgia, which is more concerned with individual and cultural memory, allows for humor and irony, and "is more oriented toward an individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs...[and] shatters fragments of memory."<sup>107</sup> But Ives, of course, is not merely reflecting and savoring the ruins of memory, he is building on it. And Ives often evokes alongside personal memory more collective and national memories, which Boym marks as a central component of restorative nostalgia. This second form, central to the project of nationalism, "gravitates toward collective pictorial symbols and oral culture."<sup>108</sup> Ives gravitates

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<sup>106</sup> Larry Starr sees in Ives "the opposite of nostalgia," which he views as a passive emotion. I agree with Starr's assessment of Ives, that "memory... is a tool for forging a meaningfully *active* life," but retain Boym's view of nostalgia as a more active emotion than Starr does, where nostalgia is part of the process of forging an active modern life from memory. See Starr, *A Union of Diversities*, 58.

<sup>107</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 49.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

in part to oral, or at least a broader performative, culture by invoking bands, choirs, parades, and the like. Ives, like most nationalists, is interested in reconstructing the past as a necessary means to constructing the future.

Ives, Antheil, and MacDowell present three different models of musical nationalism, achieved through a host of different types of collage. To be sure, none of them fully took up the mantle of musical nationalism; all three, in fact, expressed some commitment to a more universal expression of music. But none of them escaped, nor rejected fully, the demand for a distinctly American art music. Ultimately, however, it is not the composers themselves who assure their place within the nation, but the broader discourse of critics, scholars, performers, and citizens that transform a composer into an American icon. MacDowell achieved recognition within his time, but his music failed to resonate with a new generation or with a changing nation. Antheil achieved recognition in Europe, but never gained fame in the United States, even as he continued to work in the United States for decades to come. Ives took an odd path toward canonization, intermittently published and rarely performed in the first decades of the twentieth century. The definition of “American” is rarely agreed upon.

Ives stopped composing in the 1920s, but continued to promote and financially support new music, cultivating important relationships with prominent modernist composers, including Henry Cowell and Elliott Carter. Philip Rossiter notes in his biography of Ives that Ives’s obscurity was due to a lack of modernist champions, who dismissed Ives as “an amateur and a crank who did not know what he was doing”; indeed Carter’s earliest public statements on Ives question his skill and quality as a composer.<sup>109</sup> Carter would change his stance, claiming in 1946 that Ives was not only America’s most prominent innovator, but that “Ives’s music emotionally

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<sup>109</sup> Frank R. Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liverlight, 1975), 212 and 233; John McGinniss, “Has Modernist Criticism Failed Charles Ives?” *Music Theory Spectrum* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 104.

connects us with aspects of the American temperament.”<sup>110</sup> By his 1989 interview with Enzo Restagno, Carter solidifies his opinion of Ives’s experimentation and awareness of tradition as quintessentially American. In his work on the reception of Ives, David C. Paul has traced a similar shift in Cowell’s public promotion of Ives from the 1930s, when he positioned Ives as a folklorist ethnographer, championing American music in the face of a European establishment and in the midst of a folk-inspired populism, to the 1950s, when he and his wife Sidney repositioned Ives as an individualist and innovator in the midst of Cold War ideology that turned on the communal evocations of the folk. The position of Ives as maverick remained central to Ives’s image, until the past few decades, when scholars have once again revised their stance to emphasize Ives’s indebtedness to tradition.<sup>111</sup>

Music theorist John McGinniss lauds the inclusion of Ives’s connections to tradition, but questions this recent shift as a failure of a modernist criticism that asserts that quality be grounded in European precedence and continuity for value.<sup>112</sup> Such concerns are at the heart of not only American identity, but collage as well. Consider again Carter’s comments from his interview with Resagno that opened this chapter: “he glimpsed a new musical vocabulary, but he was also aware of the need to reconcile it with what he had learned at Yale, and I think he spent his entire life dealing with this problem.” Years earlier, in a 1971 interview with Allen Edwards, Carter echoes McGinniss’s concerns: “thinking about Ives has been particularly fruitful to me: about how he calls into question matters of style, coherence, and even the integrity, the ‘seriousness’ of serious music,” before going on to observe his “many different intentions as a

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<sup>110</sup> McGinniss, 104–6; Carter’s quotation comes from *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, ed. Felix Meyer and Anne Chatoney Shreffler (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008), 72.

<sup>111</sup> For a summary of these current trends, see Peter Burkholder, “Ives Today” in *Ives Studies*, ed. Philip Lambert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 263–90.

<sup>112</sup> McGinniss, 100.

composer.”<sup>113</sup> Musicologist Larry Starr has likewise taken the intellectual and critical establishment to task for its tardiness in accepting Ives and Gershwin, arguing “it is the most specific, profound *American* aspects and implications in the work of Ives and Gershwin that met (and often continue to meet) the greatest resistance.” Chief among these aspects, Starr elucidates, are “the welcoming of influences from the most eclectic sources, the free embracing of native vernacular expressions along with imported ‘high art’ vocabularies and idioms, and the resulting celebration of artistic pluralism.”<sup>114</sup>

Ives’s use of collage as a way to preserve a tension between past and present, tradition and experimentation, to recall a shared past from a modern perspective, and to preserve a tension among many cultures while invoking nationalist and historical imagery is what allowed him to function as a chameleonic figure throughout the twentieth century. Whether populists like Gershwin and Copland, or experimenters like Cage and Carter, Ives’s collage proved capable of being read in a variety of manners for all who followed and sought to define American music in various contrasting ways. Ives neither invented collage nor American music, but he did intertwine them in ways that sonically demonstrated the necessities of collage within an American nationalism.

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<sup>113</sup> Allen Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 63.

<sup>114</sup> Larry Starr, “Ives, Gershwin and Copland: Reflections on the Strange History of American Art Music,” *American Music* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 179.

## Chapter Two

### **Satire on Tenth Avenue: Musical Comedy Meets Musical Nationalism in**

#### **Rodgers and Hart's *On Your Toes* (1936)**

In his autobiography, Broadway composer Richard Rodgers vividly recounts one of his favorite memories: conducting the Ballet Russes at the Metropolitan Opera in a performance of his own ballet *Ghost Town* in 1939. The moment was a career high for Rodgers, filled with excitement, expectation, and surprise:

I was naturally nervous about conducting the famed orchestra of the Ballet Russe [*sic*], and one day, following a run-through, the first trumpeter jumped up from his chair and yelled “Rodgers!” Now I knew I was in trouble. No one yells “Rodgers!” to the conductor—and composer!—unless there’s something wrong. Then, breaking into a wide grin, the man said, “Rodgers, Broadway composer, from you I expected hot licks.”<sup>1</sup>

At the heart of this comic vignette is another form of collage of two different musical genres, revealing an interplay of cultural expectations and collisions as two distinct musical traditions met in the pit that day. In Rodgers’s nervousness lie both a sense of honor and elevation at the commission and a note of inferiority and humbled pride at stake; in the trumpeter’s jesting, perhaps a relaxation of seriousness and decorum with a composer of different stature. We might wonder, for instance, how one of America’s most prominent popular composers got to be in such a position, or ask whether anyone else expected “hot licks” and why Rodgers ultimately decided not to compose them.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1975), 194.

Rodgers had been commissioned as part of a growing interest in creating a homegrown, vernacular ballet tradition in the 1930s. Five years before *Ghost Town*, Lincoln Kirstein had begun the quest by inviting choreographer George Balanchine to found the School of American Ballet, an attempt that met with difficulty and disappointment. They faced a number of obstacles. The Great Depression restricted support of new artistic endeavors and left audiences skeptical of ballet, an art form they found overly aristocratic and pretentious. Many artists, recognizing the effect of economic hardship on their audiences, strove for a broader populism in their work—something ballet, in its American formulation, lacked at first. In addition, the musical establishment held rather conservative views, epitomized by the failed attempt to partner Balanchine’s troupe with the Metropolitan Opera.<sup>2</sup> Balanchine’s difficulties were compounded by the common critique of his European background, the implication that Balanchine “was not American enough to be entrusted with nurturing a truly American school and style of ballet.”<sup>3</sup> How fitting that Balanchine turned, as the commissioners of *Ghost Town* would, to the quintessentially American popular form of the Broadway musical to attain a cultural status as American, while Rodgers himself sought a very different cultural status, that of “serious” composer. America was a nation jockeying for position within a cultural hierarchy, and simply importing a prominent European artist no longer fit its requirements, but neither had America completely abandoned its idolization of European high culture, as demonstrated by Rodgers’s response in the pit.

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<sup>2</sup> See Joseph Horowitz, *Artists in Exile: How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts* (New York: Harper, 2008), 31 and Bernard Taper, *Balanchine, A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 177–190.

<sup>3</sup> Taper, 175.

Out of this moment where cultural and social lines were being reconfigured, Rodgers and Balanchine formed an unlikely artistic alliance on Broadway.<sup>4</sup> In their first collaboration, the 1936 musical *On Your Toes*, Rodgers, Balanchine, lyricist Lorenz Hart, and librettist George Abbott reflexively portrayed the dynamics of such a collaboration, satirizing both the European ballet and government-supported arts programs of the Works Progress Administration, while asking probing questions about the place of classical, Broadway, and jazz within American musical nationalism. Like Rodgers's autobiographical anecdote, *On Your Toes* exceeds its entertainment value by subtly revealing a system of cultural expectations and boundary negotiations within American music. As a document of changing social attitudes toward music, it captures the pressures and contradictions of what it meant to be American at a moment of cultural transition. It does so through methods of collage—contrasting and recombining these different musical styles. This chapter provides a sort of response to Chapter One: both examine the creation of an American musical nationalism, and both highlight similar forms of collage, namely the combination of different musical genres or traditions. But whereas Chapter One focused on how vernacular and folk idioms were collaged onto a classical “background,” this chapter reverses that relationship. Examining the encounter between classical music and dance and its American vernacular counterparts in a popular genre, as well as its complicated and contradictory reception, further illuminates not only the contestation about what American music could or should be in WPA America, but also how social factors like race, class, and geography continued to frame the discussions.

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<sup>4</sup> Rodgers and Balanchine collaborated on four musicals together: *On Your Toes*, *Babes in Arms*, *I Married an Angel*, and *The Boys From Syracuse*. Balanchine continued to work on Broadway through 1951, collaborating on new works by notable composers Irving Berlin, Vernon Duke, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, and Frank Loesser, revivals of operettas by Franz Lehár and Johann Strauss, and two operas of Gian Carlo Menotti.

## Leaps and Bounds: *On Your Toes*, Dance, and Advancing the American Musical

*On Your Toes* was originally conceived as a vehicle for Fred Astaire. Rodgers and Hart had been in Hollywood in the early 1930s when they learned that Pedro Berman, head of the R.K.O. studio, was looking for a new idea for a film musical. Although R.K.O. passed on the idea, Lee Schubert and Harry Kaufman, who were in search of a show for Ray Bolger, signed on.<sup>5</sup> Rodgers and Hart returned to Broadway from Hollywood in the 1935-1936 season with two shows, *Jumbo* and *On Your Toes*. *On Your Toes* proved the hit of the season, garnering critical acclaim and running for 315 performances, becoming one of Rodgers and Hart's most successful and most-revived shows.<sup>6</sup>

The story centers on Philip "Junior" Dolan (Bolger), the youngest member of a family vaudeville act. Junior's father wants him to continue in the family business, but his mother insists he get a proper education in classical music. Fourteen years later, he is a music professor in the W.P.A.-run Knickerbocker University. Among his students are Frankie Frayne, Junior's primary romantic interest and writer of Tin Pan Alley-type songs, and Sidney Cohn, Junior's prize student who has finished a jazz ballet called *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. With the help of

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<sup>5</sup> "Words Without Music," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1936. All newspaper articles, unless otherwise noted, accessed from the *On Your Toes* Clippings \*MGZR, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Having passed on it, R.K.O. would later engage in a high-priced bidding war with other studios. Warner Brothers won the rights, and made the film in 1939, with Eddie Albert and Zorina. Untitled article, *The New York Times* July 11, 1936, accessed from *On Your Toes* Scrapbook, \*MWEZ 4470, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. See also "It's a Success, and Imagine His Surprise!" *New York Tribune*, May 10, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> While this number may seem small in comparison to modern day blockbusters like *Cats*, *A Chorus Line*, and *The Lion King*, runs in the 1930s seldom broke four or five hundred. That season, only the melodrama *Murder in the Old Red Barn* ran longer with 337 performances. Prior to *On Your Toes*, only one Rodgers and Hart musical had as much success: *A Connecticut Yankee* (1927, 421 performances); Rodgers and Hart had three subsequent musicals with longer runs: *I Married an Angel* (1938, 338 performances), *Pal Joey* (1940, 374 performances), and their final work *By Jupiter* (1942, 427 performances). In addition, *On Your Toes* may have well benefited from the staggeringly expensive and highly promoted spectacle of *Jumbo*'s production at the Hippodrome.



wealthy patroness Peggy Porterfield, Junior convinces the Russian Ballet to stage the work, and in the process becomes romantically entangled with the prima ballerina Vera Barnova. This infuriates her on- and sometimes off-stage partner Morrosine, who hires two gangsters to kill Junior during the ballet's premiere.<sup>7</sup> Frankie warns Junior, and he manages to extend the final dance sequence long enough for the cops to intervene. Junior is saved, the ballet is a smash, and the lovers are united (Figure 2.1).

By design, Rodgers's score mixes a variety of styles, including vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, classical music, and jazz. This collage of styles certainly provided novelty, something highlighted in the show's press,<sup>8</sup> but critics saw more: a surprising element of "sophistication." Even as it satirized high art, *On Your Toes* made a frank bid for that same status, an elevation of the musical to art form, by not just taking ballet as a subject but collaging classical music and ballet into a Broadway musical comedy. *Time* considered the work nothing less than a "definitive milestone," praising the show's facility with the realms of both comic and serious art:

The finale of *On Your Toes*' Act I, in which disaster strolls implacably through a conventional ballet, will make it impossible for many people ever again to take the serious Dance seriously. Thereupon, Messrs. Abbott, Rodgers & Hart, uncannily abetted by famed choreographer George Balanchine, perform an even more impressive theatrical miracle by staging 15-min. ballet of their own, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," which would probably evoke an ovation from modernists anywhere outside *On Your Toes*. Miracle No. 3, which tops the evening, occurs when Abbot *et al.* bring the whole performance back into the musical comedy theatre with an exciting, side-splitting and thoroughly surprising finale."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The characters Vera Barnova and Morrosine are thinly veiled references to Irina Baranova and Léonide Massine, two of the stars of the Ballets Russes.

<sup>8</sup> Reports of auditions reflected the diversity of talents in the dance line, everything from ballet dancers to a Rockette and a former prize fighter. See Lynn Garafola, "On Your Toes, or The Americanization of George Balanchine" presented at The Society of Dance History Scholars, June 22, 2001, Book 2, Popular Balanchine dossiers, 1927–2004, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>9</sup> Untitled review, *Time Magazine*, April 20, 1936.

### **Principal Characters from *On Your Toes* (1936)**

**Phil “Junior” Dolan III** (Ray Bolger), a former child vaudeville star and current professor of music, choreographer and star of *Slaughter On Tenth Avenue*

**Frankie Frayne** (Doris Carson), a student and romantic interest of Junior, writer of Tin Pan Alley songs

**Sidney Cohn** (David Morris), a student of Junior, composer of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*

**Vera Barnova** (Tamara Geva), a Russian Ballerina, star of *La Princesse Zenobia* and “Strip Tease Girl” in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, romantic secondary interest for Junior

**Konstantine Morrosine** (Demetrios Vilan) a Russian dancer, Vera’s onstage partner and jealous romantic partner

**Peggy Porterfield** (Luella Gear) Wealthy patroness of ballet, commissioner of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*

**Sergei Alexandrovitch** (Monty Woolley) Impresario of the Russian Ballet

### **Principal Numbers from *On Your Toes* (1936)**

#### **Act I**

“Two-a-Day for Keith” (Young Junior and Dolan Family)

“Questions and Answers (The Three Bs)” (Junior, Frankie, Sidney, and Class)

“It’s Got To Be Love” (Frankie)

“Too Good for the Average Man” (Sergei, Peggy)

“There’s a Small Hotel” (Junior, Frankie)

*La Princesse Zenobia* (Ballet)

#### **Act II**

“The Heart Is Quicker Than the Eye” (Peggy, Junior)

“Glad To Be Unhappy” (Frankie)

“Quiet Night” (Chorus)

“On Your Toes” (Frankie, Chorus)

*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* (Ballet)

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**Figure 2.1: Principal Characters and Numbers in *On Your Toes***

The surprise registered here at the “miraculous” ability to shift from jesting classical dance to seriously reinventing it and back again implies an incongruity between two traditions that ordinarily should not permit such combinations.

Like many critics, the reviewer for *Time* situates this sophistication chiefly in the show’s chief innovation—the ballets. Rodgers and Hart not only employed a well-established European choreographer of modern work, marking the first time a Broadway show would use the term “choreographer” in its credits, but incorporated two full-length ballets, a risky venture given the relative unfamiliarity with ballet in America. In the first act, Junior gets a bit part as a slave in the Russian Ballet’s production of *La Princesse Zenobia*, a spoof of the Fokine ballet *Scheherazade*, but manages to ruin the performance. In the second act, Sidney’s *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is produced. Junior plays a patron at a seedy bar who falls in love with a striptease dancer, played by Vera. The jealous owner of the club attempts to shoot Junior but accidentally kills the striptease girl, and after a struggle, Junior kills the mob boss and goes crazy with grief.

Historians have since taken a similarly laudatory view of *On Your Toes*, principally championing it for its revolutionary elevation of dance and integration into the plot of the musical. In one of the earliest histories of American musical theater, David Ewen writes that *On Your Toes* “placed considerable emphasis on the dance, perhaps the earliest musical to do so.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the work was deemed important enough to merit inclusion in broader midcentury surveys of American music, with John Tasker Howard commenting upon “its famous ballet, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, integrated right into the action—an innovation for Broadway” and Gilbert Chase similarly noting it was “remarkable for its realistic ballet.”<sup>11</sup> Later histories have seldom deviated

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<sup>10</sup> David Ewen, *Complete Book of the American Musical Theater* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), 239.

<sup>11</sup> John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: A Comprehensive History from 1620 to the Present* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 740; Gilbert Chase, *America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1955), 630. Chase later expanded his comments in a revised 1987 edition,

from this view: *On Your Toes* “explored the role classical ballet might play in a Broadway musical”; it was “the first show to utilize dance as a story advancing instrument”; and perhaps most dramatic of all: “No one had ever done it before, but Rodgers and Hart were ready to try another wild experiment. For the first time ever, they would work ballet into the very fabric of their story. They would make dance inextricably integrated into their musical comedy.”<sup>12</sup>

Scholars writing recently on the history of musical theater have focused more intently on this latter aspect as a precursor to the “integrated musical” model perfected by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Thomas Riis and Ann Sears name *On Your Toes* alongside *Porgy and Bess* (1935) as one of the few structurally innovative shows of the 1930s; Ethan Mordden marvels at the show’s “amusingly mystifying” opening number that sets up the pop vs. classical theme rather than providing the usual exposition; and most recently, Larry Stempel also highlights the pop vs. classical theme as the show’s source of humor and, while admitting that dance “did not really advance the plot from within,” affirms that it “served notice nonetheless that... it could serve as more than a decorative appendage and still be entertaining.”<sup>13</sup> The only extensive treatment the show receives beyond such praise is given by musicologist Geoffrey Block, who pays close attention to the construction of several songs and finds within the score an organic treatment of musical composition. Block also notes a more recent way the show has become important to

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rather boldly proclaiming, “Any search for new landmarks of the American musical show must certainly focus on the innovative features of *On Your Toes* (1936), with music by Richard Rodgers, book by Lorenz Hart and George Abbott, and choreography by Balanchine—whose presence obviously indicates something different was afoot.” See Gilbert Chase, *America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 533.

<sup>12</sup> The three quotations come, respectively, from Richard Kislán, *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theater* (New York: Applause Books, 1995), 137; David H. Lewis, *Broadway Musicals: A Hundred Year History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002), 86; and Scott Miller, *Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theater* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, “The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein from the 1940s to the 1960s” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 165; Ethan Mordden, *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 206; Larry Stempel, *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 281–2.

musical theater historians: the 1983 revival reconstructed Hans Spialek's orchestrations to carefully attempt a historically informed production of the work.<sup>14</sup>

*On Your Toes* is certainly not a run-of-the-mill Broadway production, but the critical focus on dance has left the full extent of its importance unexamined. While it is unquestionably important to the development of American musical theater, the show has broader importance within American culture and national identity that is not widely understood. Simply put, the musical's subject matter, Balanchine's choreography, and Rodgers's eclectic score reflected directly the musical heterogeneity of America at the time and entered into contemporaneous debates in WPA America over musical nationalism. Nationalism is indeed a central concern of the show, made clear in its promotion of a distinctly American jazz ballet as art. Furthermore, *On Your Toes* was also part of an emerging tradition of Broadway musicals set recognizably in present-day America. Rodgers and Hart had previously taken up political or distinctly American themes and settings (*Dearest Enemy* (1925), *Present Arms* (1928)), but in each case, the satire was far removed, set either in the past or in a distant land. *On Your Toes* drew on the success of satiric musicals like George and Ira Gershwin's *Strike Up the Band* (1930) and *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), and took aim at the New Deal policies of President Roosevelt, who had just been elected to a second term. *On Your Toes* predates several political musicals aimed at Depression-era America, including Marc Blitzstein's labor musicals *Pins and Needles* (1937) and *The Cradle Will Rock* (1938); Kurt Weill's *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938), a dark satire of Roosevelt's politics; and most notably, Rodgers and Hart's own *I'd Rather Be Right* (1937)—the first musical to make a sitting president the central character.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Showboat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85–100.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theater: A Chronicle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 563. Rodgers notes his excitement to work on contemporary subject matter in Hollywood for the films *The Phantom*

Rodgers is considered today a quintessentially American composer, thanks in large part to his work with Oscar Hammerstein on shows like *Oklahoma!* (1943), *South Pacific* (1949), and the film musical *State Fair* (1945), but this interest in crafting a distinct American style was already at work in *On Your Toes*. Rodgers even credits the show as epitomizing the effort by Broadway composers to create an American vernacular art music.<sup>16</sup> He offers a personal definition of musical nationalism and argues for the central place of the American musical within it:

The works that have proved meaningful and viable with the passage of time are those composed by men who wrote in the accents of their native music and language. This applies equally to symphonies, operas or musical shows; it is as if a composer manages to be most universal only when he is most completely himself. The operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan are thoroughly English, yet universally understood and loved. I can think of no music more typically German than Bach's. Of course, we are not trying to be American Bachs, or even American Gilbert and Sullivans, but their example of being completely themselves was valuable to us. In following their example we could have tradition on our side, even when we were being most untraditional; for example, we could absorb the folk devices of jazz—could, that is, if we wished. Lyricists could use slang expressions, even word of more than two syllables. We could take contemporary American stories as a base for our musicals. We were, in short, establishing our own traditions. The popularity of American musicals, both at home and abroad, attests to the rightness of our instincts.<sup>17</sup>

Under Rodgers's view of nationalism, the musical eclecticism of his score for *On Your Toes* stands out as purposefully American. In this chapter, I explore two themes of Rodgers's musical choices: how Rodgers's use of classical and jazz resonated with broader debates over which musics could and should be seen as "American," and how he makes a case in the show for the music of Broadway to stand on equal footing with jazz and classical music as an American art form.

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*President and Hallelujah, I'm a Bum*. See Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1975), 155.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Rodgers, "Opera and Broadway" in *The Richard Rodgers Reader* ed. Geoffrey Block (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 291

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## Classical Music in WPA America

Reviews of *On Your Toes* seldom failed to remark upon the employment of classical music in both the libretto and score, jokingly suggesting the listener “brush up on your Beethoven and Rimsky-Korsakov” in preparation.<sup>18</sup> In the 1930s, listeners would have had ample opportunities to do so. Classical music had long been on a steady course of institutionalization as an elite art form, retaining its European roots as repertoire and performers were imported to America. But with the populism that flourished in response to the Great Depression, many began to advocate for broader access to the arts as well as a focus on local, American performers and composers.

Chief among these efforts was the Federal Music Project, founded in 1935 as part of the Works Progress Administration. The scope of the project was vast; by June 1936, the project had developed 141 orchestras, 77 bands, fifteen chamber music ensembles, two projects for soloists, a project for composers, and 81 “dance, theater and novelty orchestras” for musicians, as well as 141 teaching projects, 24 projects for copyists, arrangers, librarians, and binders, two projects for tuners and repairers, and eleven administrative projects.<sup>19</sup> By August, it employed approximately 15,000 and produced over 30,000 concerts, seen by more than thirty-two million people. In addition to concerts, music education was an integral component of the project, ranging from music appreciation to composition and performance, and the Project touted its efforts to reach

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<sup>18</sup> Brooks Atkinson, ““On Your Toes’ Being a Musical Show With a Book and Tunes and a Sense of Humor,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 1936.

<sup>19</sup> Nikolai Sokoloff, *The Federal Music Project: the second preliminary report covering its scope and activities during its first nine months* (Washington: n.p., 1937), 7.

rural America's schools in addition to the 100,000 children served each month in New York City's 115 centers.<sup>20</sup> Junior's WPA-sponsored music classroom was a familiar, current setting.<sup>21</sup>

Although its primary objective was to get musicians back to work, the Project quickly took on a broader mission, namely, the fostering of a national identity and spirit through music. The Project reported that artists "responded heartily when they learned they were expected to return a value to their communities" and it frequently emphasized the role of music in fostering a sense of community and national pride.<sup>22</sup> The press covered it similarly. In a *New York Post* editorial, musicians were called a "national resource" akin to oil, while a radio play based on a true story of an unemployed man who was discovered to have musical talent concluded, "The project saved the man, his family, and, in a larger sense, all of American society by giving a transient a chance to be part of America."<sup>23</sup> Likewise, the audiences of concerts were frequently equated in press coverage to the nation itself, brought together through the power of music.<sup>24</sup> As recorded in the transcripts from the FMP's Composers Forum Laboratory, a series of new music concerts which were followed by sessions where the audience could ask questions of the composer, questions of nationalism are among the most frequently asked—so frequent that when composer Marion Bauer was asked, "Do you approve of nationalism in music?" she laughingly remarked, "It seems an evening would be incomplete if this question were not asked."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>21</sup> The report even lists an instance paralleling Frankie's character, wherein a woman enrolled in a WPA music theory course and wrote a song that was accepted by Lotte Lehmann. See *ibid.*, 20–1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>23</sup> The editorial is recounted in Cornelius Baird Canon, "The Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration: Music in a Democracy" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1963), 70; the radio play is detailed in Kenneth J. Bindas, *All of This Music Belongs To the Nation: The WPA's Federal Music Project and American Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Canon, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Transcript for New York City Composers' Forum Laboratory 1937, Box 2, E833 Records Pertaining to the Composers Forum Laboratory 1935–40, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.



First and foremost, the Project sought to encourage performances of American composers, old and new. The majority of the programmed works stressed accessibility, either older, more conservative composers like Edward MacDowell and John Knowles Paine or contemporary composers who used jazz and vernacular music, such as George Gershwin and Victor Herbert, who, with John Phillip Sousa, were the most performed composers.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, the Project gave many composers the opportunities for having works performed, and composers across the board praised the Project particularly for its funding of orchestras.<sup>27</sup> Transcripts from the Composers Forum Laboratories reveal a certain amount of resistance to modernism and snobbery towards jazz music, but also an engagement with and serious concern for the creation of an American musical tradition. Audiences flocked to concerts in large numbers, even to concerts with new music programmed, and news reports frequently commented on their enthusiastic, “music hungry” behavior.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the Project touted its expansive scope, bringing classical music concerts and symphonies to rural America, its notable support for African-American performers, as well as its rich diversity of musical programs, which included Mexican, Cuban, Hungarian Roma, Hawaiian, and Native American ensembles.<sup>29</sup>

Such diversity was not, however, uncontested. If audiences, performers, and administrators alike agreed that the Project conveyed a distinctly nationalist message, the means to this end were not always agreed upon. Joseph Weber, president of the American Federation of Musicians, sought to include musicians who performed jazz and other vernacular musics, and was largely successful, but the Project director Nikolai Sokoloff had a different view. Sokoloff saw the Project as a chance to supply a vastly needed cultural education, giving Americans the

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<sup>26</sup> Bindas *All of This Music Belongs To the Nation*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Canon 111.

<sup>29</sup> Sokoloff, 7.

background to discover their own national culture, and would have preferred its musicians perform classical music, including a steady diet of the European masters. Sokoloff's support for new American music was tepid, stating that while many works were without "lasting value" he hoped that the Project might create at least a national style if not a worthy new masterpiece.<sup>30</sup> Sokoloff yielded on the matter of repertoire, but stressed that "artistic standards and honest musical integrity were to govern" their projects. To that end, when their budget was cut in July 1937, the Project responded by removing the worst musicians from the organization, seizing it as a chance to improve the quality of music offered.<sup>31</sup>

The disagreement between Sokoloff and Weber is indicative of a broader cultural discourse concerning American art in the early twentieth century. Sokoloff's efforts to promote classical music grew out of the rising popularity of music appreciation programs on the radio. Walter Damrosch's *Music Appreciation Hour*, which aired on NBC beginning in 1928, took a fairly middle-of-the-road approach, friendly and accessible but serious and formal, and centered his program on a fixed Germanic canon—Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, and Brahms—but not to the exclusion of new and American works.<sup>32</sup> Other programs followed, some even more conservative than Damrosch's, others employing jazz musicians to "update" European classics for American listeners hooked on big-band swing. These bands, like the New Friends of Rhythm, nicknamed Toscanini's Hep Cats, became extremely popular, and a lively debate over their merits ensued.<sup>33</sup> Like the FMP, these radio programs carried political and patriotic value. With the Radio Act of 1927, Congress stipulated the need for radio to serve the

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<sup>30</sup> Bindas, *All of This Music Belongs To the Nation*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Sokoloff, 9 and Canon. 73.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1987), 203–4.

<sup>33</sup> For more information about particular programs, see Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini*, 205–206 and William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *Music of the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 174–180.

public interest, and radio stations quickly responded. The broadcasts stressed accessibility, what musicologist Michael Saffle calls “a strong democratic vision that [culture] was within the reach of any person,” and the notion of social mobility and agency of the listener to learn and appreciate high art.<sup>34</sup> The series *NBC University of the Air* aired several programs, including *The Story of Music*, *The World’s Greatest Novels*, *Your United Nations*, and *Our Foreign Policy*, effectively equating the importance of culture with that of current events. A few years later, with the onset of World War II, the conservatively Eurocentric NBC began a heavy promotion of new American works, again underscoring the frequent political weight culture carried.

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<sup>34</sup> Donald C. Meyer, “Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra: High, Middle, and Low Culture, 1937–1954” in *Perspectives on American Music, 1900–1950*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Garland Press, 2000), 308.

### **Bach, Beethoven, and Broadway: Classical Music in *On Your Toes***

Against this backdrop, the use of classical music in *On Your Toes* is less surprising, no longer just a generic abnormality but a timely and topical satire, fully aware of (and taking aim at) the cultural status of classical music. The cultural presence of classical music in the United States, and more specifically of music appreciation efforts aimed at the general population, smoothed the collage process of combining classical music with Broadway, even as *On Your Toes* comically emphasized the boundaries between the two traditions through satire. Examining the satiric commentary reveals both cultural tropes at play in broader society as well as a specific statement from the show's creators on the effectiveness of classical music within the discourse of American musical nationalism.

Satiric treatment of classical music has a rich tradition in Tin Pan Alley. Larry Hamberlin's work on opera in Tin Pan Alley songs provides a rich look at the practice and meaning of popular music's treatment of classical music. In his analysis of Irving Berlin and Ted Snyder's song "That Opera Rag" (1910), Hamberlin unearths anxieties over race, gender, and national identity expressed through the music. First, the song invokes classical music as a signifier of white culture in order to mock its African-American subject and his attempt at upward mobility by trying to assimilate into white high culture. Second, through its original performance within a stage play, classical music emerges as distinctly European in another ill-advised attempt (this time by a white woman) to leave one's station for something better. Finally, Hamberlin argues that the song allowed for a third type of mobility for the original performer,

that of the independent woman.<sup>35</sup> One key difference between the operatic novelty songs Hamberlin examines and the later, broader parodies of opera (and by extension classical music) in the 1930s and after, Hamberlin argues, is that the earlier songs never poked fun at the medium and could count on audiences to appreciate and know the opera repertoire.<sup>36</sup> The parody of *On Your Toes* straddles this line, often poking fun at the music, music appreciation, and ballet itself, but sometimes taking music seriously. But, as will be made evident, audiences could not always be counted on to know the repertoire, and the jokes were lost.

While there is no evidence to suggest that the opening of *On Your Toes* is modeled on Snyder's tune, the two share an unusual proclivity for quotation, with a collage of quoted tunes making up a substantial portion of Berlin's chorus and Rodgers's verse. The two also find common ground in terms of their symbolic use of classical music. First, *On Your Toes* continues to connect classical music with upward mobility. In an early scene, Junior's mother insists that her son must go to school, insisting that he will be a music teacher as her family has been. His father feels otherwise, wanting Junior to remain in the family vaudeville act, only agreeing to send him to school as punishment for his dalliance with a girl from a second-rate act. Here, the effect is positive—a force for moral correction and self-elevation, no doubt in line with the many who viewed classical music as necessary for combating the immorality of jazz and other vernacular musics.

Later, however, it is not mobility and morality but elitism that classical music connotes. With a message more along the lines of “That Opera Rag,” class boundaries are reinforced and classical music and its high-class listeners are sharply mocked in “Too Good for the Average Man.” One of the score's cleverest songs, it is a rather overt (and radio-unfriendly) send-up of

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 6 in Larry Hamberlin, *Tin Pan Opera: Operatic Novelty Songs in the Ragtime Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

the vices of the upper class, including adultery, alcoholism, and abortion, delivered by the show's two wealthy characters. Using musical quotation and allusion, the song aligns classical music with the upper class. The opening lyrics, describing class divisions in Russia and England, are set first with a quotation from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, and second with a stylistic allusion to Renaissance music. While these also serve up "local color" to the lyrics, they also convey an air of class, cemented later when the libretto instructs the two singers to dance a minuet—an odd choice given the music's duple meter—but pizzicato strings, bells, and ornamental trills nonetheless convey the feeling of a genteel aristocratic dance, no doubt accompanied on stage by something similarly evocative.

Culture lines are drawn most sharply in the number "Questions and Answers (the Three Bs)." At the start, a collage of quotations simulates the music lesson it offers. The song begins with Junior quizzing his students to a collage of quoted classical works: Schubert's "Ständchen," played diegetically just prior to the song proper, Franck's D Minor Symphony, and Liszt's *Les Préludes* (Example 2.1).<sup>37</sup> This lesson is directly modeled on Walter Damrosch's music appreciation radio programs, where he favored teaching themes of canonic works by attaching text to them. Following this, students are quizzed on name recognitions to a patter verse, before the chorus of the song drives home the canonic trio—Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms—anchored by the quotation of perhaps the most canonic work of all, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. An extended patter section follows, in which more names of composers are rattled off by the students, deftly rhymed by ethnicities of their last names, naming the various Italians ending in –ini, and the Russians and Eastern Europeans ending in –sky. It is quite clear that music education here entails simply the recognition of the canonic repertoire and figures. While the lyrics may

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<sup>37</sup> The orchestration of this song also includes a brief quotation from Felix Mendelssohn's *Die Hebriden* overture right after Junior sings, "You won't get home at all!"

simply have been constructed to rhyme extensively, they encompass a fairly wide variety, ranging from the Baroque to the late romantic period, include a mix of performers as well as composers, and even admit European operetta composers and performers into the canon. While listeners probably would not have recognized all of the names, many might have rung familiar, including a contemporary reference to the operetta *Sari*, which had been revived on Broadway in 1930.

The musical score is written in 2/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff features Junior and Miss Wasservogel. Junior's line is: "Whom was this writ - ten by? By Cae - sar Frank \_". Miss Wasservogel's line is: "Pro - nounce it Franck Name this for me, Joe Mc". The second staff features Junior: "Pro - nounce it Franck Name this for me, Joe Mc". The third staff features McCall: "Call \_\_\_\_ "We won't get home un - til morn - ing" You won't get home at all!".

**Example 2.1: Quotations of Franck and Liszt in “Questions and Answers (The Three Bs)”**

The lesson also clearly reveals a divide between popular culture and classical music, a divide grounded in real life, as witnessed in programming wars within the Federal Music Project and on the radio. The students overtly express their boredom with classical music, preferring instead popular songs of the day. Much to the consternation of Junior, the students incorrectly identify composers through references to popular culture, such as misrecognizing Liszt’s *Les Préludes* as a similar melody from the drinking song “We Won’t Get Home Until Morning,” calling Shostakovich’s opera “Lady MacBeth from Minsky’s,” a conflation of the opera with a

burlesque house, or believing Puccini to be the author of the Tin Pan Alley song “Poor Butterfly.”<sup>38</sup> This last answer hints at the contradiction at the heart of this show. “Poor Butterfly” was indeed inspired by the Puccini opera *Madama Butterfly*, suggesting the ease with which high and low cultures have mixed in American popular song, a trend continued by *On Your Toes*, all the while asserting a clear boundary between the two within the show’s satire. The punishment for mixing is made clear by the students, who sing, “You will never get the old diploma here / If they catch you whistling ‘La Paloma’ here.”<sup>39</sup>

Classical music is coded not only as elite in *On Your Toes*, but also more subtly as foreign. The opinion that good art was synonymous with European had been long held, only recently challenged by the nationalist attempts of the FMP. Sokoloff, Damrosch, and others in their choices of programs preferred the European composers of the past to American composers or contemporary music. The view of classical music taken most often in *On Your Toes* adheres to this practice. The repertoire referenced—both musically and textually—in the show is exclusively European; not a single American work or composer is named. Even performers are given over to the purview of Europe, as seen in lyrical references in the number “Questions and Answers (The Three Bs)” or more directly through the literal importing of the Russian Ballet into this country to provide culture. True to musical appreciation models, only a few twentieth-century composers—among whom Americans might have more easily ranked—merit mentioning, including the remarkably recent Shostakovich opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which premiered in Leningrad in 1934 and premiered in New York the following year, and coincidentally made headlines in the *New York Times* the day after *On Your Toes* debuted

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<sup>38</sup> The tune for “We Won’t Get Home Until Morning” is better known today as “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” See Example 1 to compare.

<sup>39</sup> “La Paloma” was a globally popular song written by Spanish composer Sebastián de Iradier in 1859, popularized by a wide range of people, from Georges Bizet to Connie Francis.



following the Russian government's heavy criticism of the work.<sup>40</sup> As the few barbs tossed at Stravinsky in the book suggest, however, Junior's inclusion of them in the lesson may have been done begrudgingly.

Finally, classical music is also coded as feminine, furthering its uneasy status within the show. In the opening scene, it is Junior's mother who insists upon the education; his father strenuously objects. This scene, set 15 years earlier than the present (i.e., 1921), is historically accurate. Women outnumbered men as music teachers between 1870 and 1930, and by the show's debut in 1936, the associations between classical music and femininity may likely not have been completely erased.<sup>41</sup> This feminizing grows more uncomfortable when applied to Junior, who becomes emasculated, perhaps even homosexualized, through his classical music training. Initially, his classical music education attempts to correct his "lower nature," curtailing his energetic, youthful, virile sex drive seen in the first scene. The adult Junior is quite changed, romantically fumbling with Frankie while his submissive behavior with the aggressively sexual Vera further unsettles his masculinity. Even the cross-gendered name Frankie and the diminutive Junior unsettles the heteronormativity of the relationship.<sup>42</sup> Junior's effeminacy is contrasted in this scene with the self-assured masculinity of composer/student Sidney Cohn, who refuses to take classical music seriously and is aligned with the more masculine-coded music of jazz.<sup>43</sup>

The hints at homosexuality become most overt during the lesson, in which Junior asks his class what inspired Schubert to write his lied "*Ständchen*." One student responds, "A beautiful

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<sup>40</sup> Olin Downes, "Changes in the Soviet: Shostakovich Affair Shows Shift in Point of View in the U.S.S.R." *The New York Times* April 12, 1936. Accessed online.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 398.

<sup>42</sup> The names Frankie and Junior pun off the popular blues song "Frankie and Johnny," which is discussed later in this chapter as a further signifier of unsettled gender norms in popular culture.

<sup>43</sup> The film of *On Your Toes* avoids coding Junior as homosexual by having him not attend school to become a classical music professor, but having him naturally shift from vaudeville to composer. It is Junior who composes the ballet *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, and does so after a dry spell is cured by seeing his childhood sweetheart, Vera Barnova, again; heterosexual love cures his musical impotence.

girl,” while Frankie insists it was “a handsome young man.” Frankie’s intimations that Schubert was gay are left hanging when Junior simply answers, “No—a pork chop, a glass of beer and a liverwurst; Schubert should be very close to our hearts here for he was born poor with no W.P.A.”<sup>44</sup> Junior’s response of course affirms the familiar trope of the starving artist, just as many music educational books of the time did, but Junior’s silence at Frankie’s response is unsettling. Was homosexuality another trope? Charles Ives certainly viewed his contemporaneous music world as largely effeminate and admitted that he pursued other hobbies like baseball partly out of fear of being labeled as homosexual.<sup>45</sup> More broadly, Gavin James Campbell has documented the prevalent and tenacious belief in the early twentieth century that classical music was a key player in the wider trend of effeminization of American men, despite its domination by male composers and performers.<sup>46</sup> The selection of a Schubert lied is a particularly pointed reference. Schubert, who was probably gay, has a long history of queer associations. A 1928 article by Frederick H. Martens battles what must have been the popular conception of Schubert as uninterested in women as romantic objects; these battles over Schubert’s sexuality continue today.<sup>47</sup> Schubert’s lieder were particularly coded. Indeed, James

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, and George Abbott, *On Your Toes*, Typescript, April 11, 1936, 1-3-6. All typescripts, unless otherwise noted, are accessed from RM 262, Billy Rose Theater Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy A. Johnson, *Baseball and the Music of Charles Ives: A Proving Ground* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 49.

<sup>46</sup> Gavin James Campbell, “Classical Music and the Politics of Gender in America, 1900–1925,” *American Music* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2003), 446–473.

<sup>47</sup> Frederick H. Martens, “Schubert and the Eternal Feminine,” *The Musical Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (October 1928), 539–552. This image of Schubert as feminine propagated even earlier in Victorian England, as detailed in David Gramit, “Constructing a Victorian Schubert: Music, Biography, and Cultural Values,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 65–78. The more contemporary set of debates, meanwhile, stemmed from one between Maynard Solomon and Rita Steblin in the wake of Solomon’s article “Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1989), 193–206. For Steblin’s response, see Rita Steblin, “The Peacock’s Tale: Schubert’s Sexuality Reconsidered,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 5–33. Indeed, the Summer 1993 issue of *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* was devoted entirely to “Schubert: Music, Sexuality, and Culture.” The debates also became public through an event at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in New York City, featuring among the speakers Susan McClary, who offers accounts in “Music and Sexuality: On the Steblin/Solomon Debate,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 83–8, and “Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert’s Music” in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas

Huneker identifies the genre of lieder as quintessentially feminine in a 1905 article “Feminism in Modern Music,” singling out Schubert’s work when he rhetorically asks, “Is there anything more feminine than the Serenade?”<sup>48</sup>

No cultural element was as elite, foreign, and feminized to the extreme as ballet, the main target of satire within the show. Whereas orchestral music had been successfully established in America in the nineteenth century, efforts to entrench ballet as part of American culture had largely failed, lacking both private financial support and public cultural demand.<sup>49</sup> In the early twentieth century, American choreographers, including Isadora Duncan, Ted Shawn, and Ruth St. Denis, attempted again to restart public interest, but achieved most of their early successes abroad with European companies, who then toured America, only strengthening the impression that ballet was exclusively European. Shawn’s attempts in the 1920s to increase involvement from American men met with especially fierce resistance.<sup>50</sup> Balanchine’s, American School of Ballet, founded on his arrival in 1933, had made little headway by the time *On Your Toes* premiered three years later.

Ballet was more familiar to audiences than it had been, thanks to renewed efforts to grow American interest, but nevertheless remained as foreign and elitist as ever, making it no doubt a popular and timely target for satire. Satire is precisely what the collaborators of *On Your Toes* had in mind. In the first act, the Russian Ballet performs *La Princesse Zenobia*, a mock-

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(New York: Routledge, 1994), 205–243. A lengthy article by Joseph Horowitz, “Schubert: Eternally Feminine?” *The New York Times*, January 19, 1992, introduced the controversy to audiences, and McClary notes that her talk warranted three “scathing reviews” from *The New York Times*: Edward Rothstein, “Was Schubert Gay? If He Was, So What?” *The New York Times*, February 4, 1992; Edward Rothstein, “‘And If You Play ‘Bolero’ Backward...’” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1992; and Bernard Holland, “Dr. Freud, Can Tea Really Just Be Tea?” *The New York Times*, February 17, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> James Huneker, “Feminism in Modern Music,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 39 (August 1905), 693.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Coe claims that ballet was just a memory by 1870 and attempts to start up schools in America had failed without patronage or “the cultural confidence to recast the art of Europe in American terms.” See Robert Coe, *Dance in America* (New York: Dutton, 1985), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Ted Shawn, “Dancing for Men,” in *I See America Dancing: Selected Readings, 1685–2000*, ed. Maureen Needham (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 200–2.

nineteenth-century Russian ballet that parodied the Fokine production *Scheherazade*. Balanchine was certainly familiar with Fokine's ballet, having staged it in Copenhagen in 1930, and while Rodgers may not have been familiar with the ballet, he certainly was familiar with Rimsky-Korsakov's score, listing it as one he recalls particularly loving to play at Lorenz Hart's place.<sup>51</sup> Audiences may very well have been familiar with the original ballet, as it remained within the popular repertoire—in fact, it opened the spring season at the Metropolitan Opera one day after *On Your Toes* premiered.<sup>52</sup> Critics easily picked up on the similarities in their reviews.

Rodgers's score for *La Princesse Zenobia* suggests that his familiarity with the Rimsky-Korsakov score guided him in parts to create a friendly satire on the work, a score built up from a patchwork of references to the original blended with tropes of nineteenth-century exoticisms. The ballet music consists of three principal ideas, each repeated a number of times with minimal variation. The first of these segments is a fanfare, centered on a four-bar phrase that establishes a modal center around the submediant. The melody bears a resemblance to themes from the second and fourth movements of *Scheherazade*, while its general modal center on the submediant is a standard Spanish-Oriental characteristic (Example 2.2). As the tableau opens, the fanfare ends with a series of chords, marked *stentando* as if to subvert the expected grace with which a ballet tableau might begin. In an earlier sketch, Rodgers composed a series of major chords that moved up the whole-tone scale: D, E, F#, Ab, Bb, and C.<sup>53</sup> In the final product, the chords modulate by thirds, always with a common tone: D, F, Ab, C, Eb, G (mm. 8–10), the effect being a stranger

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<sup>51</sup> Taper 140, Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 29. Rodgers also quotes *Scheherazade* in the ballet for *Babes in Arms*, "Peter's Journey." See Mordden, 214.

<sup>52</sup> Garafola, 9. Further evidence is found in a New York Times article covering the De Basil ballet, listing *Scheherazade* as a favorite of audiences "too well known to call for extended comment." See John Martin, "De Basil Ballet Here After Tour" *The New York Times* April 13, 1936. Accessed ZC-310, Reel 9, Billy Rose Theater Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>53</sup> Box 12, Folder 18, Richard Rodgers Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

progression, continually wandering farther afield, and more in line with nineteenth-century compositional practice.

a)



b)



c)



d)



e)



**Example 2.2:** a) Rodgers, *La Princesse Zenobia*, mm. 1–4; b) Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*, mvt. II, m. 108; c) *Scheherazade*, mvt. IV, mm. 108–11; d) Joaquín Rodrigo, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, mvt I, mm. 1–2; e) Pascual Marquina “España Cani”

The second section, a dance in three-quarter time, employs several notable tropes: exotic instrumentation including the oboe, gong, and xylophone, modal melodies that frequently invoke the whole-tone and octatonic scales, pastoral drones, alternation between the tonic and modal

seventh scale degree, and parallel motion within the harmonization. The melodic shape bears some resemblance to the violin theme in the first movement of *Scheherazade*—indeed, a solo violin enters at m. 31 to strengthen the connection—but an even stronger resemblance is found in another familiar work with exotic elements: the Malagueña movement from Maurice Ravel’s *Rapsodie Espagnol* (Example 2.3). Thus far, Rodgers’s construction of the score is still something of a collage. Although not on the scale of “Questions and Answers (The Three Bs),” *La Princesse Zenobia* collages a variety of Orientalist tropes with the similar understanding that these codes and references to the original are familiar to audiences, and thus crucial to the ballet’s comic purposes.

a)



b)



**Example 2.3: a) Rodgers, *La Princesse Zenobia*, mm. 11–4; b) Ravel, *Rapsodie Espagnol*, mvt. II, mm. 40–2**

The third section, a *pas de deux*, provides a point of contrast by suggesting that a more serious attempt at ballet music is being offered, as it emulates an aesthetic closer to Rimsky-Korsakov and to classical form in general. Its central idea appears to be derived from *Scheherazade* itself, emphasizing the chromatic descent from the tonic to a flattened seventh degree. A four-bar melody traces a chromatic path around B before expressively leaping

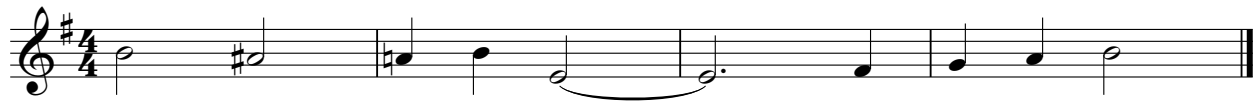
downward to E and climbing back up again. As in the other sections, the melody incorporates chromaticism and invokes the whole-tone scale, but to different effect; whereas previous sections have remained harmonically static, here the use is expressively modulatory, especially as the melody expands from its four-bar origin to a sweeping melody, fitting for the romantic duet on stage. This is Rodgers at his most “classical,” and the *pas de deux* music sustains itself for over a hundred bars, far longer than either of the other two sections. While much of the music merely repeats the motif, it does so with subtle harmonic and melodic variation, similar to the first movement of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* (Example 2.4). The ballet ends with a flourish of activity, an accelerating dance for the slaves based on the opening fanfare, echoing again Rimsky-Korsakov as well as numerous nineteenth-century Orientalist orchestral dances. Rodgers seems to have considered a fourth idea, laid out partially in a manuscript immediately following the *pas de deux*: a waltz incorporating overt octatonicism—further revealing his indebtedness to Rimsky-Korsakov—and echoing the opening oboe melody in its repetition and scalar motion.<sup>54</sup>

Balanchine choreographed *La Princesse Zenobia* as a sharp parody of classical ballet, but the parody proved too subtle, as critical and press reports of the ballet demonstrate. Several reviews remark upon the seriousness with which the audience took the ballet, at least initially, with laughter being shushed by other patrons (the reviewer for *McCall’s* admitted to being among those shushing the laughter). The *New York Herald*, in fact, reviewed it as a serious ballet, writing, “Those of you who are fond of serious ballet will be overjoyed by Mlle. Geva’s performance as the Princess of Zenubia [*sic*] in a fluent pantomime of the routine school,” while the *Boston Post* reported that the dancers themselves were unaware that the ballet was a spoof

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

a)



b)



c)



**Example 2.4: a) Rodgers, *La Princesse Zenobia*, mm. 148–51; b) Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*, mvt. I, mm. 20–3; c) *Scheherazade*, mvt. I, mm. 102–3**

until they read the reviews the next day.<sup>55</sup> While this final claim remains rather dubious, comments about the audience’s seriousness when presented with Balanchine’s ballet uncover a certain predisposition, namely to assume that a Balanchine ballet, even when presented in a musical comedy, was to be taken seriously. Furthermore, as recounted by Tamara Geva in an interview, the laughter came from the gallery and was shushed by the patrons down in the higher-priced orchestra seats, adding shades of class distinctions in terms of etiquette in this liminal space between musical comedy and the classical ballet.<sup>56</sup> That is, wealthier audiences

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<sup>55</sup> See Percy Hammond, Review of *On Your Toes*, *New York Herald* April 13, 1936; “Say It Isn’t So,” *Boston Post* April 5, 1936. Other reviews implying that either the reviewer or audience took *La Princesse Zenobia* seriously: Review of *On Your Toes*, *Stage* (May 1936); Helen Eager, Review of *On Your Toes*, *Boston Traveler* March 23, 1936; Edward F. Melvin, “Song and Dance with Humor,” *Boston Evening Transcript* March 23, 1936; Elinor Hughes, ““On Your Toes’ Continues; Satire and Comedy Combine in Two Recent Attractions,” *Boston Herald* March 29, 1936; Review of *On Your Toes*, *McCall’s* (July 1936); Review of *On Your Toes*, *Christian Science Monitor* March 23, 1936 (accessed from ZC-310, Reel 9, Billy Rose Theater Collection, The New York Library for the Performing Arts).

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Tamara Geva by John Gruen, February 12, 1978. Transcript accessed in Binder 3 of *On Your Toes*, Series III, The Popular Balanchine Dossiers, (S)\*MGZMD 146, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



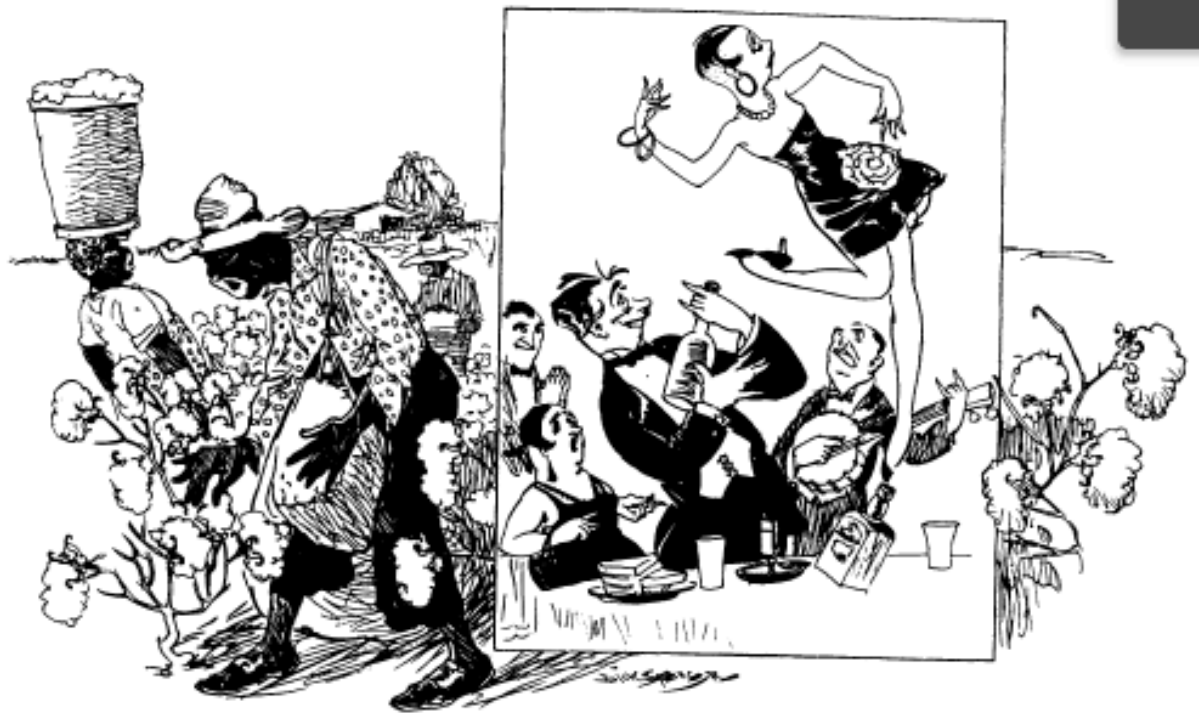
treated the show's ostensibly European ballet with reverence as high art, unaware it was a satire, while lower-class audiences, who were likely less knowledgeable about ballet and therefore even less likely to understand it as satire, found it funny, suggesting the very sight of it was, to them, ripe for ridicule.

One moment stood out, however, as obvious, welcome humor for musical theater audiences. In the show, Junior eagerly takes Peggy's offer of a bit part in the ballet, yet in classic screwball fashion, ends up with a larger role as a slave and proceeds to ruin the entire show. Here, the laughs are made through physical comedy, but they also come at expense of American pride, as Junior fashions himself at the lofty level of European masters and ultimately thoroughly embarrasses himself when he fails to fit in with the ballet company. These laughs at an American's failed pretensions toward European culture were a familiar trope, the very same content that made "That Opera Rag," and the stage play in which it appeared, a success. But here there is a new tension at work. Pairing these laughs with the notably absent laughs at the beginning of the ballet, we see that not only did audiences of *On Your Toes* not get cultural references and jokes, the opposite of what Hamberlin argues about the audiences of "That Opera Rag," but in taking the ballet seriously, audiences considered it to be a serious step toward raising an American vernacular form to an art form. This tension between humor and seriousness is mirrored in Rodgers's score, which itself is a collage that sometimes broadly parodies Orientalist tropes and elsewhere legitimately attempts a through-composed Romantic ballet. This collage allowed Americans to laugh at their own pretensions even as they turned to the classics as a model to be not imported but adapted to vernacular forms, including jazz.

## Taking Jazz Seriously

Even while classical music was being popularized and democratized through the FMP and radio, its status as high art was never questioned. That status is what made it so ripe and effective for certain forms of parody in *On Your Toes*, and what made other moments in the show like *La Princesse Zenobia* difficult for American audiences to understand. The status of jazz, on the other hand, was far less cemented, and its valuation in *On Your Toes* was even more difficult to discern. Jazz had always resisted easy categorization, in part because of its rapid and widespread proliferation across several urban centers. In the early decades of the twentieth century, debates centered on its origins and ownership, its racial and moral characteristics, even its fundamental musical definition; for many, taking jazz seriously meant treating it as a serious threat to social norms and high culture. By 1936, however, jazz discourse had evolved considerably, and if had not eliminated these older associations, it had at least layered new associations on top of them that treated jazz both as a wildly popular music and as a serious art music akin to and combinable with classical music.

In order to trace the shifting opinions toward jazz, I will begin by briefly enumerating some of the various anxieties that surrounded jazz in the 1920s by way of a cartoon that appeared in *Musical America* in 1926 (Figure 2.2). First, the upper panel addresses jazz's immorality by linking jazz with physicality, sex, and drunkenness, shocking the well-to-do woman who observes. In this period, many publicly decried the impropriety of the dances jazz accompanied,



**A Contrast in Origin and Mood—The Spiritual of the Negro's Yesterday, and Today's Jazz, as Epitomized by Dick Spencer**



**Grinding Out the Popular Jazz Product**

**Figure 2.2: Cartoon from *Musical America*, 13 February 1926, p. 3**

as well as jazz's physical effects upon the brain and body, charging that jazz's use of syncopation, dissonance, and blue notes caused the listener to experience something of a breakdown of mental reasoning and to disregard common decency.<sup>57</sup> Second, and somewhat relatedly, the lower image links jazz to the modern noise and nervous energy of the machine age, which was often linked to the anxieties about moral transgressions.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the mechanical "grinding out" of a "product" denigrates jazz as faddish, crudely and quickly assembled for an insatiable, novelty-seeking audience. Jazz here is the antithesis of an inspired or timeless art form like classical music, a musical sausage rather than prime rib. Third, it marks jazz in a complexly racial way. While the upper panel takes pains to differentiate jazz from the "authentic" African-American spiritual, the lower panel suggests a number of inauthentic racial and exotic connotations of jazz. The supposedly "authentic" African Americans in the upper panel come across as grotesque caricatures as well, suggesting a link to the minstrel figures who appear on the sheet music below. If blackness is situated within jazz uneasily, both panels readily suggest that jazz is racially marked not only as black but also as Jewish: one Jewish man turns the crank in the lower panel, while another watches the scene above, hands pressed together as if in charge of, profiting from, or inspired by what he sees.

The sheer multiplicity of jazz products foregrounds both a view of jazz as machine-made and mass-marketed and the complexity of its racial markers. A quick survey of the sheet music covers overloads the viewer with a collage of signifiers that reflect a variety of ethnic markers for jazz. One song references white novelty jazz acts, including a barnyard novelty song akin to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's "Livery Stable Blues," while another is a black-dialect

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<sup>57</sup> For example, see Anne Shaw Faulkner, "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1921, reprinted in *Jazz in Print (1856–1929): An Anthology of Selected Early Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Karl Koenig (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 152–4.

<sup>58</sup> Neil Leonard, *Jazz and the White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 47–8.

“coon” song, “Tennessee Mamie,” with a minstrel caricature on the cover; others feature exotic images including an African figure in a grass skirt dancing wildly and a Hawaiian number; and two give a nod to the French appetite for jazz—“Jazz Beau” puns the French title with Blues legend Jasbo Brown, while “Boo Coo Jazz” similarly evokes scat singing and the French “beaucoup (de) jazz,” or “a lot of jazz,” commenting perhaps on the overabundance of jazz being produced. Judging by the sheet music categorized as “jazz” by its Tin Pan Alley producer, the definition of jazz was hardly fixed or simple, seemingly unified only in its commerciality.

By the 1930s, public opinion was not so sharp against jazz; however, the beliefs encapsulated in the above comic continued to frame debates over taking jazz seriously as an art in its own right. Jazz in the 1930s continued to resist easy categorization and took a variety of forms. Swing, which would soon dominate the jazz scene nationwide, had only just broken the year before with Benny Goodman’s performance at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles. In Harlem, black audiences thrilled to the hot rhythms of Chick Webb’s orchestra, a far cry from the sweet orchestral sounds of Paul Whiteman’s band, which remained somewhat popular on the radio. Meanwhile, in uptown Manhattan, the Onyx Club’s success as a prominent Prohibition-era speakeasy until 1933 was fed by its hot jazz performances, and shortly after the end of Prohibition, it quickly became the premiere site of jazz in the 1930s. Its mostly white patrons embraced a nostalgic view of “authentic” jazz, including a resurgent interest in Dixieland, boogie-woogie, and emulations of Armstrong-style small-group improvisation.<sup>59</sup> This emphasis on forms of jazz linked to African-American traditions at the Onyx Club and around Harlem was balanced, however, by a continued acceptance of older strains of white humor through novelty

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<sup>59</sup> Patrick Burke, *Come In and Hear the Truth: Jazz and Race on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 52–3.

jazz acts.<sup>60</sup> This diversity was forthrightly acknowledged, even perhaps desired, as Scott

DeVeaux emphasizes in his description of a collage-like benefit concert held on May 24, 1936:

ranging from full-sized dance orchestras (the Casa Loma Orchestra) to bands-within-the-band (Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven) to miscellaneous combinations (such as a guitar duo and a saxophone sextet) that played in front of the curtain while stagehands set up between appearances by the big bands. Black musicians, including Louis Armstrong and boogie-woogie pianist Meade "Lux" Lewis, were represented as well as white musicians.

The concert also featured Artie Shaw's novelty "String Swing Ensemble," featuring a string quartet, drum, and guitar, and initially lined up "small combo purist" Red Nichols and Benny Goodman.<sup>61</sup> Like the sheet music covers in the cartoon, this jazz concert exuded an aura of collage, highlighting the sheer diversity of its possibilities along multiple fronts: size, geography, period, novelty, and most pointedly race.

Jazz continued to defy easy racial categorization as well. To be sure, the 1930s left a lasting impact on jazz through integration of white (often Jewish) and black musicians, most notably Benny Goodman's employment of Teddy Wilson in 1935 and Lionel Hampton a year later. And if live performance and audiences were somewhat slower to integrate, mixed-ensemble recordings were common by the late 1930s.<sup>62</sup> The relationship between jazz, African Americans, and Jews remained complex. David Lewis, acknowledging an increased cooperation between Jews and African Americans in their mutual goals of assimilation, suggests that one key difference lay in their attitudes toward their lower-class businesses, namely that Jewish elites embraced their lower-class roots while African Americans ignored theirs. Lewis concludes that "the Harlem Renaissance literally took place in a rented space—in a Harlem they did not own."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Scott Deveaux, "The Emergence of the Jazz Concert, 1935–1945," *American Music* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1989), 14 and Burke, 70.

<sup>61</sup> DeVeaux 12–3.

<sup>62</sup> Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 203.

<sup>63</sup> David Levering Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930s," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (December 1984), 563.

This helps to explain why Jewish musicians so easily found a home in Harlem by relating to the working-class setting. Artie Shaw's experience with anti-Semitism crystallized his commitment to integration, and finding a community in Harlem, he commented, "For the most part I was actually living the life of a Negro musician, adopting Negro values and attitudes, and accepting the Negro out-group point of view not only about music but life in general."<sup>64</sup> Jewish bandleaders, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw among them, would help lead the charge for integrating jazz, but in doing so retained jazz as their expression of their own Jewish backgrounds and aspirations; Mezz Mezzrow went even further in his association, perhaps too far, by declaring himself an "honorary Negro." Meanwhile, many African-American jazz musicians touted their affinity with Jewish culture, from Louis Armstrong's wearing a Star of David to Paul Robeson and Ethel Waters regularly performing Hebrew songs.<sup>65</sup>

The presence of Jews in jazz was not universally embraced, however. Alain Locke, one of the leading intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, believed in jazz's potential as a folk music to create an African-American art music tradition but felt disappointed at its dilution within the commercial marketplace.<sup>66</sup> His rationale echoed fears also expressed in the *Musical America* cartoon:

One of the handicaps of Negro music today is that it is too popular. It is tarnished with commercialism and the dust of the market-place. The very musicians who know the folkways of Negro music are the very ones who are in commercial slavery to the Shylocks of

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<sup>64</sup> Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*, 207.

<sup>65</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the extent of crossover between Jewish and Black performers, see Chapter Four of George Bornstein, *The Colors of Zion: Blacks, Jews, and Irish from 1845 to 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) and Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a closer examination of one particular case, see Jeffrey Melnick, "A Black Man in Jewface" in *Race and the Modern Artist*, ed. Heather Hathaway, Josef Jařab, and Jeffrey Melnick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 126–139.

<sup>66</sup> Paul Allen Anderson offers a broad but concise account of Locke's complex and occasionally contradictory statements on jazz. See Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 162–6.

Tin Pan Alley, in artistic bondage to the ready cash of our dance-halls and the vaudeville stage.<sup>67</sup>

Locke's anti-Semitic remarks emphasize again the fractured and unfixed nature of jazz, but also suggest a broader shift toward embracing jazz: jazz was no longer the danger, but now the victim.

Racial tensions also sublimated into other discourses around jazz. As jazz scholar Nathan Bakkum has observed, accounts of John Hammond's trip to Kansas City to hear the Count Basie band in 1936 have often carried a theme of "exoticist voyeurism," associating the music with racialized danger vis-à-vis what record producer Frank Driggs termed the "unsavory characters and illicit behavior" in the Kansas City club—an exotic nature, Bakkum notes, that would have to be tempered for New York's cosmopolitan audiences.<sup>68</sup> Prohibition in the early 1930s similarly rendered jazz exotic, as it was driven into underground speakeasies and associated with illegal behavior and in New York and Chicago with (white) mob bosses who owned various clubs. Hollywood also continued the association of jazz with various forms of transgression, particularly female sexuality. In Hollywood, jazz generally connoted crime, a sleazy or underworld setting, or a sexually impure or aggressive female. Peter Stanfield's examination of African-American popular songs in 1930s films suggests that "Hollywood's deployment of songs such as 'Frankie and Johnny' or of jazz and blues more generally... condense meanings of class, gender, and race."<sup>69</sup> Jazz's power to signify was in fact so strong that the mere inclusion of the blues ballad "Frankie and Johnny" in a film warranted censorship based on its associations.<sup>70</sup> In

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<sup>67</sup> Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1968), 4–5. Jeffrey Melnick offers a richer account of dissenting opinions of "commercial slavery" in Chapter Four of *A Right to Sing the Blues*.

<sup>68</sup> Nathan C. Bakkum, "Don't Push, Don't Pull: Jazz Rhythm Section Interaction and Musical Change" (PhD. Diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 97–9. Bakkum quotes a passage from Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop—A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Stanfield, *Body and Soul: Jazz and Blues in American Film, 1927–63* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 75.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 56



addition, new fears about jazz and mental health cropped up, as swing and its accompanying African-American jitterbug were linked with “emotional unbalance, sexual excess, and even rape” as well as drug use.<sup>71</sup>

Fears about moral and sexual transgression in the 1930s were clearly lingering from the concerns raised in the 1910s and 1920s and stemmed not only from jazz’s challenge to racial segregation, but also from its similar challenge to high and low cultural divides. Jazz and classical music existed in a form of cultural collage, which over time produced shifting interpretations of their relationship. In the 1920s, some stressed the boundaries between the two and viewed them as stark opposites, often pitting jazz as a dangerous threat to classical music. Such fears had been raised when jazz first began to make its way into the classical concert hall, prompting fears that jazz refused to “stay in its place,” as one critic put it.<sup>72</sup> With jazz threatening to tarnish higher culture, critics of jazz sought to reinforce the boundaries through contrast: various articles in periodicals detailed how jazz was depleting symphony orchestras, destroying the performer’s ability to play correctly, clogging the radio, and even driving classical musicians to suicide, as one article from the *New York Times* on April 7, 1922 reports.<sup>73</sup> Such fears were largely absent by the 1930s, though not banished completely; the Bach Society of New Jersey led a campaign in 1938 to outlaw the practice of “jazzing” classical music.<sup>74</sup>

Others saw in the collage a more unified whole where jazz and classical music each enhanced the other. Jazz had some strong proponents in the 1920s who drew upon classical

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<sup>71</sup> Kenneth J. Bindas, *Swing: That Modern Sound* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 10. Further details about the negative associations of swing can also be found in David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>72</sup> George Gershwin, “Mr. Gershwin Replies to Mr. Kramer,” reprinted in *The George Gershwin Reader*, ed. Robert Wyatt and John Andrew Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 98.

<sup>73</sup> “Musician Is Driven to Suicide by Jazz: Wouldn’t Play It, Couldn’t Get Employment” *The New York Times* April 7, 1922. Reprinted in *Jazz in Print (1856–1929): An Anthology of Selected Early Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Karl Koenig (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 177.

<sup>74</sup> Stowe, 94.

music for comparison rather than contrast, although it was not until the 1930s that jazz's supporters made large strides in the defense of jazz's artistic merits. Critics who came to the defense of jazz provided detailed musical analyses of jazz's elements and noted the innovations in harmony, rhythm, and orchestration. Roger Pryor Dodge, for example, compared jazz improvisation to eighteenth-century practices, and trumpet player Bubber Miley's melodic writing to Palestrina.<sup>75</sup> Other critics compared jazz's polyrhythms to English madrigals, improvisation to cadenzas, syncopations to Brahms, and its orchestration, moods, and textures to Delius.<sup>76</sup> The rise of periodicals to feature serious jazz criticism—*Metronome*, *Tempo*, *Down Beat*—suggests an alignment with classical music through their titles, which invoke art music terminology. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that many efforts to take jazz seriously did not place jazz on par with classical music, perhaps strategically. “Snort if you will,” concludes one article, “but the fact remains that the shop girl who has heard Paul Whiteman has taken a step toward appreciation of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.”<sup>77</sup> In another, George Gershwin expressed his belief that the difficulty and sophistication of jazz techniques would be not harmful, as was believed, but beneficial in instructing classical performers.<sup>78</sup> Both statements implicitly acknowledge that a gap in quality remains between jazz and classical music, however, and that appreciating or playing Beethoven is the ultimate goal.

Jazz performers also aligned themselves with classical music in various ways.

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<sup>75</sup> Roger Pryor Dodge, “Harpsichords and Jazz Trumpets” in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105–10.

<sup>76</sup> Aaron Copland, “Jazz Structure and Influence,” *Modern Music* (November 1926), reprinted in Koenig, 495–7; Connections to Delius are made by Laura Rexroth, “Duke Ellington and Percy Grainger: Black, Brown, and Blue-Eyed English” in *Wind Band Activity in and Around New York ca 1830-1950: Essays Presented at the 26<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the College Band Directors National Association New York, NY, February, [sic] 2005*, ed. Frank J. Cipolla and Donald Hunsberger (New York: n.p., 2005), 88.

<sup>77</sup> Don Knowlton, “The Anatomy of Jazz,” *Harper's* (March 1926), reprinted in Koenig, 461.

<sup>78</sup> George Gershwin, “Does Jazz Belong to Art?” in Wyatt and Johnson, 94–8.

Musicians from Louis Armstrong to Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker quoted classical music in performance. Several musicians in the 1930s proved adept at not simply quoting but performing classical music, including Teddy Wilson's harpsichord performances, Benny Goodman's famed recordings of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets, and Goodman's commissioning and premiering new works, such as *Contrasts* by Béla Bartók and concertos by Aaron Copland and Malcolm Arnold, all of which served to counter those who had dismissed their musicianship. Goodman's famous Carnegie Hall debut in January 1938, a few months before his quintet recordings, was perhaps the iconic moment of jazz's admission to high culture, even more than Paul Whiteman's 1924 premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue* in a concert called "An Experiment in Modern Music." Whiteman's was the first major concert to garner positive press regarding the possibility of jazz as a concert music. As Whiteman himself announced, "I desire to show the musical world that jazz, as we arrange and perform it, is no longer merely a dance medium, but feels ready to make a bid as an art, an American musical art, characteristic of our country, expressed in a tonal language which our people can understand."<sup>79</sup> Goodman's debut at Carnegie Hall more genuinely reflects the entry of jazz on its own terms into the concert hall; Goodman did less to classicize the sound of jazz, included African-American performers, and did not play classical excerpts alongside jazz or classical-jazz hybrids. But Goodman refers to Whiteman's concert in a key way. Whiteman's concert was broadly structured to trace the history of jazz from its early days to its art music present, Goodman featured a "twenty years of jazz" segment, and John Hammond's "From Spirituals to Swing" concert a few months after Goodman's would repeat this form—all of which suggested both that jazz had a traceable lineage of styles like that of classical music and that modern jazz had developed into a serious art form from rougher folk roots.

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<sup>79</sup> Vernon Duke, *Listen Here! A Critical Essay on Music Depreciation* (New York: I. Obelensky, 1963), 54.

Perhaps the greatest advancement toward placing jazz and classical on equal terms came through jazz composition. As I detailed in the previous chapter, the embrace of jazz among modernist Europeans, and their American followers like George Antheil, made Americans wary about jazz in the 1910s and early 1920s, but the growing number of Americans working in America who adopted and advocated jazz, including John Alden Carpenter, Victor Herbert, Deems Taylor, and Aaron Copland, as well as conductors like Leopold Stokowski, made critics take note. By the 1930s, jazz was popular enough to merit serious treatment in the Federal Music Project despite Sokoloff's personal objections. Jazz was included in lists of folk music that the Project funded the collection and research of, considering it an essential part of the American musical folk landscape. The Project also held a number of jazz concerts as well as Swing Jazz Forums, akin to the Composers Forums, where composers and musicians would discuss jazz seriously. Transcripts of these had their share of praise for the music, but also frequently featured fans of classical music treating jazz somewhat dismissively and sometimes fans of jazz who felt misled to expect swing rather than art music.<sup>80</sup> Yet their attendance at these forums suggests a willingness to take jazz seriously enough for debate or a genuine curiosity about its merits.

The two biggest names in jazz-classical composition were not classical composers who adopted popular forms, but just the opposite: George Gershwin and Duke Ellington. The successes and difficulties each met with prove instructive for evaluating how Rodgers, also working within the popular sphere, mixed the two genres. Gershwin formally studied composition with Rubin Goldmark and turned his attention to extended works for orchestra, including a piano concerto, the *Concerto in F* (1925), that he orchestrated himself—a rare practice among Broadway composers. Gershwin explained, “I wanted to show that jazz is an

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<sup>80</sup> The inclusion of jazz as a folk music for collection is located in Box 38: Entry 823 Records Relating to Music Research 1935–1936, Folder: Composers' Use of U.S. Folk Themes. The transcripts of the Swing Jazz Forums are located in Box 4, Folder: Swing Jazz Forum Study, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

idiom not to be limited to a mere song and chorus that consumes three minutes in presentation...not merely a dance; it comprises bigger themes and purposes.”<sup>81</sup> Ellington not only adopted the language of classical composition—“Concerto for Cootie,” “Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue,” “Creole Rhapsody”—but extended the form of the jazz composition as well. This is apparent as early as his 1927 “Black and Tan Fantasy,” which builds upon its stylistically eclectic blues chorus form with a contrasting 16-bar strain of sweeter jazz, and a coda quotation of Chopin’s Funeral March, which cyclically refers back to the opening blues “spiritual” theme in both rhythm and harmony.<sup>82</sup> Later compositions continued to experiment with longer, more sophisticated, and more classical forms better suited to live performance than the three minutes on a single side of a record, doing precisely what Gershwin aimed to do as well. In 1933, Ellington’s “Creole Rhapsody” was honored by the New York School of Music as the previous year’s best new composition, prompting Howard Taubman to comment, “Though it may shock the idolators of the masters, it is fair to say that Ellington is a composer in the tradition of Bach and Haydn.”<sup>83</sup>

It was one thing to suggest that Ellington and Gershwin were composers in the tradition of Bach and Haydn, but it was another to suggest that they were their equals. Indeed, both composers faced criticism of their more ambitious works. Critics praised Gershwin’s tunefulness, as befitting any good Tin Pan Alley songwriter, but found his classical side trite and derivative. In his *Concerto in F*, some seemed willing to give Gershwin the benefit of the doubt and insist that conductor Walter Damrosch was not up to the spirit of the work, or that his efforts

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<sup>81</sup> George Gershwin, “Jazz is the Voice of the American Soul,” reprinted in Wyatt and Johnson, 94.

<sup>82</sup> This is the piece wherein Roger Pryor Dodge compared Bubber Miley’s improvisations to Palestrina, making this one of the earliest works to garner serious musical consideration. The connections of which I speak between the blues theme and the Chopin are the i-iv-i cadence of the Chopin as arranged here, and the dotted rhythm in m. 10 and 11 of Miley’s initial statement of the theme.

<sup>83</sup> John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 165; Leonard, 146.

of cultural uplift succeeded too well.<sup>84</sup> Lawrence Gilman harshly judged Gershwin not on whether he wrote good jazz but simply on whether he wrote good music, ultimately finding the attempts at classical form made the work “conventional, trite, at its worst a little dull.”<sup>85</sup> Allan Langley agreed, dismissing the work as a series of good tunes stitched together with “spurious Chopinesque padding.”<sup>86</sup>

Ellington’s longer works fared even worse, partly because of his race. Warren W. Scholl felt Ellington was “out of his field” when expanding works beyond the popular song form, while Constant Lambert wrote, “Ellington’s best works are written in what may be called ten-inch record form.... Into this three and a half minutes he compresses the utmost, but beyond its limits he is inclined to fumble.”<sup>87</sup> Sharper still are John Hammond’s essentialist critiques that Ellington’s longer works abandon his “simplicity and charm,” and in doing so:

he has purposefully kept himself from any contact with the troubles of his people or mankind in general. ... Consequently Ellington’s music has become vapid and without the slightest semblance of guts. His newer stuff bears superficial resemblance to Debussy and Delius without any of the peculiar vitality that used to pervade his work. The Duke is afraid even to think about himself, his struggles and his disappointments, and that is why his “Reminiscing” is so formless and shallow a piece of music.<sup>88</sup>

In these critiques, Ellington’s race inscribed conflicting limits on what he can do; one suggests that he must use his art toward a racially specific uplift, while another primitivizes Ellington by celebrating his “simplicity” while insisting Ellington, and presumably other black entertainers, should avoid approaching anything more serious. Classical music is out of his field, somewhere he doesn’t belong. Ellington’s own opinions on the matter were understandably mixed. He strove

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<sup>84</sup> The awarding of Ellington is noted in Samuel Chotzinoff, “New York Symphony at Carnegie Hall” in Wyatt and Johnson, 84. The quotation from Taubman appears in Lawrence Gilman, “Mr. George Gershwin Plays His New Jazz Concerto” in Wyatt and Johnson, 86.

<sup>85</sup> Lawrence Gilman, “Mr. George Gershwin Plays His New Jazz Concerto” in Wyatt and Johnson, 86..

<sup>86</sup> Allan Lincoln Langley, “The Gershwin Myth,” reprinted in Wyatt and Johnson, 174–5.

<sup>87</sup> “Warren W. Scholl: Profile of Ellington in the *Music Lovers’ Guide*,” in Tucker, 104; “Constance Lambert on Ellington,” in Tucker, 111.

<sup>88</sup> John Hammond, “The Tragedy of Duke Ellington” in Tucker, 119–120.

to expand jazz's possibilities, writing jazz works symphonic in scope, such as *Black, Brown, and Beige* (1943), and even planned an opera on the African-American experience.<sup>89</sup> But Ellington never composed works for classical ensembles and also made comments that he would never write a symphony or opera because he needed an audience.<sup>90</sup>

Gershwin's and Ellington's bid for their works—and more broadly, for jazz—to be taken seriously was complicated by jazz's rapidly exploding popularity as a dance music at the same time that it made serious advances in the concert hall. Its popularity was what spurred many musicians, conductors, composers, and even the Federal Music Project to take notice and opportunistically try to wrest that popularity toward classical music; jazz was simply unavoidable. Yet those same attempts to tame it into an established art form—whether through lectures, concerts, or compositions—left audiences feeling that something essential to the music was lost in translation, a loss borne out in the critiques of Gershwin and Ellington. As a result, it is hardly surprising that Ellington had a harder time than Gershwin, for jazz as a popular music in Gershwin's time largely meant Paul Whiteman's already rather symphonic sweet jazz; Ellington, writing in the 1930s, had to incorporate the rhythmic energy and hot new sound of swing, and did so by writing not for the orchestra but for his band, thereby having to go further to convince some audiences of its artfulness while heightening others' expectations that what would be heard would conform to the popular conception of jazz.

That the critics perceived in Gershwin and Ellington's efforts an ultimate failure to synthesize jazz and classical traditions suggests to me more about the impossibility of that task than about their respective compositional abilities. Carol Oja's analysis of Gershwin's concerto suggests collage as the structure, alternating between American vernacular and European art

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<sup>89</sup> Mark Tucker suggests that this unproduced opera, *Boola*, was never completed. See Tucker's note in Tucker, 116.

<sup>90</sup> "Duke Ellington on Gershwin's 'Porgy'" in Tucker, 116.

musics: “Like cinematic cross-cuts between one location and another, they splice aural images of the blues together with ones of the European piano-virtuoso repertory.”<sup>91</sup> Leonard Bernstein describes *Rhapsody in Blue* similarly: “a string of paragraphs stuck together—with a thin paste of flour and water.”<sup>92</sup> The metaphors here—cinematic montage, pasted paper—invoke collage.

One of the clearest examples of collage within this attempt to bridge jazz and classical comes again in cartoon form: the Walt Disney animated short *Music Land*. Several films portrayed a conflict between jazz musicians and classical musicians, a sort of modern-day musical Romeo and Juliet, but *Music Land* accomplishes the task more aurally than most.<sup>93</sup> The familiar tropes are at play here, as a collage intercutting between jazz and classical plays up difference: the Land of Symphony is elegant and refined, where aristocratic anthropomorphic violins and harps dance to a minuet, whereas the Isle of Jazz is boisterous and decked out in busy neon lights, as drums, brass, and exotic ukuleles in grass skirts jitterbug to a big band sound. The central story concerns the romance between a young male saxophone (whose father resembles a jolly Paul Whiteman) and a young female violin (with a stern mother). He pursues her, and winds up imprisoned in a metronome jail, a plot that caters to two tropes: of jazz as masculine and sexually transgressive and classical music as feminine and innocent, and of classical music being boring (to which Junior’s students would attest), its straight rhythms literally a prison for the freedom of improvisatory jazz. This provokes an all-out war between the kingdom of jazz and queendom of classical, which assault each other with cannonades of music; the soundtrack intercuts between and dissonantly overlays the big band jazz with Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries.” By the end, all is resolved: a double wedding for the two young lovers and for their

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<sup>91</sup> Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 323.

<sup>92</sup> Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 57.

<sup>93</sup> For instance, see *That Girl From Paris* (1936), *Champagne Waltz* (1937), *Alexander’s Ragtime Band* (1938), *Naughty but Nice* (1939), *Broken Strings* (1940), *Let’s Make Music* (1940), *My Love Came Back* (1940), *Mister Big* (1943), *Greenwich Village* (1944), *Night Song* (1948), and *A Song is Born* (1948).



respective parents takes place, accompanied by a musical collage of a hot big band version and a slightly swung string orchestra version of Wagner's "Bridal Chorus." In other words, the uniting of jazz and classical is not actually a fusion at all, but a harmonious collage of two impulses.

What I find most powerful in drawing attention to collage is not the incongruity between the two traditions, but the alignment of collage with American vernacular forms in general. Leonard Bernstein continues his critique of *Rhapsody in Blue*: "You can't just put four tunes together...and call them a composition. A composition means a putting together, yes, but a putting together of elements so they add up to an organic whole."<sup>94</sup> Collage is a negative in these works of Gershwin and Ellington only if one privileges the synthetic, through-composed forms of classical music, but there has been a resistance to this in critical and scholarly assessments. Samuel Chotzinoff blamed Walter Damrosch for the *Concerto in F*'s shortcomings in his review. Composer Marc Blitzstein opined that the concert hall treatment "debauched" jazz.<sup>95</sup> Musicologists Carol Oja and Orin Moe have offered provocative analyses of another prominent figure who treated jazz and blues within art music, the African-American composer William Grant Still, ably demonstrating how his music foregrounds popular aesthetics. Oja argues that Still's fractured style came from his work in musical theatre and that "this kind of discontinuous formal structure might have grown out of Still's work as an arranger and... could be credible." Moe aims to shift the treatment of Still's first symphony to emphasize its popular roots over the classical, claiming that "it would be far more fruitful to approach this work as a blues-dominated symphony rather than a symphonically dominated blues. Viewed as the latter, it becomes a rather conservative composition with ethnic coloration. Viewed as the former, it is a fascinating

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<sup>94</sup> Bernstein, 57.

<sup>95</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, *William Grant Still* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 185.

rapprochement between music from two distinctly different traditions.”<sup>96</sup> In his study of big band swing, David Stowe suggests a similar racial framework for collage when he contrasts the smooth unity of Benny Goodman’s Carnegie Hall concert with the celebration of difference and competition that characterized a battle of the bands between Chick Webb and Count Basie that occurred that same evening.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, whereas Gershwin and Whiteman repeatedly used the melting pot analogy, and W. E. B. DuBois used art music to argue for a similar racial synthesis, Ellington referred to dissonance as “the Negro life... our way of life in America. We are something apart, yet an integral part.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Jean Toomer’s writing and Romare Bearden’s visual collages drew formal inspiration from vernacular black musics, specifically jazz and blues, in their respective art forms.<sup>99</sup> How collage—and particularly collage between jazz and classical music—is manifest within a work, then, carries cultural connotations in at least two interconnected ways. First, the degree of synthesis between white and black forms of music within a collage could emulate social aims across the color line. Second, racially and economically coded musical genres could dictate aesthetic choices, with classical music privileging organic formal unity and smoothness, while jazz and other vernacular musics could readily appreciate an aesthetic based on difference and contrast. With an awareness of such implications, we can examine the treatment of jazz in *On Your Toes* and understand how collage on the Broadway stage reframed contemporaneous debates and complicated the black/white and jazz/classical binaries through the presence of Jewish musical theater traditions.

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<sup>96</sup> Carol Oja, “‘New Music’ and the ‘New Negro’: The Background of William Grant Still’s ‘Afro-American Symphony,’” *Black Music Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (Autumn 1992), 162; Orin Moe, “A Question of Value: Black Concert Music and Criticism,” *Black Music Research Journal* 6 (1986), 64.

<sup>97</sup> Stowe, 21.

<sup>98</sup> Duke Ellington, “Interview in Los Angeles: On *Jump for Joy*, Opera, and Dissonance as a ‘Way of Life’” in Tucker, 150.

<sup>99</sup> See Chapter Three of Rachel Farebrother, *The Collage Aesthetic in the Harlem Renaissance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

## Satire on Tenth Avenue?: Serious Jazz meets Musical Comedy

*On Your Toes* reflects in numerous ways the volatility of jazz by never committing itself to a single position on the subject. At various moments, Rodgers and Hart gleefully satirize jazz's low art reputation. In a lyric from the song "The Heart is Quicker Than the Eye," in which Peggy chronicles her mother's numerous lovers, Hart pens:

Number four was a musician  
Who could swing it sweet and hot.  
Whistler's Mother is a classic.  
Mother's whistler was not

Here, jazz is not only associated with sexual promiscuity, but Hart wittily does so through that same technique of contrast with high culture. But much of the show concerns a loftier, if problematic, vision of jazz in the jazz ballet *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Examining the treatment of the jazz ballet by the show's creators and its critics lays bare the contestations over race and nationalism at the heart of the subject matter.

Before the ballet "premieres" at the end of the show, the audience knows very little: that it employs jazz, is choreographed by a vaudevillian-turned-professor, and features a striptease girl. Most telling is its sensationalist title. *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* thus links jazz not only to sexual promiscuity but more broadly to Hollywood's noir-ish associations as well, and it seems to revel in the exotic spectacle of a seedy, violent, quasi-racialized underworld set on the periphery of Manhattan and populated with equally peripheral characters. The connection to New York's most violent, criminal district no doubt resonated with Hollywood's use of jazz to

underscore tales of fallen women, urban dramas, and gangster films, and such images were somewhat realistic. Prohibition drove jazz underground and with the Depression, fancy clubs gave way to cheap dance halls and mobster-owned speakeasies.<sup>100</sup> But there was a bright side to jazz in the Prohibition era and after: jazz scholar Burton Peretti recounts that “in New York and Chicago, speakeasy and mob-owned nightclub owners gradually adjusted to legitimate managerial careers,” while historian Kenneth Bindas reports that jazz musicians Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw felt that music saved them from a life of crime growing up in a gangster-ruled Chicago.<sup>101</sup> *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, however, offers very little of that uplift; jazz is inextricable from violent mobsters and loose women, not an alternative to it. The story of the ballet opens in a nightclub that features jazz dancing and a striptease performance. After the girl finishes, a patron tries to go after her and is shot by her boss. Junior’s character pays for a private dance, which is interrupted by the cops, and he drunkenly and forcefully resumes it later. Her boss attempts to shoot Junior but kills the girl instead when she tries to intervene, and after an ensuing fight, Junior kills the boss and goes into a mad dance. During this final sequence at the ballet’s premiere, Junior learns that two actual gangsters are in the audience and plan to shoot him at the ballet’s end, and he must extend the finale long enough for the cops to arrive.

Although the idea of a jazz ballet specifically remained something of a novelty in 1936—certainly novel enough that nearly every critic remarked upon it—*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* had several notable precedents. John Alden Carpenter’s *Krazy Kat* (1921) is often credited as the first jazz ballet. It was followed closely by a second Carpenter ballet, *Skyscrapers* (1923–24), and Emerson Whithorne’s “dance satire” *Sooner Or Later* (1925). Europe too was exploring jazz

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<sup>100</sup> Lewis A. Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>101</sup> Burton W. Peretti, *Jazz in American Culture* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 69; Kenneth J. Bindas, *Swing, That Modern Sound*, 90.

as a ballet subject; Cole Porter's *Within the Quota* and Darius Milhaud's *La Création du monde* debuted together in Paris in 1923, Bohuslav Martinů's *La Revue de Cuisine* (1927) and Kurt Weill's *Die Sieben Todsünden* (1933) incorporated elements of jazz as well. In addition, many concert works involving jazz were choreographed. A choreographed version of Henry Gilbert's *Dance in the Place Congo* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1918, predating Carpenter's *Krazy Kat*. Several of George Gershwin's works, including *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and his *Concerto in F*, were choreographed as well.<sup>102</sup>

*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* shares a number of common elements with its predecessors. Like *Skyscrapers* and *Sooner or Later*, it is identifiably set in contemporary urban America, specifically New York City, and like *Within the Quota* and *Krazy Kat*, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* takes popular culture images of the time—the gangster, one of the most popular film genres of the day—as its subject. *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* also includes diegetic dances of the day, as was common, and Carol Oja notes in her comprehensive study of American music in the 1920s that *Skyscrapers* preceded *On Your Toes* by hiring Broadway performers.<sup>103</sup> Yet unlike other American jazz ballets, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* situates jazz in a seedy underworld of crime, violence, and stripteases. In that regard, Weill's dark satire *Die Sieben Todsünden* may be its closest predecessor; the two share a striptease dancer as the central female protagonist and both employed Balanchine as choreographer.

While Gershwin's concerto was expected to have an integrated structure, the ballet could readily accommodate an episodic form. None of these jazz ballets sounds like jazz, but rather they connote it through a series of tropes: syncopations, instrumentation (such as the banjo or saxophone), blue notes, blues harmonic progressions, Tin Pan Alley pop tunes (especially for the

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<sup>102</sup> Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 357.

<sup>103</sup> Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 336. Oja also quotes Deems Taylor in a review of *Krazy Kat* as presciently saying, "The people who really ought to be doing ballet in this country are the producers of reviews and musical comedies."

slow theme), or quotations of popular dances or songs. Added to this typically are a number of modernist classical music features, particularly ostinatos. In addition to these works, Jeffrey Magee notes that Tin Pan Alley composers had likewise assembled jazz through a collage of signifiers and references.<sup>104</sup> *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* includes a number of these tropes, and makes use of an episodic structure, but feels more in touch with its jazz, or at least popular, roots. In fact, there is very little that would seem “classical” about it, perhaps because it was written by a musical theater composer for a Broadway musical rather than by an art music composer for a ballet company. Rodgers’s score and Spialek’s orchestration nod toward a number of jazz elements, everything from a Dixieland novelty-style horse whinny and a popular dance rhythm to the hot big band swing of the day and a specified “bluesy” number for the drunken dance between the patron and the striptease girl. The score’s occasional nods to the classical side come when the ballet turns most serious: the scoring for the *pas de deux*, the modernist harmonies when the girl is killed, and the plaintive oboe solo that follows as her death is briefly lamented.

Unsurprisingly, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* takes most of its cues from the Tin Pan Alley song, favoring a base structure of four and eight bar phrases, and Rodgers’s proclivity towards simpler melodies with motivic consistency. Most Rodgers-like is the *pas de deux*, with an AABC structure. The first A, an eight-bar antecedent, is characterized by long-held notes and downward descending lines punctuated by a leap of a sixth. Rodgers subtly changes the second A’s opening to provide more stability by dropping from the third to the tonic and balances by extending the ending, repeating the leap up to the sixth a second time before dropping to the seventh and resolving to the tonic, a ten-bar phrase. The B begins on the dominant with a leap up of a seventh—building on the leap in the A—resolving up with an appoggiatura to the octave before

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<sup>104</sup> Jeffrey Magee, “Everybody Step: Irving Berlin, Jazz, and Broadway in the 1920s,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2006), 698–715.

dropping down a seventh. The C phrase expands to twice the length—sixteen bars— and abandons the long notes of the A and B phrases for a more fractured style of shorter motives and punctuated, syncopated rhythms. This section still connects motivically to the earlier phrases, with leaps now stretched to octave glissandos, a reprise of the chromatic appoggiaturas of the B section offset by downward stepwise movement that recall the A section and bring the melody to a close (Example 2.5).

The melody's formal qualities are enriched by its harmonization. The two A sections are harmonized similarly, with oscillating parallel triads that add a lilt and a touch of harmonic color to the sustained notes of the melody. The first A concludes (mm. 7–8 of the melody) with an extended dominant harmony that rises chromatically from V to a V6-5 chord. The second A deviates in two ways. First, it inverts the conclusion, ending (mm. 15–16 of the melody) with a descending chromatic line in the harmony, from #4 to b3, supported by a V/V–V–I harmonic progression with a neighboring common-tone diminished chord at the end before the final cadence. Second, the tonic arrives in the aforementioned sequence at m. 16 as expected, but the melody delays the cadence for two more bars, heightening the surprise. In contrast, the B section consists entirely of tonic-dominant alterations every two bars, before the C phrase's harmonic complexity, laden with seventh and ninth chords and with suspensions and appoggiaturas that offset the gestural repetitions in the melody, producing an effect of a bold but constantly shifting harmonic color underneath a simple, steady melody.

A1

leap (6th)

A2

leap (7th) chromatic upwards leap (7th, inverse)

B

leap (octave)

C

chromatic upwards

Example 2.5: Rodgers, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, mm. 132–73



Before audiences heard a note of the ballet, however, they were informed of what they should expect, since questions of its merit are given substantial consideration by the characters as the ballet is created, discussed, and staged. As choreographer and star of the ballet, and as educator to its composer, Junior navigates the ballet's—and his own—position between classical and vernacular traditions. The ballet is first introduced in Junior's classroom, where he announces, "Miss Frayne has sold another song. (Applause) It is a catchy tune, but cheap.... Now we come to the more serious music. Mr. Sidney Cohn has finished his jazz ballet to my satisfaction."<sup>105</sup> Junior's attitude toward the jazz ballet remains a little standoffish in this scene; the jazz ballet is not a serious work *per se*, but simply "more serious" than a Tin Pan Alley song. Here Junior echoes the cautious supporters of jazz employing the familiar method of contrast to define jazz. The ballet is worthwhile enough to earn Junior's support; by giving it a stamp of approval, the knowledgeable WPA music instructor lends it some credibility. In the next scene, where Frankie discovers that Junior is choreographing the work, Junior's opinion is expanded:

Frankie:       And you're arranging the dances for it?  
Junior:        Yes, but I'm afraid this work needs inspired choreography something  
                  as great as the Russian Ballet.  
Frankie:       Well—why not try the Russian Ballet?  
Junior:        That's asinine—ridiculous. They have a tradition, they wouldn't even  
                  read it.  
Frankie:       With Peggy Porterfield backing them [...] She's yearning for an  
                  American ballet—she's offering prizes for one.

Having taken up the mantle of choreographer, Junior's admiration of the jazz ballet is rendered stronger here, claiming the work is worthy of more distinguished choreography, yet remains painfully aware of the view taken of jazz among the elite.

The question of the ballet's worth is very quickly tied up with national identity. In these early scenes, the jazz ballet is clearly identified as the product of not just an American composer,

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<sup>105</sup> Ellipsis appears in the original

but of a WPA-funded education. The exchange between Frankie and Junior makes the issue of the ballet's Americanness explicit, not only in terms of Peggy's commission, but in the stark contrast between the traditions of the Russian ballet and its American counterpart. Junior's response was broadly representative of America: conflicted about its place among European music. Jazz acted as a brash calling card of the ballet's American character in stark defiance to European traditions, the source of Junior's half-shamed response and at the same time precisely what Peggy and audiences demanded. This rift is continually deepened over the course of the show and reaches a breaking point during a rehearsal when the Russian star Morrosine quits:

Vera:           Darlin – this Russian greenhorn – he does not understand American Jazz Rhythm.  
Morrosine:    (Stops dancing) I don't go on. Stop that cat music. (The music stops) I tell you something – it's all going to be rotten.

Morrosine's labeling of the music as "cat music" suggests a racially-charged belief that jazz is primitive and animalistic—jungle music, and thus quite unsuitable for the ballet. But it also masks his own inability to master its rhythmic complexity, and Junior, an American, ends up having to replace the Russian, who cannot master jazz as an American, apparently innately, can. This turn of events may have been inspired by the premiere of *Krazy Kat*, where reviews criticized the performances by Adolph Bolm and George Barrère simply because they were not American.<sup>106</sup> Junior is ultimately wrong in his belief that the ballet needs Russian choreography, for it requires American choreography and American dancers, not to mention a developing confidence in that national voice. The moment patches together Junior's dual histories as classical music professor and vaudeville performer, finally absolving Junior's shame of his background and his inferiority complex towards the Russian masters. The scene easily suggests

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<sup>106</sup> Howard Pollack, *John Alden Carpenter: A Chicago Composer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 203–4.

that America has found a similarly satisfying solution through its employment of jazz as a compositional tool.

Peggy Porterfield has to navigate a different terrain of artistic standards and public demand in her decision to stage *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Peggy's "yearning" for an American ballet positions her within the broad demand for American composers embodied in the FMP's philosophy. But her embracing of a jazz ballet specifically reveals her own expectations for the work. The popular appeal of these jazz works drives Peggy's insistence on performing *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* after the failure of *La Princesse Zenobia* as a way to shore up profits. Her characterization of the work as "a new ballet that's the nuts" further emphasizes its vernacular appeal through her comical appropriation of slang. The Russians protest, but Peggy defends the choice, "Your public is tired of Scheherazade, La Spectre de la Rose—they've seen all those Russian turkeys at the Capitol for 40¢—this is something different—it's a jazz ballet—they can't understand the music without the story and nobody can understand the story—they'll say it's art." Peggy seemingly reaffirms the associations already raised, continuing the differentiation between *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and the Russian tradition, painting the latter as out of touch with modern American public demand, a demand seemingly met by a jazz ballet. But Peggy's comment in fact undercuts this—jazz is not associated here with populism but rather with modernism. Jazz is the opposite of accessible, something the public "can't understand" and is therefore art. The comment is meant to be a broad satirical jab at another target, modern art's reputation for shocking audiences, as Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* had famously done in Paris, and the inaccessibility of it in any form (George Antheil, Marcel Duchamp, and Gertrude Stein, among others). Admittedly, American audiences did not flock to the spectacle of modernist performances as they did in Paris, and the incorporation of jazz into modernist

compositions was typically an effort to attract audiences. Nevertheless, the moment serves as a reminder that jazz did not universally mean a popular hit, but had made significant ties with modernism as well.

The populism/modernism and low/high art dualities that surround the jazz ballet are encapsulated in the character of Sidney Cohn, the ballet's composer. Sidney, in fact, has very little to say about the ballet itself, but his attitude in the classroom illuminates his aesthetic position. In "Questions and Answers," Sidney is among the worst students, showcasing a strong affinity with the vernacular. He includes novelty musician/harmonica virtuoso Borah Minnevitich among the canonic composers and misidentifies Puccini as the author of the Tin Pan Alley song "Poor Butterfly."<sup>107</sup> Sidney also stands up quite vocally in defense of Frankie's popular songs. But Sidney also compares himself in that lesson to Stravinsky (a remark which earns an equally sharp rebuke from Junior). Sidney's comparison spells out his assuredness and confidence, something Junior lacks, and makes him a prime candidate for a new voice of American art not unlike Charles Ives, the figure of a male genius, educated at home, embracing both the popular and modernist traditions, irreverent and humorous but self-assured and sincere.

Within the world of *On Your Toes*, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* triumphs as a wholly American ballet, a serious work. Its real-life reception with newspaper critics, however, was less clear. Because collage leaves meanings open, the interpretation of a "serious" jazz ballet collaged into a Broadway musical elicited a variety of reactions, depending on which elements the viewer privileged. With questions about how to take the first ballet still lingering, critics divided particularly in their interpretation of the seriousness of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Many

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<sup>107</sup> The identification of this character as Sidney is seen in sketches of the song, indicating that his wisecracks were intentionally part of his character within the song before the rest of the chorus was determined.

reviews found it surprisingly good, that is to say, a serious work.<sup>108</sup> Reviews labeled the work “a seriocomic ballet masterpiece,” and “one of the finest musical and choreographic numbers ever presented.”<sup>109</sup> Several apparently agreed with the show’s contention that this ballet was indeed American. The *Boston Post* compared it favorably to Gershwin and Ferde Grofé in its color while stressing its own unique flavor, while the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* proclaimed:

Ray Bolger is the chief dancer, American from tip to toe, and no doubt it was Mr. Balanchine’s idea that with such dancers as he extant in the country we can have striking ballets of our own. “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue” is the answer, an answer more than adequate. We have had that answer before but never previously has it been given so great a prominence.<sup>110</sup>

Several other reviewers remarked more broadly upon Balanchine’s ability to choreograph in a jazz style and upon Rodgers’s music. However, reviewers were far from unanimous in such praise.

While nearly all enjoyed the ballet, a number of other reviewers enjoyed it as a satire rather than a serious ballet.<sup>111</sup> Typically in these reviews, *La Princesse Zenobia* and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* are seen as bookend satires on “both Muscovite and home-grown ballet,” or “from

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<sup>108</sup> In addition to reviews quoted elsewhere, the following reviews treat *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* as a serious work: “Matter of Music,” *Boston Post*, April 5, 1936; Review of *On Your Toes*, *New York Sun*, April 13, 1936; Burns Mantle, “‘On Your Toes’ Pretty Exciting,” *New York Daily News* April 13, 1936; Rowland Field, Review of *On Your Toes*, *Brooklyn Times-Union* April 13, 1936; Herbert Drake, Review of *On Your Toes*, *Cue* April 18, 1936; Review of *On Your Toes*, *Time* April 20, 1936; Clifford Adams, “The Curtain’s Up!,” *Gotham Life* April 19, 1936 (accessed from ZC-310, Reel 9, Billy Rose Theater Collection, The New York Library for the Performing Arts). While the vast majority praise the ballet, two reviews expressed disappointment that *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* was not a satire: Review of *On Your Toes*, *Cincinnati Billboard* April 25, 1936; Eugene Burr, Review of *On Your Toes*, *Margaret Wentworth’s Sign Post* Vol. 6, #39, both accessed from ZC-310, Reel 9, Billy Rose Theater Collection, The New York Library for the Performing Arts. Furthermore, Irving Hoffman recalled this as their first serious work in his review of *All Points West!*. See Irving Hoffman, Untitled Review, December 5, 1936.

<sup>109</sup> The quotations come respectively from E.F. Harkins, “‘On Your Toes Gay, Melodious,” *Boston Daily Record* March 23, 1936 and “‘On Your Toes’ Smash Tuner; Cinch Material For Films,” *Hollywood Reporter* April 13, 1936.

<sup>110</sup> Arthur Pollock, “‘On Your Toes’ at the Imperial Theater Gets Fun and Novelty Out of the Ballet Dancing Business,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* April 13, 1936.

<sup>111</sup> In addition to reviews quoted elsewhere, the following reviews treat *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* as a satiric work: “What Inspires a Long Writer? If Not One Thing, The Another,” *New York Tribune* May 31, 1936; Review of *On Your Toes*, *New York Herald Tribune* June 21, 1936.

the Russian ballet to its American paraphrases.”<sup>112</sup> In these two reviews, again the stress is on an American ballet, but such a venture is seen as comic, rather than a serious statement of national art. This position is nicely summed up in the review for *Stage*, which reads, “[Balanchine’s] choreography for the two ballets, *Princesse Zenobia* and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, are superb satiric comments on the choreographer’s somewhat over-blown art... *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is as skillfully executed as authentic ballet; and, of course, is much better because it isn’t.”<sup>113</sup> Those favoring a satirical interpretation took two paths. One identified the target as modernism, and saw *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* as a satire of modern dance in the way *La Princesse Zenobia* parodied classical ballet. The other took aim at the very notion that an American jazz ballet could be taken as seriously as—or even more seriously than—its Russian, classical counterpart. The portrayal of the ballet in the show as connecting jazz with both populist and modernist movements allows either view to be supported.

These reviews parallel quite directly the reactions to other jazz-classical works. Most reviewers commented upon the inherent Americanness of these works, even when they disliked the work itself. In fact, when the compositions were too reminiscent of European works, composers were criticized for it. Cole Porter’s *Within the Quota*, a hit in Paris, was too Parisian for American audiences, perhaps, as Paul Rosenfeld suggested, due to the orchestration’s being completed by a Frenchman. Carpenter’s *Skyscrapers* elicited derisive remarks at its similarity to Stravinsky. Complaints were similarly lodged when a work was too classical, like Gershwin’s *Concerto in F*, which was seen as too formal, a step backwards after his *Rhapsody in Blue*. Some reviewers treated these ballets as humorous ones as well. *Within the Quota* and *Krazy Kat* are

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<sup>112</sup> The quotations come respectively from Gilbert W. Gabriel, Review of *On Your Toes*, *New York American* April 13, 1936 and George Jean Nathan, Review of *On Your Toes*, *Life* June 1936.

<sup>113</sup> Ruth Woodbury Sedgwick, “The Curtain Went Up,” *Stage Magazine*, Undated. Accessed from ZC-310, Reel 9, Billy Rose Theater Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

both satirical comic works, the former a satire on tabloid journalism, the latter an adaptation of a comic strip. Gershwin's concert pieces were earnest but not devoid of humor. *Rhapsody in Blue* elicited laughter at its premiere, and Gershwin described his *An American in Paris* as "a humorous piece, nothing solemn about it."<sup>114</sup> The exception here is Carpenter's *Skyscrapers*, a work which elicited praise from most reviewers, who took note of the work's seriousness, even poignancy and grimness within the abstract plot, which concerned American work and play in New York City. A similar view of the mechanical side of American urban life is found in Emerson Whithorne's *Sooner and Later*, but in his review, Edmund Wilson identifies the work as a "dance satire" and ponders more broadly on the jazz ballet:

All of these recent efforts to create a native ballet have been interesting. It may be true that our popular humor—which Mr. Carpenter here exploited—our popular music—which Mr. Porter has laid under contribution—and our Indian dances—which Mr. Whithorne makes the foundation for the first section of *Sooner and Later*—contain seeds of a new kind of entertainment different both from our musical shows and from the European ballet.<sup>115</sup>

Wilson goes on to complain of Whithorne's aimless structure, preferring the tighter if more trivial *Krazy Kat* and *Within the Quota*, before settling on Gershwin as the proper man for the job, since popular music is his "natural mode of expression...not, as with Whithorne or Carpenter, a language deliberately adopted and overlaid on an academic training."<sup>116</sup>

Against this broader critical backdrop, it seems clear that critics could easily have expected a jazz ballet to be satirical. Works typically were presented as something humorous, and what's more, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* was part of a Broadway musical, not even a concert work. The fact that so many saw in it a welcome, even serious advancement of American choreographic art is noteworthy. That the work does not dress itself up as a European concert

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<sup>114</sup> Pollack, *George Gershwin*, 441.

<sup>115</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The American Earthquake: A Documentary of the Twenties and Thirties* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 66–7.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

work may have simultaneously fueled beliefs that the work could not be anything but a satire and played to its advantage as a serious work, given the prevalence of criticism in this vein toward other works.

How audiences reacted to the work is difficult to determine. Interviews with members of the cast are contradictory as to the ballet's effect. In an interview, Tamara Geva, who premiered the role of Vera and was Balanchine's wife, disapproves of the newer version of *Slaughter* "because it seems to me what has been done—it's a kind of a satire. It's a joke. The other one wasn't a joke at all. It was quite serious and it ended up with a shooting, and dead people. I was killed at the end."<sup>117</sup> Geva goes on to recount, "It was a dramatic performance, something that made people sit there and never laugh. And it wasn't high kicks or anything like this. There were very interesting combinations that we did. ... You know, George [Balanchine] is a master of things like this. He can take that and do absolute magic—and people started applauding!"<sup>118</sup> Such testimony is compelling, yet it contradicts an interview with Fred Danieli, a member of the chorus and the only one who came from Balanchine's company, which means he was also familiar with Balanchine's style and perhaps intent. Danieli recalls, "*Slaughter* was really very funny. ... Geva did a strip tease with fake breasts and fake G-string. She took off one pair of breasts and there was another pair of breasts. And it was very funny."<sup>119</sup> That reviewers failed to remark upon the audience suggests that the audience's reaction was probably not strongly incongruous with the critics', which were broad. Most likely then, audiences and critics responded enthusiastically, applauded, laughed at times, remained silently riveted at others; but

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<sup>117</sup> Interview with Tamara Geva by Nancy Reynolds, May 7, 1976 and May 11, 1976, p. 47. Transcript Available \*MGZMT 5-654, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Fred Danieli by Peter Conway, January 17, 1979, January 23, 1979, January 30, 1979, February 2, 1979, March 1, 1979, and April 20, 1979. Transcript available \*MGZMT 5-735, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



such cues could be read as treating the work as a thrilling, serious ballet or a satiric, comic performance depending on one's vantage point.

The divergent reactions to *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* are not irreconcilable, but rather as indicative of the full measure of the ballet's satiric potential. In their theorization of satire, Brian Connery and Kirk Combe suggest five overlooked components of satire: satire is historically situated; satire makes references beyond the text; satire is open-ended; satire is formless, and thus inhabits other genres; and finally, satire is structured around heightened oppositions. From this characterization, it quickly becomes clear how collage and satire intersect in method, for certainly the last four of five components could easily apply to collage as well. In particular, it is the last, its structure of heightened opposition, its "militant disunity," that seems especially relevant in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*.<sup>120</sup> Like other classical/jazz hybrids, the ballet plays off the novelty and incongruity of pairing two divergent forms of music and dance and embracing both. And given its historical situation—that is, if Balanchine could make an open mockery of ballet and Ellington could win awards as a composer—this opposition was indeed prominent and meaningful.

Furthermore, in creating *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, Rodgers and Balanchine had to embrace two opposing demands. First, as the makers of a musical comedy, they had to entertain. *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is played for laughs at several points, including a comic chase with the cops and the finale, as Junior frantically extends the ending to prevent being shot by two hired thugs. In a letter, Rodgers expresses the importance of the ballets as comedies, writing,

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<sup>120</sup> Bruce A. Connery and Kirk Combe, *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 4–6.

“The biggest of the laughs, praise the Lord, come in both ballets.”<sup>121</sup> But there is ample evidence that Rodgers saw potential in this work as serious art. The ballet’s story turns at other times to dramatic and tragic tropes, most pointedly the death of the striptease girl. And unlike *La Princesse Zenobia*, there is no evidence Balanchine set out to parody modern ballet, which, being even less familiar to audiences, would be even more difficult to make into obvious parody—indeed, those who label it a parody of modern ballet take on a tone that seems to call modern ballet itself something of a parody. When Junior tells Frankie as he is choreographing *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, “I’m afraid this work needs inspired choreography something as great as the Russian Ballet,” the moment is particularly meaningful because Rodgers, after all, did get inspired choreography from Balanchine—earning, for the first time on Broadway, the credit of “choreographer”—suggesting that *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* really deserved, even required, serious treatment. Balanchine’s serious engagement with jazz as a musical form for dance, both before and after *On Your Toes*, and his decision to eventually excerpt the ballet as part of the repertoire point to its standing as a legitimate ballet. For his part, Rodgers appears to have taken the composition of the ballet quite seriously, admitting he was nervous about the form in particular, perhaps due to complaints lodged against Gershwin’s approach to form, and to working with Balanchine “because the man actually knows music and has had to do it with pretty good composers.”<sup>122</sup> That Rodgers saw *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* as a serious composition is strengthened by his subsequent interest in longer compositional forms, starting with his first work for the concert hall, *All Points West!*, which debuted later that year, and the aforementioned

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<sup>121</sup> Letter from Richard Rodgers to Dorothy Rodgers, March 22, 1936. All correspondence accessed from, unless otherwise noted, Series III, Richard Rodgers Papers, \*T Mss 1987-006, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from Rodgers to Dorothy Rodgers, February 6, 1936.

ballet *Ghost Town*, as well as by his use of the ballet as a moment of dramatic weight within subsequent musicals, such as *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* (1945).

In this light, consider again the review from *Time*, which suggests that its creators:

perform an even more impressive theatrical miracle by staging 15-min. ballet of their own, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," which would probably evoke an ovation from modernists anywhere outside *On Your Toes*. Miracle No. 3, which tops the evening, occurs when Abbot *et al.* bring the whole performance back into the musical comedy theatre with an exciting, side-splitting and thoroughly surprising finale.<sup>123</sup>

Here, the reviewer points to the incongruity between serious art and musical comedy and marvels at the deft execution of both and suggests that the satire of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* must be taken seriously as art.

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<sup>123</sup> Untitled review, *Time Magazine*, April 20, 1936.

## Unmasking *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*

Taking characters and some critics at their word, if *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is a distinctly American work of art, then we ought to consider what it has to say about American musical identity and what it would mean to take a jazz ballet in a Broadway show seriously—and what it would mean not to. The split may be partly due to a difference in expectations, that a musical comedy would provide easy laughs, not a serious work of art. I will explore this possibility further in the next section. A second cause may be the more systemic difficulties other concert jazz pieces faced, particularly anxieties over race. Debates over jazz and American cultural identity trafficked heavily in the subject of race. The Broadway musical has also long engaged with the subject of race, both explicitly and implicitly, and Rodgers in particular has repeatedly addressed racial issues.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, *Babes In Arms* (1937), Rodgers and Hart's next show after *On Your Toes*, explicitly confronts racism and segregation. Yet the commentary surrounding *On Your Toes* then and now remains astonishingly devoid of any mention of race despite a complex collage of racial signifiers at play within the ballet.

Like many reviewers, I feel any attempt to discuss *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* must acknowledge the shadow cast by *La Princesse Zenobia*. In this case, however, the shadow is not just one of parody but one of the ballet's racial implications. In the ballet, Junior appears as a

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<sup>124</sup> Scholarship on the subject of race is widespread within Rodgers's musicals. See for instance Andrea Most's *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), which examines no less than four of his musicals: *Babes in Arms*, *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*; and James Lovensheimer's *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), which traces the evolution of that show's racial content.

fake Russian who in turn has blacked up to portray a Nubian slave. The big joke occurs when Junior disrobes to reveal that he has forgotten to black his entire body, blacking just his face. This contrast is central to the humor, as noted in the typescript libretto's description of the ballet: "We must manage in placing the ranks and formations that the white body continually kills the effect." The emphasis on contrast again points to collage, as Junior is collaged into a European troupe, where he is unable to mask the seams of this pasting and integrate.

The gag is based on the tradition of blackface minstrelsy, in which white (and later, black) performers would apply dark makeup to their face and, taking on the persona of a stereotyped African-American character, present music or humorous entertainment. Through minstrelsy, race became a lens through which to explore a variety of cultural anxieties in nineteenth-century America, including gender and class tensions. The mask of blackface enabled its performers to critique and comment upon politics and issues of the day. It also provided a vehicle for the development of a distinctly American vernacular entertainment through its burlesques of European high culture, such as opera. Its functions shifted over time, and by the early twentieth century, as its popularity waned, it served a different function. As a long-held tradition in white culture, it became a staple of the vaudeville stage and offered Jewish Americans the chance not simply to participate in but to assimilate into white culture, to become white by performing black through a mask of difference.<sup>125</sup>

*La Princesse Zenobia* adapts the blackface routine in a way that raises questions about race and national identity and echoes throughout the musical. The ballet strikes a familiar note of American nationalism through parody and contrast with European high art, but accomplishes this through a subtle reversal of typical blackface. Whereas minstrelsy accomplished this through

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<sup>125</sup> This subject is given extensive treatment in Michael Rogin's *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

white characters blacking up to impersonate an African Americans in order to satirize elite culture, Junior blacks up to assimilate into elite culture, portraying a member of the Russian Ballet, who in turn is portraying a Nubian slave. The act of blacking up thus affirms high culture; it is the powerful unmasking of Junior that gets not only the broadest laugh, but strikes the biggest note of difference between American musical nationalism and imported European art, rendered strongly through visual cues. Moreover, the acts of masking and unmasking further emulate collage by layering one racial element on top of another so that all exist simultaneously.

That moment of unmasking implicitly renders American identity in terms of race and difference, which is to say it unmasks both Junior and the process of defining Americanness. Junior is unmasked as an American, more specifically a white American, and even more to the point, a Jewish American. In the scene, Junior blacks up in the manner of a vaudeville performer, rather than in the manner customary to ballet and opera. Since Junior had, in fact, been raised as a vaudeville performer, as the opening scene demonstrated, his assumptions here about how to black up suggest a familiarity with that tradition. Junior may very well have blacked up for his family's act, and habitually follows the same process here without a second thought. The Jewishness suggested by that opening scene, a vaudeville troupe family and the use of Yiddish slang, is lost in the first act as Junior passes for a white, snobbish music teacher. His Jewish vaudeville background becomes a mark of shame, evident by his aversion to popular music in *Questions and Answers* and embarrassment when Frankie discovers him dancing while choreographing Sidney's ballet and realizes who he actually is. But *La Princesse Zenobia* tests the limits of his passing as something he is not, and forces him to reconcile his desires with his identity.

The scene invites us to read Junior's path as metaphoric of America—the shame of its vernacular roots, the aspirations toward and emulation of European culture, and the realization that mere importing and copying simply won't fly anymore. But if this reading is accurate, the scene renders it problematic in terms of race by framing it in images of blackface. Junior's appearance in *La Princesse Zenobia* effectively equates the American and the vernacular, and in turn equates the vernacular with a Jewish, working class stage practice from some years earlier. It also unmask these practices, perhaps unwittingly, as based on racial appropriation, white reinterpretations of black music performed by Jewish performers for white audiences. The practice had waned in popularity and drew criticisms, yet dance historian Susan Manning notes the sustained and accepted practice of blackface dance within the 1930 New Left, a group largely composed of New York Jewish members.<sup>126</sup> As a satire of ballet, the scene is effective at that moment, but what does it have to say about blackface? Is it a critique, using juxtaposition to the ballet's exotic subject matter to unmask it as nothing more than fake exoticism? Or does it suggest something purely American to be re-embraced? Are the racial elements in American musical nationalism to be assimilated or more openly differentiated? *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* purports to be the solution to the problems raised by *La Princesse Zenobia*—quite literally for Peggy, who insists on staging the new work as a way to recoup financial losses from *La Princesse Zenobia*, but more broadly as an example of a new American masterpiece, as both characters and critics claimed. As such, the onus is placed on *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* to clarify, or at least acknowledge, the implicit discussion of race in American music begun in the first act.

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<sup>126</sup> Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 58–66.

*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* might at first glance appear to sidestep the issue of race entirely, if what we look for is only an acknowledgement of its white or black roots, but it is actually poised to argue for the Americanness of Jewish Americans. It is the product of artistic collaboration between two Jews, Junior and Sidney, and makes its Jewish roots quite apparent. Like *La Princesse Zenobia*, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* looks to vaudeville for its American credentials. The scene where the cops raid the bar is choreographed in a slapstick manner, while the music—variations on the song “Three Blind Mice”—underscores the cartoonishness and ineffectiveness of the cops. The shooting of the first patron and of the boss are similarly cartoonish as the music delivers a “Shave and a Haircut” tag in a stern, monophonic manner with the gunshots corresponding to the final two blows, a musical joke told in deadpan to simultaneously convey and render safely comical the “slaughter.” The vaudeville connection is made in that musical joke, since that same phrase was used earlier in the opening song “Two a Day For Keith,” the Dolan family vaudeville act. Rodgers apparently considered a more overt connection between *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and the vaudeville number “Two A Day For Keith,” writing on the manuscript a suggestion that the chorus for “Two A Day For Keith” might serve as a lead for *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* (Figure 2.3). But this subtle nod is revealing in its own right. The phrase appears in “Two a Day For Keith” right after Junior speaks his first line: “So I was born in vaudeville,” as a musical affirmation of his birthright. Its appearance in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* similarly reaffirms Junior’s vaudeville roots, but the joke here is embraced and assimilated into the ballet, rather than striking a comical note of difference as in *La Princesse Zenobia*. Junior’s acceptance and assimilation of his vaudevillian past is stressed in



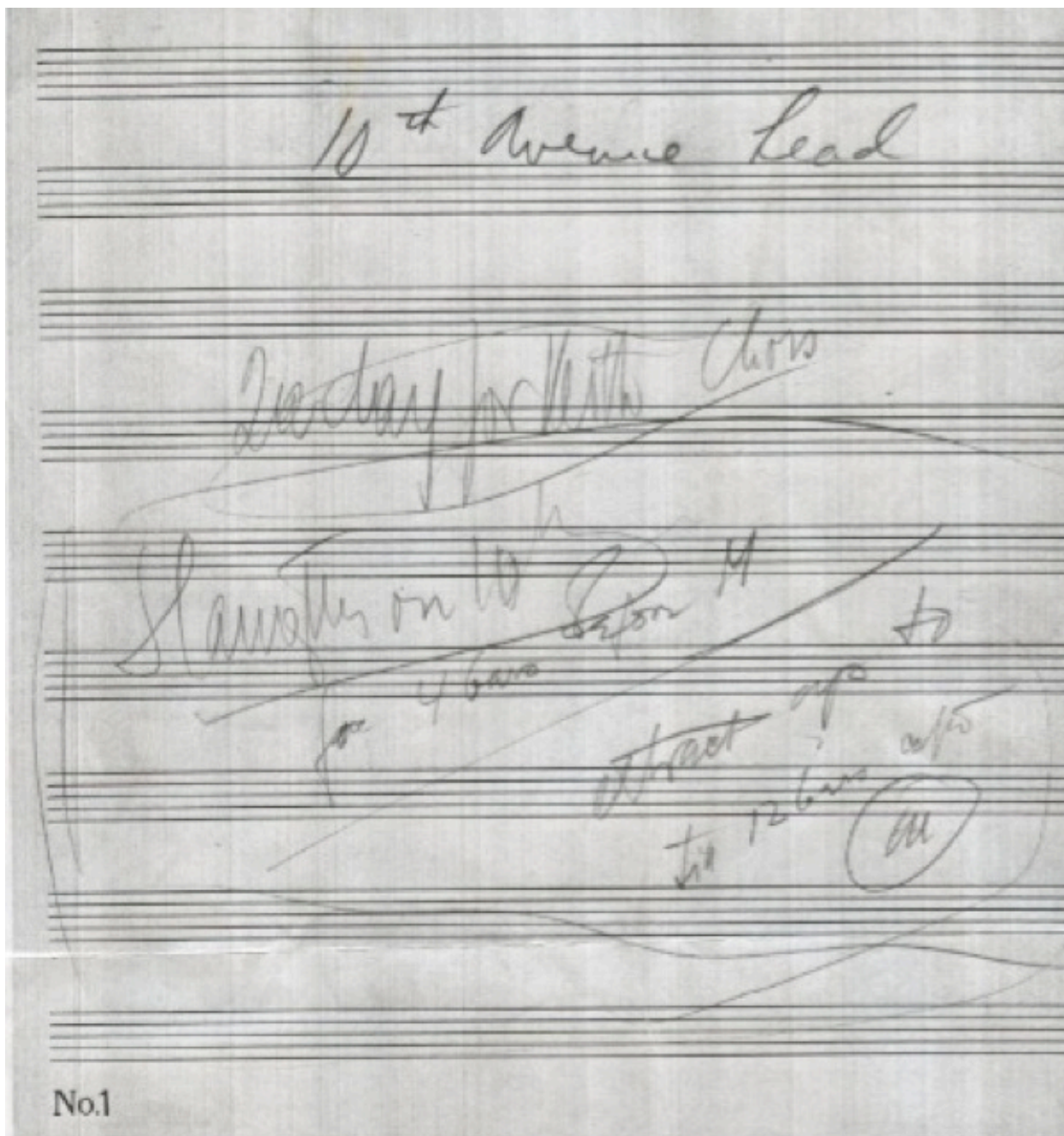


Figure 2.3: Rodgers's Lead Sheet for *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*

the ballet's finale. By all accounts, the final dance was a moment of old-fashioned hoofing as Junior's character goes crazy. As Junior dances, life imitates art: he learns that two gangsters have been hired by the jealous Morrosine to kill him at the ballet's end. Junior must think on his feet, so to speak, to avoid being killed. The result is a physical slapstick tour-de-force as Junior keeps repeating the big finish until the cops arrive just as he collapses from exhaustion. The moment is akin to the blackface unmasking in that it intrudes upon the "serious" work and provides the broadest satirical laugh. But where vaudeville had previously been a source of embarrassment, laying bare Junior's deficiencies, and ruining a performance, here it is the crowning moment, showcasing Junior's mental acuity and physical dexterity, not to mention saving his life.

The setting and story of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* suggest further integration of Jewishness within the ballet. The title, Sidney's excitedly sensationalist suggestion, sets the action in Hell's Kitchen, an area of Manhattan dominated by the dangerous waterfront yards and tenement slums occupied largely by Italian and Irish immigrants (not Jewish immigrants, who lived primarily on the Lower East Side) and home to the city's highest mortality rate and a lurid reputation for organized crime. Such a setting would seem to provide a view of jazz as a gritty, low-class form, accompanying illicit sex, prostitution, and sensationalist tales of violence—all charges frequently heard about jazz—and an almost satiric, antiheroic take on modern America. But Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick argue otherwise. In their book on immigrants in American popular culture, Rubin and Melnick contend that the gangster characters who populated Hollywood (and by extension, the ballet) were essentially Jewish characters in disguise, created by Jewish filmmakers as a method of assimilation, effectively replacing the

decreasingly popular act of blackface. That Jewish filmmakers would portray Jewish characters in such a way might seem baffling, but Rubin and Melnick find the positive subtext:

With characteristics recognized as “Jewish” but not named as such, Jewish filmmakers and Jewish audiences were able to have a “secret” conversation about what it meant to be Jewish in the United States. It is here that the classic gangster melodrama—the choice between ethnic ghetto and rise to wealth, the pull between Old World parents and American girlfriends, the minutiae of what a man should wear—takes on Jewish specificity.<sup>127</sup>

Rubin and Melnick’s reading is persuasive when considering *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Rather than exhibit the rise to wealth as assimilation, as the films did, this trope is transformed in the ballet, with classical music serving as a symbol of that high life, as it does throughout the musical. As unlikely a setting as a nightclub might be for high art, the ballet treats the subject and characters seriously, even nobly. The portrayal of love, jealousy, and especially the striptease girl’s self-sacrifice, throwing herself in front of the patron to spare his life at the cost of her own, dovetails the lurid subject matter into familiar tropes from ballet and opera—consider the self-sacrificing courtesan in Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata*, for example. Acknowledging these moments as seriotragic, Rodgers’s score and Spialek’s orchestrations adopt their most classical tone in these scenes, from the lushly romantic melody and scoring of the *pas de deux*, to the lone instance of modernism in the dissonances and harmonics that accompany the girl’s death, to the plaintive solo oboe with strings that serves as a rubato-laden lament.

Elsewhere, Rubin and Melnick note the corrective power gangsters films had for the image of Jewish man, typically rendered effeminate.<sup>128</sup> Again, the ballet acknowledges this while altering the circumstances. Recall Junior’s vaudeville days were marked by a rather masculine nature, and it was his sexual activity that first raised concerns with his mother about his need for

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<sup>127</sup> Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick, *Immigration and American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 31–2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

an education. The following scene in Junior's classroom renders him effeminate and ineffectual. But by the end of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, all this has been corrected. Frankie's warning of Morrosine's plot affirms the central relationship, and the two lovers are again united. Junior has grown more accepting of her songwriting talents, and in embracing his hooper past (something Frankie had been impressed by) he both accepts her and has the occasion to demonstrate his physical skills in the ballet's finale.

Bringing the Jewish vernacular—vaudeville, jazz, gangsters—to the European high art ballet provides an effective foil to *La Princesse Zenobia*. In doing so, it creates another “secret conversation” of Americanization wherein the adaptation of these vernacular art forms to the ballet, not to mention the hiring in the show of two Jewish Americans to compose and choreograph/star in a Russian Ballet production, demonstrates this assimilation and cultural elevation of the Jewish into the white. This method stands in contrast to the marked otherness of Junior in *La Princesse Zenobia* and substitutes for blackface as a method of assimilation. But at the same time, we must recognize that it simply replaces one mask with others. The gangster model borrows the mask of Italian immigrants, and its fictionalized, sensationalized, and aestheticized presentation in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* presents it as a form of exotic lower-class tourism.<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile, the appropriation of jazz here creates a subtler form of blacking up. The use of jazz in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is largely superficial, as Rodgers and Spialek paste together a pastiche of jazz signifiers taken from various sources: a horse whinny effect reminiscent of Dixieland novelty jazz, big band swing, sexualized blues, syncopated dance music, even a jittery attempt to evoke hot jazz. This was not uncommon for the time, having

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<sup>129</sup> Ted Merwin argues that the Lower East Side functioned as a form of tourism for Jews; the fictional landscape of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* would seem to serve a similar purpose. See Ted Merwin, *In Their Own Image: New York Jews in Jazz Age Popular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 9. This idea also invokes Carrie Tirado Bramen's discussion of the “urban picturesque,” in Chapter Four of *The Uses of Variety: Modern Americanism and the Quest for National Distinctiveness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

precedents in both classical jazz works and Tin Pan Alley, not to mention the aforementioned collage of jazz signifiers in the sheet music cartoon and benefit concert.<sup>130</sup> But Rodgers's own dismissive attitude toward jazz separates him from this crowd and suggests his interest in jazz here was not to argue for jazz itself as an art form but simply to appropriate the debate and interest in it for other purposes.<sup>131</sup> In other words, jazz becomes yet another mask.

Moreover, this pastiche approach to jazz yields a problematic and inconsistent application of jazz's racial significations in the ballet's final scenes, which merit a closer look. As I have noted, the most classically balletic part of the number comes earlier and is coupled with the least jazzy music: the Whiteman-esque, symphonic *pas de deux*. Yet near the tragic end, Rodgers turns to two forms of jazz heavily marked as black. The first, at rehearsal mark U, turns to the blues (Example 2.6a). Rodgers marks in the score "Bluesy," an appropriate term as the music does not really present a blues but does somewhat model it, with its repeated oscillation between a flatted "blue note" and natural third and its oscillating motion between the tonic and the subdominant. The scene is also punctuated by a jittery simulation of hot jazz, with its walking bassline, chromatic piano runs, quick tempo, and strong syncopation (Example 2.6b). This music accompanies Junior's forceful and violent retaking of the striptease girl, as noted in the score's directions: "throws chairs...leaps over bar...swigs drink...jumps onto bar...and kisses [her] passionately." At first, the use of blues here appears in keeping with the popular Hollywood practice of jazz underscoring for sexually loose women, except jazz usually scored either sexually aggressive or fallen women; here it is the man who is the aggressor—drunk, violent, and possessive, and it is she who falls for him and is soon martyred trying to save his life.

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<sup>130</sup> For one example of how Broadway typically fashioned jazz out of distinct tropes, see Magee.

<sup>131</sup> Rodgers and Hart penned the song "I'd Like To Recognize the Tune" for *Too Many Girls* (1939), in which they criticize jazz music. Rodgers writes in his autobiography that the song reflected his actual feelings that jazz distorted tunes beyond recognition. See Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 193.

Furthermore, if the tale is one of tragic love, as the *pas de deux* suggests, why revert to violence here? And why underscore it with not just blues, which at least had a history of signifying sex, but an attempt at hot jazz, that only serves to further racialize the spectacle of violence and sexuality?

a)



b)

Example 2.6b shows piano accompaniment for two staves in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and quarter notes. A dynamic marking "(piano)" is placed above the first measure of the top staff. The piece concludes with a triplet of eighth notes in the top staff, indicated by a bracket and the number "3".

Example 2.6: a) Rodgers, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, mm. 284–91; b) *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, mm. 305–8

Following this, the striptease girl is shot—marked as tragic by being the only gunshot not accompanied by the “Shave and a Haircut” motive—and we get a miniature collage of previous material to signal a rush of emotion beginning at rehearsal mark X: a “misterioso” chromatic downward slide of violin clusters, an “alla funeral march” reprising the bluesy number with a quick reference to either the main motive of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (or, given the quick tempo, funeral march designation, and solo trumpet, perhaps also to Mahler’s Fifth Symphony), and finally, as Junior shoots the Boss, there is an almost mocking return of the horse-like laugh and syncopated dance music that underscored the very first shooting when another patron tried to have his way with the striptease girl and was shot by the Boss. Thus, Rodgers’s use of collage here is dramatically pointed, not random, yet it is the classical references (the violin clusters and the subsequent reprise of the *pas de deux*) that signal seriousness and grief and the jazz that signals violence and dark humor. Rodgers’s use of a second black-identified style of jazz, namely swing, receives similar treatment. Swing’s immense popularity and its position as a site of increasingly interracial collaboration would have appealed to Rodgers, and the moment does indeed offer a more racially integrated view of jazz. The tune used for the section marked “Swing!” appears first at rehearsal mark A2 in the solo flute, then more fully orchestrated underneath a solo oboe. Here, the tune is first treated as a rubato classical-esque lament, signifying serious grief, then swung in order to signify Junior’s mental imbalance as he is instructed to go into a “crazed dance.” As previously noted, swing, and especially the lively jitterbug dancing that accompanied it, had been linked to mental unbalance by critics.

But more central to swing’s placement, and to the more complex racial content it implies, is the connection between swing and comic dancing. Brian Harker’s work on Louis Armstrong’s accompaniment for “eccentric dancers” not only uncovers a lost performance tradition of jazz

dancing, but suggests that heightened rhythmic swing and improvisation—hallmarks of what jazz fans at the Onyx Club and elsewhere would characterize as authentic African-American jazz—derived in part from stage comic performances with connections to blackface routines and minstrel caricatures.<sup>132</sup> The descriptions of the dances point to acrobatic gestures, frenetic tap routines, “rubberlegs,” and physical comedy, all of which resonate with the descriptions the critics gave of Ray Bolger’s work in the finale, a scene in which Bolger’s character must improvise—in authentic jazz fashion—to save his own life. Bolger’s presence in the show is itself quite meaningful, as he was among the noted “eccentric” dancers of his day. But Bolger eliminated his tapping early on in his career to specialize in lampoons, parodies, and satires, which suggested the humor from the minstrel stage, even though he may not have blacked up for performances.<sup>133</sup> For those who might have been familiar with Bolger’s routines, the jazz ballet would more easily fit into Bolger’s own tradition of satire—a tradition, jazz scholar Patrick Burke notes, that was increasingly looked down upon by critics and fans who sought to take jazz, and especially African-American jazz, seriously.<sup>134</sup>

One final piece of the show’s complex racial treatment of jazz in the ballet remains. Balanchine collaborated with the African-American choreographer Herbert Harper, who remained uncredited. It was Harper who apparently taught Bolger the rhythm dancing for *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and he recalls, “Bolger knew his ballet but not his jazz and toe heel work.”<sup>135</sup> One might expect the reverse to be true, given Bolger’s reputation for vernacular dance, but this suggests that Bolger’s stage performances were far from the African-American

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<sup>132</sup> Brian Harker, “Louis Armstrong, Eccentric Dance, and the Evolution of Jazz on the Eve of Swing,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 93–4.

<sup>133</sup> Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), 158, 194, 211.

<sup>134</sup> Burke, 93–4.

<sup>135</sup> Stearns, 167.



traditions Balanchine used in the finale. Thus, the moment stands out as contradictory in a number of ways: choreographed in part by an African-American expert, danced by a skilled dancer who had been part of a longstanding jazz tradition, and relying heavily on the tropes of swing and improvisation, while at the same time it plays the scene for laughs and masks the African-American choreographic roots behind the white faces of Bolger and Balanchine.

The Jewishness seems so central to the text for New York audiences, but a typescript of the show as performed in St. Louis in 1939 features several subtle changes to make the Jewishness less overt, including the removal of Yiddish slang terms and the renaming of Sidney Cohn's character Thomas Smith.<sup>136</sup> The reasons for and the person or persons behind the changes are unknown; Rodgers was Jewish, but did not publicly emphasize or discuss this aspect of his identity.<sup>137</sup> But the effect is clear: the author of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* is changed from Jewish to Anglo-American, presumably for a less Jewish audience than in New York, one who might not sympathize with or understand the "secret conversation" about Jewishness in America that the show creates. Whether Rodgers suggested the change or simply agreed to it, it points to an interest he had in ensuring that the show be a success and increased the likelihood that the ballet was taken seriously as a work of American art with that audience.

Broadly stated, all of this serves to call attention to the cost of assimilating Jews here. While purporting to contrast with *La Princesse Zenobia*, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* leaves many issues unsettled in its vision of an American art, issues opened and sustained through the collaging of multiple musical genres with multiple racial and other social signifiers. Through

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<sup>136</sup> *On Your Toes* played at The Muny in St. Louis in 1939. The typescript is housed in RM4353, Billy Rose Theater Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>137</sup> Andrea Most has observed Rodgers's reticence on his Jewishness both in public and in his autobiography, where he immediately distances himself as not a "religious" Jew. See Most, 12 and 69. In her biography of Rodgers, Meryle Secrest recounts how Rodgers in a much later show, *Two By Two* (1970), "didn't want to do a Jewish show." See Secrest, *Somewhere for Me: A Biography of Richard Rodgers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 379.

collage, the resonances pile up. The pastiche of jazz tropes recalls the pastiche of nineteenth-century exotica, the surface application of approximated jazz recalls the methods of blackface, as do the eccentric dance and burlesque striptease, both of which derived from minstrelsy, and the setting on Tenth Avenue is romanticized and exoticized as much as the Arabia of *La Princesse Zenobia*. Even the opening notes of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, bellowed in unison by low brass and followed by a gong, strike an uncanny resemblance to the opening notes of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, the source material of *La Princesse Zenobia*. In light of this, and given the subtlety of the satire and conflicting accounts, how the blackface gag is meant to be taken is left unresolved. Is it an acknowledgement of its passé nature, its un-Americanness, to be taken along with the rest of the fake exoticism of *La Princesse Zenobia*? Or is it a proud marker of Americanness worth celebrating? At best, *Slaughter on Tenth* sidesteps the issue altogether, neither affirming nor denying the efficacy of blackface, and more importantly, leaving African Americans out of the picture entirely. Meanwhile, the critical and scholarly discourse surrounding race in the jazz ballet at best only implies that race is there by musical proxy. Those uncomfortable with the idea of black/Jewish music as serious American music could embrace the work as satire and still deny such music was worth celebrating as American, while others could embrace the ballet as serious, admitting those musics (and by association, those races) into American art.

## Musical Comedy as Musical Nationalism

While *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* resonated with contemporaneous concerns about jazz and classical music, neither tradition was Rodgers's chief concern. Rodgers was knowledgeable about classical music and remained somewhat dismissive toward jazz, but he took up the issue not out of investment in the outcome but rather because the debates provided an effective vehicle for Rodgers to make his own voice heard, and with it stake a claim for the Broadway musical to be at the forefront of a distinctly American form of composition. He labels Jerome Kern as America's first popular composer, and speaks similarly of himself and his contemporaries, indeed choosing *On Your Toes* as exemplary of this form of musical nationalism:

We younger composers and lyricists—Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, George and Ira Gershwin, Vincent Youmans, Lorenz Hart and I—were breaking ground for a native American musical theater. We drew on everyday life for our themes, our musical ideas, our language. We did this unconsciously, for we were more concerned with doing our work as well as we could. Making history was incidental.

A musical play completely in the American mold, with an American story, sung in American English to music characteristically American, was inevitably on its way. *Show Boat* (1927) is an outstanding example that gracefully eludes any cut-and-dried label; it is unmistakably American in every way. There were many other shows of which this could be said—the neglected but revolutionary *Rainbow*, with music by Vincent Youmans and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein; the Gershwins' *Of Thee I Sing*; *Music in the Air* (Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach [Oscar Hammerstein]), *On Your Toes* (Lorenz Hart and me)—and all of them contributed in some way to the growth of a musical theater distinctly our own.<sup>138</sup>

The company of these shows in particular demonstrates that Rodgers admired the dramatic heft and innovations of these productions, their American (or in the case of *Music in the Air*, its

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<sup>138</sup> Richard Rodgers, "Jerome Kern: A Tribute," in Block, *A Richard Rodgers Reader*, 270. The block quotation is taken from Richard Rodgers, "Opera and Broadway," in Block, *A Richard Rodgers Reader*, 291.

present day) setting, as well as the blend of American vernacular and European classical musics.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, Rodgers's career consistently reflects this. His early shows engaged in classical music parodies, such as an early parody of Rimsky-Korsakov "Say It With Jazz: A Coq D'Or-ian Fantasy," and he and Hart took interest in *The Garrick Gaieties* when given the opportunity to write a jazz opera "The Joy-Spreader."<sup>140</sup> His interest remained strong through *On Your Toes* and later works, as evidenced by his dramatic monologue *All Points West*, the ballet *Ghost Town*, and other "serious" compositional efforts.

While the mixture of jazz and ballet may have carried the most cultural significance, the show's primary revolution was not in this mixture. Rather, *On Your Toes* astonished by mixing ballet with musical theater, creating two full-length ballets for the Broadway stage and for the first time crediting the role of the choreographer, in effect taking dance as a serious component. Likewise, the story portrays a literal marriage of the two, between Frankie, the songwriter, and Junior, the classical music professor who eventually comes around to appreciating her work as a serious art form. There is a subtle thread at work portraying Broadway's artistic growth. The opening number, a vaudeville act "Two a Day for Keith," is an unremarkable and formulaic song with generic rhymes and strict repetition that would hardly merit serious attention. Contrast this to Frankie's song "It's Got To Be Love," which Junior prejudicially dismisses as cheap. In truth, the song is remarkably well constructed. Its verse employs rather sophisticated harmonic motion, to flat II on "aquamarine," and later altered to III on "the shade I see," capturing the sense of astonishment of love professed. The chorus is close to a standard ABAC form, but is filled with

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<sup>139</sup> Gerald Bordman notes that *Rainbow* fused "lean jazz with arioso passages" in a style similar to *Show Boat*, and that *Music in the Air* adopted classical devices to title each scene: "Leit Motif" [*sic*], "Etude," "Nocturne," and "Rondo." See Bordman, 500 and 536.

<sup>140</sup> The opera was eventually dropped, but Rodgers felt "everyone seemed to appreciate our attempt at something a little daring," including Hart, who signed on in particular to have a chance at writing a jazz opera. See Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 64 and 66. The term "jazz" here, it should be noted, refers not to what is now considered jazz, more broadly to popular music, and the "opera" is in fact a short one-act scene with music, although much longer than a standard variety number.

internal rhyming, which is doubled by tight motivic construction: a triplet figure in the A and held notes in the B. The C music, in fact, is nothing more than a variation on the B, and concluding with the characteristic triplet of the A music on “nevertheless.” The tune’s subject—the illness of love—marks it as a song particularly characteristic of Rodgers and Hart, thus making the jab of its putative cheapness even sharper, and the song’s complexities even more apparent.<sup>141</sup>

Examining the show as an argument for Broadway’s nationalism, the high point comes not with the two ballets, but with the show’s title number, which offers a compelling vision for America and its music. The show’s overture and finale make much use of “On Your Toes,” and many remembered the work as a high point for the show, rivaling *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Dancer Fred Danieli remembers it as “the other big number,” and several critics agree: *Variety* called the song the “big number of the show,” while *Dancing Times* gave it more coverage than *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, proclaiming:

Far more ingenious than his burlesque is the *On Your Toes* number...[It] enlivens the stage by the unusual spectacle of fast-stepping Tap dancers alternating with a group doing classical ballet routine....The effect is exciting, a fine show of grace, rhythmic movement that is kaleidoscopic with the change of lights on costumes, and amazing variety in choreographic pattern.<sup>142</sup>

Both *Dancing Times* and Danieli remark upon the originality of the number, in which a tap chorus and ballet chorus, both staples of the Follies tradition, dance here side by side. As in *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, the classical and vernacular traditions are kept intact while juxtaposed harmoniously to suggest a collage in which the parts work together rather than against one another.

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<sup>141</sup> Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Fred Danieli by Peter Conway, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, 37; Untitled Review, *Variety* April 15, 1936; Russell Rhodes, “Burlesquing the ‘Ballet Russe,’” *The Dancing Times* June 1936, 283.

The song wins Junior over, for as Frankie comes with song in hand to Junior and Sidney, the two immediately begin to orchestrate it, and the audience begins to hear it take shape. Junior quickly becomes involved in the collective orchestration:

Junior: I can see how it might be a very effective number in the theater.  
Sidney: Just imagine that, with scenery and costumes. I'd like to orchestrate it myself. I'd start the melody on two pianos – I can almost hear it – (Two pianos start to play) Then I'd sneak in a solo trumpet. (Trumpet picks up) Then the traps softly. (Traps using fly swatter)  
Junior: (Entering the spirit) Excellent. And then the fiddles would have a countermelody (Fiddles begin to play)  
Sidney: Right.  
Junior: And then gradually the woodwinds. (Brass and woodwinds come in)  
Sidney: And then – and then the whole band. (Now the entire band is playing)  
Frankie: And then I sing the song.

The number celebrates collaboration over solo genius, a key feature of Broadway that was distinct from European classical musical forms. Likewise, the dance enacts its own collaboration not only between two lines of dancers, but through the choreography, in which Balanchine collaborated again with Herbert Harper for the tap routines.<sup>143</sup> But instead of melting and assimilating into a single product, the result here adheres more to the aesthetic many have found so American in jazz: the prizing of a democratic individualism, and the promotion of an idealized interplay and “tension of cross-purposes” between equal forces.<sup>144</sup>

The lyrics to the song similarly envision an America of self-mobility, set to an invigorating, optimistic, and continually rising refrain. The music beseeches you to get “up on your toes” to achieve nothing less than the American Dream. Furthermore, this “applies to those who dwell in/ Richmond Hill or New Rochelle, in/ Chelsea or/ In Sutton Place.” Aside from finding a clever rhyme for “Excelsior!”, this lyric uses the “list song” model to acknowledge

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with Fred Danieli by Peter Conway, *The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts*, 37.

<sup>144</sup> Robert J. O'Meally, ed. *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), 128. O'Meally uses this term to describe both the structure of the Manhattan skyline and a jazz performance. Agreeing with his argument that this phrase captures something essential about American identity, I would contend that this phrase also extends to practice of collage.

New York City's diversity through a brief tour of neighborhoods, from the working class immigrant Chelsea and Richmond Hill to the upper class New Rochelle and Sutton Place, at once recognizing the boundaries while insisting that all are united by a common ground, their encouraged belief in the American Dream—in short, they are all American. And what is the top? The lyrics first mention the sweetest apple, followed by a penthouse. The penthouse is easily understood as a dream of wealth, underscored by the lyrical exhortation “Get that dough, don't be a goof,” while the apple addresses a simpler satisfaction, a meal in a time of the Great Depression, and no doubt resonated with the common sight of the unemployed selling apples for five cents. The bridge of the song celebrates two other items, air mail and “that Astaire male,” a paean to modern culture, but also perhaps a nod to Astaire's mastery of the very same activity the song demonstrated, a blending of ballet and tap into an American art (not to mention the original impetus for *On Your Toes*). Finally, the number celebrates jazz, certainly sounding more swing-like than most of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, and placing the blue note of the tune, a flat seven, as the literal apex of the melody, the prize to be reached. Not only are vernacular and art forms ready to intermingle to create something American, but Rodgers gives the vernacular a home-field advantage.

The various uses of collage in the song envision a utopian America with musical theater as its artistic heart and soul. While other collages in *On Your Toes* either satirically emphasize sharp divisions between cultural material or problematically efface the complex systems of difference at work, the title number conjures up a different form of collage where difference is simultaneously acknowledged and celebrated as crucial to a larger whole, seen in the collaborative approach in composing the song and in the choreographic arrangement. This moment serves as a metaphor for America and American art. Like the use of collage in criticisms

of Gershwin and Ellington, collage is aligned with the American vernacular—but unlike those criticisms, collage does not compromise the artistic integrity, but rather serves as a productive force that achieves its own distinctly American form of artistic unity. The lyrical references to New York’s different neighborhoods with their different ethnic and economic demographics suggests that New York is no less a metonym than Ives’s small town, and further insists that America is made better through its collage of citizens. Even as they acknowledge inequality and difference in the lyrics, Rodgers and Hart assert both an American dream that all can share in equally as citizens and an American vernacular art that is just as inclusive.

In light of this number, the purposes of classical music, jazz, ballet, and Broadway in *On Your Toes* are clarified. Each is a vital contributor to the bid for an American art form, and each is allowed its place to shine while contributing to the larger aims. Balanchine would later turn *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* into a repertory piece for the New York City Ballet, and Rodgers would continue to use ballet in his musicals for dramatic purposes, suggesting that in true collage form both ballet and Broadway emerged richer from the collaboration.

Rodgers’s place within American music is secured—he and Balanchine were among those honored in the first Kennedy Center awards. And in large part because of his efforts, so too is the place of the Broadway musical secure in the American canon. Even if *On Your Toes* has largely been forgotten, its advances have not. A revival of the show in 1954 was unsuccessful, as critics and audiences found the work dated, but a new show would open three years later, one that validated the work Rodgers, Hart, and Balanchine had achieved. *West Side Story* (1957) parallels *On Your Toes* in striking ways: both take place in an explicitly present-day America, concerned with debates over national identity; both scores eclectically include jazz, classical, and popular song; both involved collaborators from the classical and Broadway worlds; both are



noted for their innovative use of ballet to further the drama; and both *West Side Story* and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* conclude with a tragic shooting. All of these elements, typically cited as evidence of the form's maturity, were taking root twenty years earlier in *On Your Toes*.

The history of musical theater, and the place of *On Your Toes* within it, is one depicting a continual move towards the integration of song and dance into the story. Consider the treatment of *West Side Story* as an apotheosis of the American musical theater's operatic ambition, or more broadly of Bernstein's skill in creating a motivically unified score—and in that light, consider again Geoffrey Block's work on *On Your Toes*, which traces the organicism of Rodgers's score and argues for its place on the path toward Bernstein by affirming that “great works of theatrical art like *On Your Toes* possess unity and structural integrity not usually associated with musical comedy.”<sup>145</sup> Yet the dominance of this history and its idealization of unity too easily obscures or minimizes the prominent role of collage within the Broadway tradition. After all, even *West Side Story* features an incredibly diverse score and indeed derives much of its power from moments of musical tension and collage: the racial tensions played out through the mambo, rock and roll-ish blues, and the promenade, for instance. In *Patterns of Intention*, art historian Michael Baxandall proposes an alternative understanding of the concept of artistic influence, where earlier artists do not actively influence later ones, but rather later artists read their predecessors in a certain way and in doing so change our perspective on history.<sup>146</sup> This same process is at work in *On Your Toes*. Given the multiple open meanings of collage, and more specifically here the resulting differing readings of its intentions and effects, the process of history has shifted the understanding of this collage. By “integrating” Broadway and ballet, or Broadway and “serious art,” the cultural differences once so strongly enacted by collage become inert.

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<sup>145</sup> Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 99.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 58–62.

With its scholarly status secure, however, the American musical has merited increased musicological attention toward its social meanings, where the focus has often been on not just musical but social integration as well. Among the prominent examples: Todd Decker's and Katherine Axtell's two re-examinations of *Show Boat* (1927)—a work often praised as the first important predecessor to the integrated musical—uncover the generic and racial tensions within the work and discuss them in culturally meaningful ways; Andrea Most's *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* traces how Jewish Americans used the stage to integrate into American society; Stacy Wolf's *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* considers how female characters are free (or not) to break from conventional roles; and all of these strategies dovetail with Raymond Knapp's broader two-volume set *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* and *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, centered around themes that examine “what musicals *do* within culture—that is, how they engage with central issues that concern us as Americans,” among them race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and American fantasies, mythologies, and countermythologies.<sup>147</sup>

If we are to understand musicals as agents in creating identity and difference, we should be forthright in turning our attention to the musical collage and diversities at work in many of these “integrated” musicals. Collage offers a framework for understanding the tensions that shape the work inside and out. As *On Your Toes* demonstrates, moments of musical collage—moments that diminish or disappear under the aegis of the integrated musical—reveal complex cultural boundaries vital to histories of both Broadway musicals and American identity.

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<sup>147</sup> Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Katherine Axtell, “Maiden Voyage: The Genesis and Reception of *Show Boat*, 1926–1932” (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 2009); Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical*; Stacy Wolf, *Changed For Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Idem, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). The quotation comes from Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 6.

Furthermore, attending to collage throughout the history of the Broadway musical creates a broader history than the privileged canon of integrated musicals. Traditions of minstrelsy and vaudeville loom larger, as do earlier shows of the 1910s and 1920s. Likewise, the prominence of musical collage continues to the present in various forms, from the crowd-pleasing “jukebox” musicals to the more overtly political shows like *Assassins* (1991), *Ragtime* (1998), *Parade* (1998), and *Caroline, or Change* (2004).

Examining the collage within a show like *On Your Toes* reveals both the difficulty and cost in forging an American musical nationalism on the Broadway. Viewed one way, the ballets are a step toward a mature, integrated musical theater work, a way to elevate the musical comedy to the aesthetic high ground of the classical repertoire. Viewed another way, the ballets satirized American pretensions toward European arts. A third view suggests the ballets presented audiences at the time with a culture clash of multiple musical and theatrical traditions, a clash indicative of the social tensions that shaped the work and gave it a powerfully resonant meaning as American art. And still a fourth, the position advocated by Marshall and Jean Stearns, finds that the arrival of the ballet “killed the Negro musical, and more specifically vernacular dancing on Broadway,” and they single out *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* as dealing “the most crushing blow.”<sup>148</sup> Because collage often sustains no single reading, *On Your Toes* encompassed all four viewpoints—and probably more. And it is this complexity that not only assured the status of *On Your Toes* as serious art, but made it suitably American as well.

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<sup>148</sup> Stearns, 159.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Historical Records: Memory, Myth, and the Folk in Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music***

In 1991, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences awarded an Honorary Grammy Award to Harry Smith for the indelible impact made on music by his 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music*. This recognition led, six years later, to a critically lauded CD box set reissue of the *Anthology* by the Smithsonian Institution—fitting, as the *Anthology* was itself one of the earliest reissues of older material. The *Anthology* began when Smith attempted to sell some of his extensive record collection of rare and early records to Moses Asch of Folkways Records. Instead, Asch suggested a commission for Smith to create an anthology from his collection. Smith accepted and set to work creating an *Anthology* that comprised eighty-four commercial releases made between 1926 and 1932, including many “race,” “hillbilly,” and some “ethnic” records, issued on three two-LP volumes: ballads, social music, and songs. Accompanying the records was a set of extensive liner notes. Smith provided listeners with documentation of the original source recording information along with pithy summaries of the lyrics and a variety of images taken from old catalogs, music labels, books, and other ephemera (Figure 3.1).

The notes take the form of a found-art collage, owing to Smith's own interest and career in avant-garde painting and filmmaking. Likewise, the music takes the form of a collage as an anthology. All anthologies are arguably forms of collage, assembling music or other content

from widespread sources and compiling them into a single presentation. But Smith's *Anthology* heightens the effect of collage, as I will discuss in greater detail, by neither creating a random hodgepodge of musical sources nor following a single clear organization within the assemblage of tracks, but instead crafting a compelling musical document that uses collage to reshape past practices of the folk in an open-ended manner and whose meanings are still being debated, constructed, and revised today.

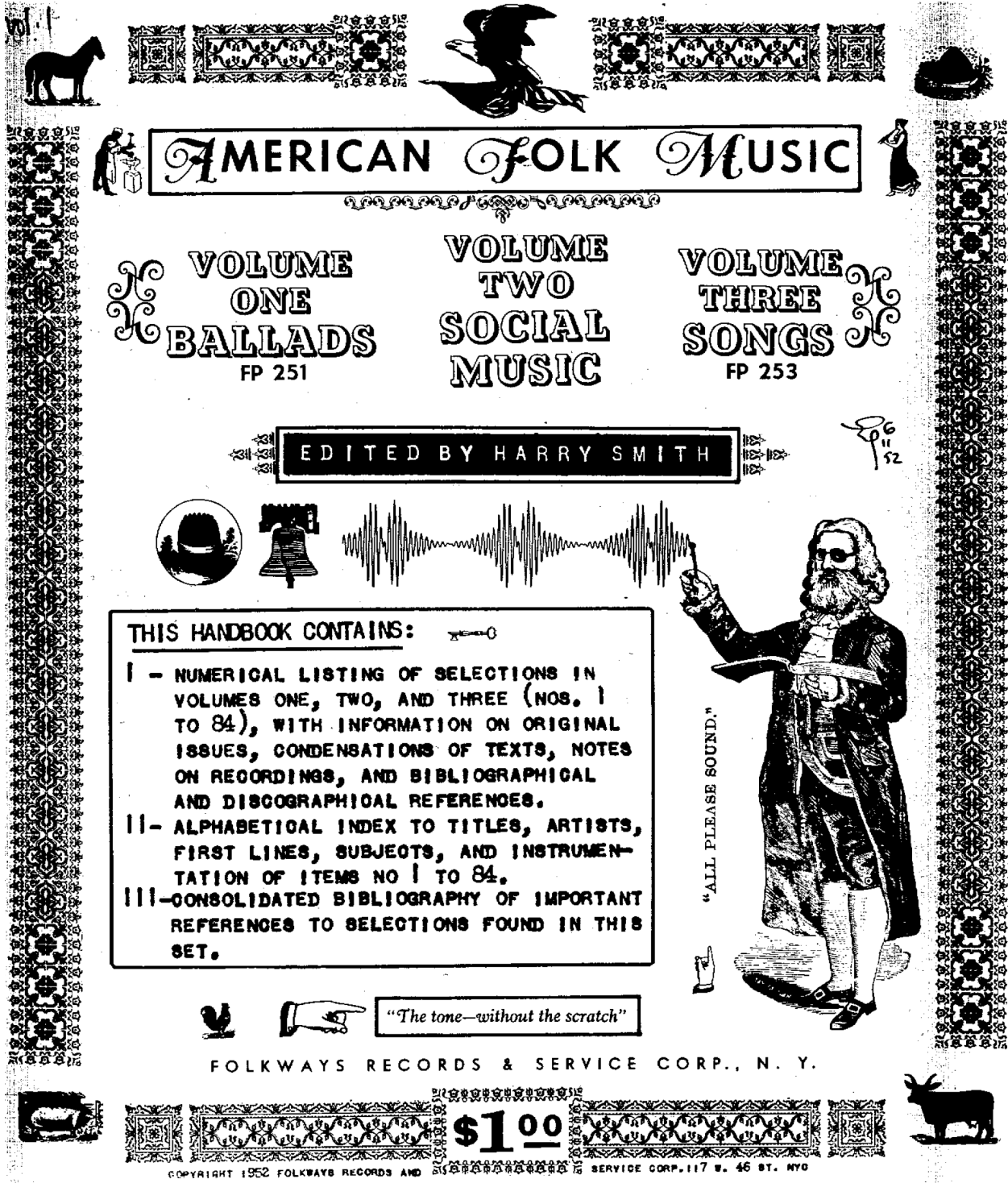
While the *Anthology* never achieved broad popular success, many prominent musicians, among them Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Dave van Ronk, and Jerry Garcia, celebrated the *Anthology* as influential in their own careers. It has since come to be seen as the “founding document” of the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>1</sup> The debt was not purely aesthetic, however; it ran deeper. In honoring Smith, the Academy thanked him “for his ongoing insight into the relationship between artistry and society and his deep commitment to presenting folk music as a vehicle for social change.”<sup>2</sup> Smith graciously accepted the award in a similar spirit, saying he was “glad to say that my dreams came true, that I saw America changed through music, and all that stuff that the rest of you are talking about.”<sup>3</sup> Doubtless these comments reflect folk music's role in political movements of the 1950s and 1960s, most centrally the struggle for civil rights for African Americans. But whereas many songs of the folk revival overtly carried a political message, Pete Seeger's “We Shall Overcome” or Bob Dylan's “Where Have All The Flowers Gone?” for instance, Smith's collection of earlier songs was far more cryptic in its advocacy for social change.

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<sup>1</sup> Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Broadcast of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Grammy Awards.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



# AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

VOLUME ONE  
BALLADS  
FP 251

VOLUME TWO  
SOCIAL  
MUSIC

VOLUME THREE  
SONGS  
FP 253

EDITED BY HARRY SMITH

**THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS:**

- I - NUMERICAL LISTING OF SELECTIONS IN VOLUMES ONE, TWO, AND THREE (NOS. 1 TO 84), WITH INFORMATION ON ORIGINAL ISSUES, CONDENSATIONS OF TEXTS, NOTES ON RECORDINGS, AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND DISCOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES.
- II - ALPHABETICAL INDEX TO TITLES, ARTISTS, FIRST LINES, SUBJECTS, AND INSTRUMENTATION OF ITEMS NO 1 TO 84.
- III - CONSOLIDATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF IMPORTANT REFERENCES TO SELECTIONS FOUND IN THIS SET.



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Figure 3.1: Front Cover of the Handbook to Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952)

Taking a longer view in this chapter, I trace the impact of the music collected on the *Anthology* on a folk-based American national identity across the twentieth century. As I discussed in Chapter One, nationalist usage of the folk requires a simultaneous engagement with the past and the present, and the *Anthology* repeatedly foregrounds this through its engagement with technology, its reissuing of older material, and most importantly its adoption of collage.<sup>4</sup> Collage is endemic to both folk art and modernism, and Smith's engagement with both disrupts nationalism's insistence on continuity. By focusing on the *Anthology* as a collage, we can understand how music was conscripted to shape and police social boundaries and how Smith's vision of America vis-à-vis its folk music has been continually rearticulated. To do this, I begin by examining the musical culture of the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. While truly collage-like in its diversity and cultural intermingling, this period saw the construction of mythologies around the folk that came to be carefully regulated and understood as just the opposite of a collage—a pure, unified tradition with clear social boundaries. Next, I elaborate how Smith's construction of the *Anthology* and its focus on collage reframed these mythologies and sought to address contemporaneous cultural problems. From there, I chronicle its impact on the folk revival before turning to the Smithsonian's 1997 reissue of the *Anthology* on compact disc to explore how the reissue reflects a different set of choices and values than Smith's original. In titling this chapter "Historical Records," I contend that these musical records become themselves social records at each turn along the way, and eventually became tantamount to

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<sup>4</sup> The concepts of "the folk" and "folk music" have proven difficult to define and categorize. My invocation of the term "the folk" in this chapter continues this process of destabilizing the category by questioning such myths as racial, regional, or chronological purity. "The folk" emerges, particularly in conjunction with nationalism, more as a utopian, imagined concept of a shared civic identity with shared history, lineage, language, culture and place. See Chapter One for more information. The term "folk music" carries similar markers, including a pre-industrial, orally and communally transmitted nature: these generic qualities are also questioned in this chapter, although the folk music discussed here may be chiefly categorized as music that cannot be definitively placed as having a single composer or performance, which often means a historical lineage traceable to a pre-mediated or live performance culture. For a fuller account of the historical attempts to define "folk music" and the issues raised by such a task, see Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

written forms of documentary records by being preserved as a national resource. Through the lens of this album, we gain a greater understanding of both the collage-like nature of the United States' folk and musical roots and how this collage has been reconfigured over time to illuminate various aspects of its cultural implications.



## **Recording The Folk: Old-Time Music and New Technology**

While folk music is often characterized as timeless, the eighty-four commercially recorded folk music tracks Smith assembled emerged from a particular moment of social transition and intensified efforts to root American identity in an imagined past. The various musical tracks Smith selected for his collage represent a variety of musical traditions from African-American blues to English ballads, cowboy songs to Cajun dances. Collectively, they reflect the contradictory discourses of folk music from which they emerged, as definitions and values were repeatedly imposed on what constituted, or what did not constitute, folk music. This discourse frequently invoked musical and lyrical signifiers of racial, geographic, and chronological distinctions, distinctions that Smith's act of collage would further complicate. Thus, in order to better understand how Smith's reorganization of musical boundaries within folk music through collage reflected a reorganization of social boundaries in the mid-twentieth century, I begin by elucidating how social boundaries, including class, race, and geography, are inscribed into the discourse of folk music Smith inherited along with his records.

Decades before Harry Smith would witness folk music changing America, folk music was regarded not as the agent but as the victim of change. The turn of the twentieth century, a period commonly known as the Progressive Era, was a time of intense efforts to modernize the country through technological innovation and implementation. City populations boomed as industrial labor demands grew and families moved to cities seeking higher wages, better working conditions, and the benefits of urban life with its modern technological advancements. Northern

cities, already the industrial centers of the United States, grew particularly quickly, fed as well by large waves of foreign immigrants and later by internal migrations as southern Americans, and especially southern African Americans, moved to northern cities. The South had remained somewhat insulated from technological advancements of the late nineteenth century; its economy remained predominantly agricultural and its population less mobile given the difficult terrain and lack of access to roads and railroads. Its population also remained fairly self-contained; at the peak of foreign immigration in the United States in 1910, less than 2% of the population in the South was foreign-born.<sup>5</sup> But in the first decades of the twentieth century, the South began to change to a more industrialized and urban region, and rapidly.<sup>6</sup>

Not all welcomed the new industrial path unequivocally. The rapidity of this modernization and its upheavals sparked in some a fear of its consequences and a nostalgic desire to hold fast to the ways of a past on the verge of disappearing in the explosive wake of the future, not unlike the concerns about the “vanishing Indians” and their music that Edward MacDowell felt. Numerous men and women, many educated at Ivy League universities, set out from the North to comb the Appalachians and American South and West and document the lore, music, and craft traditions of America they encountered. The impetus was felt as early as 1888, when the American Folk-Lore Society was founded to fight the encroaching urbanism and preserve folklore. To do so, they went to “older and more retired towns” to find “the quiet past”

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<sup>5</sup> Gavin Wright, “Persisting Dixie: The South as an Economic Region” in *The American South in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Craig S. Pascoe, Karen Trahan Leathem, and Andy Ambrose (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 21. The South had not always been static, however. Before the civil war, nearly 40% of the Southern population had been foreign born. See David Goldfield, “Unmelting the Ethnic South: Changing Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity in the Modern South” in Pascoe, Leathem, and Ambrose, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1900 and 1920, the population grew in Tennessee by 16%, but populations in urban counties grew by as much as 88%, in Hamilton county. Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina grew statewide by 28%, 31%, and 35% respectively, with some urban counties in all three states more than doubling in population. Average farm sizes decreased and manufacturing output exploded, growing by 423% in Tennessee, 510% in Alabama, 550% in Georgia, and by an incredible 894% in North Carolina. Data from United States Census, accessed via Social Explorer.

before it was “absorbed into the uniformity of the written language.”<sup>7</sup> Folk music was transcribed and published in collected books of American folk songs, often annotated for readers. With the invention of the phonograph, John Lomax, Cecil Sharp, Olive Dame Campbell, and others travelled to remote locations to record the folk themselves performing traditional music, allowing for what they believed to be a more authentic presentation of performance practice. Still others went further and sought not simply to preserve the traditions but to ensure their survival through the creation of schools, upheld as “a sort of cultural breakwater, standing against the new values and esthetics carried by the radio, the railroad, the phonograph, and the automobile.”<sup>8</sup>

Anthropological scholars were not alone in collecting music in the South. In 1923, on the advice of Atlanta salesman Polk C. Brockman, Okeh record company executive Ralph Peer traveled to Atlanta to record a local celebrity by the name of Fiddlin’ John Carson. Mamie Smith’s recording of “Crazy Blues” and Vernon Dalhart’s recording of the ballad “The Wreck of the Old 97” had already demonstrated a broad market for southern music; Fiddlin’ John Carson would prove similarly marketable to Peer’s surprise. Peer initially marketed him as akin to other ethnic acts like German and Swedish records, which he had promoted only to a special, localized clientele, claiming Carson’s records “were so terrible I just didn’t dare put any of them in the regular list.”<sup>9</sup> Yet Carson proved popular and was subsequently added to Okeh’s national catalogues.<sup>10</sup> Other companies quickly followed suit, setting up studios in Southern cities and drawing artists from surrounding rural and urban communities.

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<sup>7</sup> Michael F. Scully, *The Never-Ending Revival: Rounder Records and the Folk Alliance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 28.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 95.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 198.

<sup>10</sup> Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U. S. A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 38.

While the anthropological collectors and the commercial record companies entered with decidedly different and even sometimes antithetical goals, their characterizations of the folk overlapped to a surprising degree and taken collectively present a dynamic and carefully constructed view. Indeed, neither collectors nor record companies simply documented what they saw; rather, they actively edited what they found to produce something they viewed as more authentic.

Most significantly, folk music was placed in opposition to commercial Tin Pan Alley hits. Many of these folk collectors shared a disdain for popular culture. Cecil Sharp felt folk music would prove a tempering influence; likewise, prominent African Americans like Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston were suspicious of industrialism's corruptive power and the threat of cultural elimination it posed.<sup>11</sup> One solution had been an alignment of the folk with fine arts and classical music, something Sharp heartily embraced but Toomer and Hurston did not because, for them, the racial associations of art music as white meant a dilution of the African-American character, whereas W. E. B. DuBois supported an alignment of black music with classical music as part of a crusade *for* modernization to escape a past characterized by slavery.<sup>12</sup> The participation of white composers John Powell and Ruth Crawford Seeger within the folk movement strengthened this alliance.<sup>13</sup> A second solution was simply to excise music deemed

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<sup>11</sup> For Cecil Sharp's position, see Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 22; for Toomer's and Hurston's, see Marybeth Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 16.

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller treatment of the contesting schools of thought on music, race, and modernization in the 1920s and 1930s, see Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Alan Lomax too felt folk music constituted something of an art music, and furthermore served as an answer to the ills of modernism, akin to what Native American music provided Edward MacDowell, as Kara Ann Gardner has argued (see Chapter One for more details). He later touted bluegrass as such: "While the aging voices along Tin Pan Alley grow every day more querulous, and jazzmen wander through the harmonic jungles of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, grassroots guitar and banjo pickers are playing on the heartstrings of America. Out of the torrent of folk music that is the backbone of the record business today, the freshest sound comes from the so-called Bluegrass band—a sort of mountain Dixieland combo in which the five-string banjo, America's only indigenous folk instrument, carries the lead like a hot clarinet. The mandolin plays bursts reminiscent of jazz trumpet choruses; a

too redolent of Tin Pan Alley. John Lomax freely did so, first in his collection of Cowboy Songs, where he rejected songs that sounded too popular while also including newly written songs that fit his perception, though excising the authors to maintain the illusion of their timelessness, and later repeated this approach in his management of the singer Leadbelly. Lomax disdained Leadbelly's love of the radio and popular songs from Jimmie Rodgers or Tin Pan Alley and subsequently restricted Leadbelly's programming away from some of the Tin Pan Alley numbers. Anabelle Morris Buchanan, founder of the White Top Folk Festival, both altered and invented traditions to further promote Anglo-Saxon folk culture, such as including morris dancing, despite the fact that morris dancing "had not been in evidence in the United States for three centuries, if ever, and had certainly never been recovered from tradition in the southern mountains."<sup>14</sup> Buchanan also revealed her own editorial process similar to Child's predilection for improving or removing unsavory lyrics in the ballads he collected, as she claimed, "Being folk, or of folk origin does not necessarily mean that a tune...is good...I am often offered crude versions perhaps of some modern ballad, based on a popular or revival tune. ... We must learn to discriminate...between the cheap 'hill billy' type and that which has true musical or literary worth."<sup>15</sup>

Although record companies clearly did not share the disdain for Tin Pan Alley that some of these collectors evinced, they nevertheless sought to capitalize on the novelty of folk music and differentiate their folk recordings from their other recordings. Record scouts would censor repertoire and shape the sound to conform to expectations on the basis that they already had

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heavily bowed fiddle supplies trombone-like hoe-down solos; while a framed guitar and slapped bass make up the rhythm section. Everything goes at top volume, with harmonized choruses behind a lead singer who hollers in the high, lonesome style beloved in the American backwoods. The result is folk music in overdrive with a silvery, rippling, pinging sound; the State Department should note that for virtuosity, fire and speed our best Bluegrass bands can match any Slavic folk orchestra." See Alan Lomax, *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings, 1934-1997*, ed. Ronald D. Cohen (New York: Routledge, 2003), 200.

<sup>14</sup> Whisnant, 200-1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

better ensembles performing contemporary hits.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Jeff Todd Titon suggests, performers might self-censor themselves based on their own perceptions of what record companies might want to hear.<sup>17</sup> Performances of folk music also appealed to record companies because it was cheaper without the copyright royalties they had to pay for published material. At the same time, the differences could not be too extreme. Peer would alter folk performances to fit the needs of the listening public, adding accompaniment or vocal harmonies to tunes, purging archaic elements but retaining an air of rusticity.<sup>18</sup> Like Lomax, Peer was more interested in the appearance of the folk rather than the veracity of its source and included new music that sounded old.

An interview with Frank Walker, who served as a record executive for Columbia in the 1920s and 1930s, reveals in more depth how companies actively shaped this music. First, Walker explains that musicians weren't simply recorded, but would consult and rehearse with executives first. "You sat down and listened to them and you talked with them and decided on this and you timed it. You rehearsed them the next morning, and recorded them in the afternoon and evening."<sup>19</sup> While vague on specifics, this suggests that companies were mindful first and foremost of their own needs, from length to audience appeal for both repertoire and performance; the dismissive attitude toward the musicians elsewhere in the interview suggests their artistic judgment and financial needs were rarely considered.<sup>20</sup> Second, Walker notes how music would

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 234.

<sup>17</sup> Jeff Todd Titon, *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 215–6.

<sup>18</sup> Whisnant, 183.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Walker, "Who Chose These Records?: A Look Into the Life, Tastes, and Procedures of Frank Walker" by Mike Seeger in *Anthology of American Folk Music*, ed. Josh Dunson and Ethel Raim (New York: Oak Publications, 1973), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Walker claims the performers "never asked you for money. ... They were just happy to sing and play, and we were happy to have them." See *Ibid.* Jeff Todd Titon offers a slightly different account in his study of rural blues performers, where they were often paid a single lump sum, see Titon, 214–5. Both highlight the economic power of white record companies held and the wholesale appropriation of this music.

be rewritten by staff members: “if I were down South and found some tale of a local nature down there, I’d sit down and write Carson [Robinson] to tell him the story of it. Then twenty-four hours later, in New York, Carson would be in, and say here is the story of whatever it happened to be. It would be done. We might make a few changes to make it a little more authentic.”<sup>21</sup>

Walker does not elucidate how it might be made more authentic, but it’s clear that authenticity is measured according to the company’s standards. Walker also tells the story of how a song he wrote called Bright Mohawk Valley sold poorly, but by changing it to Red River Valley turned it into a success. “Why?” Walker asks, “Because there was no one Red River in the United States but probably eight or ten. So everybody adopted it. It was their special song, for their special Red River.”<sup>22</sup> Here, broad appeal is of key importance to success, something echoed by Walker’s idealistic description of the use of focus groups: “We would bring all the people up—from the bank president to the street cleaner. You watched the expression on their face. We were able to judge then because you were playing to America.”<sup>23</sup> With this comment, Walker exposes one of the principal mythologies of the folk, namely that it was a democratic music traversing social boundaries (here, class) and appealing to all. Moreover, the folk purported to speak not just to but also for the entire nation.<sup>24</sup> Yet in the pursuit of the folk and its attendant perceived authenticity, social boundaries were often carefully regulated.

Often elided with the chronological distance between the traditional and the modern was the geographic distance both between the city and the country (as in Charles Ives’s “Old Home Day”) and between the North and the South; thus the traditional, the folk, the rural, and the South all came to be equivalent in the popular imagination and understood as not modern, commercial,

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<sup>21</sup> Walker, 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> This idea was discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

urban, or Northern. Historian Karl Hagstrom Miller notes that southern musicians came to be classified as folk by the North regardless of the music and this “marked the entire region as a place apart from the rest of the nation. It suggested that the South maintained a homogenous musical culture defined by its antiquity, its primitive ideals, and its ignorance of northern styles.”<sup>25</sup> Miller effectively unsettles this myth, documenting the wide popularity of commercial music, yet at the time the myth proved quite tenacious. Southern musicians who excelled at commercial or art music and traveled north to New York were in danger of disrupting this boundary and found themselves forced to figuratively return home by playing up their southern heritage as a novelty in order to remain competitive.<sup>26</sup> Thus, even recordings such as Columbia’s first southern recording, which featured Ernest Thompson performing Irving Berlin’s Tin Pan Alley standard “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” was classified in their catalog as folk.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, the concurrent rise of Southern regionalism in art and literature traded on a difference between and a critique of the encroaching northern industrialism against the older, agrarian, southern way of doing things. In doing so, Southerners unsettled the cultural hegemony in the United States that New England had held until then. As literary scholar Carrie Tirado Bramen writes, regional literature, through the rhetoric of authenticity, “validated the geographic ‘margins’ as a rich space for cultural productions... and challenged the inferior and subordinate connotations of the local.”<sup>28</sup> Yet Bramen also recognizes that regional writers were in fact urban and sometimes Northern, thus, “rather than representing the authentic voice of the regional subaltern,” their work “instead ventriloquized rural misfortune from the comforts of the

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<sup>25</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 105. Miller’s book unsettles this notion effectively by focusing on commercial music making in the South. For a broader examination of the musical variety of Southern music making, see John Minton, *78 Blues: Folksongs and Phonographs in the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 112.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>28</sup> Carrie Tirado Bramen, *The Uses of Variety: Modern Americanism and the Quest for National Distinctiveness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 122.



metropolis.”<sup>29</sup> Just as Southern musicians were constructed to appeal to cosmopolitan audiences, so too was Southern literature constructed to provide a refuge from immigration and modernization, an elegy for a rural past disappearing amidst the progressive expansion of the city.

As the South transitioned to the modern, industrial age, the regional identity was one of confusion. For some, such as Southern musicians who traveled north, or performers like Leadbelly who enjoyed performing Tin Pan Alley songs as well, the mythology of a backwards South was condescending and restrictive. For others it was a traditional and comfortable image to cling to in the face of sweeping changes. David Whisnant describes Jean Ritchie, the youngest child in a prominent singing family, being chastised by her father for singing in a trained manner:

Standing at the very boundary between the old culture of her grandparents, parents, and older siblings, and the new culture of the radio and her college classmates she felt a profound confusion. ‘And so in my mind,’ she recalled later, ‘the songs got all mixed and tangled until I came to think on the hillbilly songs and the old songs as the same kind of thing.’<sup>30</sup>

Ritchie’s state of confusion mirrors the broader South. Whether Lomax’s naïve belief that prisons were impermeable to modern culture, a belief clearly belied by Leadbelly’s familiarity with and love of popular Tin Pan Alley songs, or Cecil Sharp’s collecting of supposedly pristine ballads, nearly half of which came from near the large cities of Ashville and Charlottesville, the south was just as much a crucible that changed old traditions as a mason jar that preserved them.

Perhaps the greatest distinction drawn with regard to the folk was not one of region, but one of race. Indeed, geographic differences often reinforced racial differences, as Northern

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>30</sup> Whisnant, 96–7.

African Americans like W.E.B. DuBois were seen as essentially Southern by Northern whites.<sup>31</sup>

While racial segregation remained policy, it was not strictly observed in practice, particularly within musical circles. Many prominent singers grew up in racially mixed communities, learning repertoire from and performing for both blacks and whites; Fiddlin' John Carson was often found on Decatur Street in Atlanta, "dubbed 'the melting pot of Dixie' for the interracial and interclass crowds it attracted."<sup>32</sup> Repertoire easily crossed color lines, a process that became only easier with the rise of radio and phonographs. Karl Hagstrom Miller notes that blacks enjoyed square dance tunes and whites enjoyed the blues just as much as the more stereotypical converse.<sup>33</sup>

Both record companies and folk collectors, however, were far more attentive to racial boundaries in their practice. While record companies recorded both whites and blacks—indeed such musical miscegenation was a crucial source of profit at the time—they could not record them together. When setting up a studio, they might record whites for the afternoon, and blacks in the evening. Nor could the music be marketed in a mixed-race fashion. Recalls Frank Walker:

There were many laws in the Southern states, which for instance, if I recorded a colored group and yet it was of a hillbilly nature, I couldn't put that on my little folders that I got out on hillbilly music... We were sued for a quarter of a million dollars because I had recorded two white country boys by the name of the Allen Brothers, and I had them record the one thing that they had made famous. It was a colored song called the *Salty Dog Blues*, and they sang it in colored style. They used to sing it around in Negro pubs.<sup>34</sup>

As in the broader marketing of Southern artist, identity trumped sonic and musical content.

For folk collectors, questions of race were not so much legal as personal, making the division all the more sharply etched. Since the mid-nineteenth century, white American popular culture had maintained a fascination with African-American music, from minstrelsy to ragtime and jazz. The booming interest in folk culture, and specifically white folk culture, stemmed from

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<sup>31</sup> Bramen, 119.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 202–3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 77–9.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, 16.

an interest in reducing the growth of black and Jewish musics as well as a reaction to increased foreign immigration. As early as 1899, rural white culture was promoted as a form of racial purity when William Goodell Frost noted that rural whites played the role of “living ancestors” particularly because of their lack of contact with African Americans; John Fox Jr. would praise their patriotism in contrast with immigrants, African Americans, and Native Americans two years later.<sup>35</sup> Collecting the folk music of his native Great Britain, Cecil Sharp deemed that the folk singers he encountered in the United States had “one and all entered at birth into the full enjoyment of their racial heritage.”<sup>36</sup> Composer John Powell was more explicit:

For perfection of line and richness of color, the beauty of Anglo-Saxon folk-music surpasses any other in the whole world. . . . Here at last, we have a basic idiom thoroughly competent to express our national psychology. . . . [This] proves not only the innate musical gift of our race, but also the high plane of musical culture and taste that our forefathers. . . . had reached, and which, consequently, is re-attainable by us, their descendants.<sup>37</sup>

Powell’s equation of white culture with national culture aptly describes the aims of folk collectors, to provide the United States with not just a white, Anglo-Saxon past but to ensure a white, Anglo-Saxon future as well, and to do so through means of preserving an innate racial hierarchy.

This assumption of racial superiority also guided John Lomax’s work with Leadbelly, albeit less explicitly. As his manager, Lomax in many ways reversed these notions of racial purity. Just as Frost had praised whites who had no contact with blacks, Lomax believed that contact with whites corrupted blacks and thus sought out African Americans that he believed had no contact with modern popular culture, namely prisoners. Lomax rejected any tunes with white or commercial associations for Leadbelly’s performances, and similarly dressed him in a fashion

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<sup>35</sup> Kiri Miller, *Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 144–5.

<sup>36</sup> Whisnant, 120.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

that emphasized his authenticity as a poor, black performer. The twin personae of the white commercial manager/collector and the black prisoner/performer underscore the power structure at play not just within their own relationship, but within the broader cultural sphere as well.

African Americans had been participants within popular culture since the late nineteenth century, but with the Harlem Renaissance began to consider their own racial heritage as a source of pride. While some whites had disdained popular musical culture as too marked by black influences, some blacks likewise disdained popular culture as low-class and a tool of oppression at the hands of whites. Many prominent black intellectuals promoted classical music and spirituals as a refined proof of the capabilities and humanity of African Americans. Others, however, turned to commercial musics like ragtime and especially the blues as a source of African-American roots. The blues had actually begun as a commercial enterprise. W. C. Handy supposedly discovered the blues not in the field but at a train station, a potent symbol of the industrialization that was changing the South. Handy did not use the term “folk” to describe the blues early on, and scholars have not found any people who either performed or recalled hearing them before 1900 or 1910.<sup>38</sup> Rather, Handy’s interest in the blues was a commercial endeavor, initially published as a Tin Pan Alley form of music. Later, Handy would reframe the blues as a folk music, claiming, “What gave the blues its real standing as folk music was that it was ‘essentially of our race,’ rooted in a collective black past.”<sup>39</sup> Likewise, James Weldon Johnson would argue that ragtime, a form of music that was composed and published, something Scott Joplin had conceived as somewhere between a popular and art music genre, was also rooted in folk origins. Karl Hagstrom Miller notes that both Handy’s and Johnson’s claims of folk

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<sup>38</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 254 and Grace Elizabeth Hale, “Hear Me Talking to You: The Blues and the Romance of Rebellion,” in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890–1930*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 243.

<sup>39</sup> Hamilton, 84.

authenticity behind commercial musics “symbolized the expanding scope and influence of folkloric notions of authenticity. ...It not only called out white appropriators of black song. It also challenged the foundational premise of academic folklore that defined authenticity through cultural and racial isolation.”<sup>40</sup>

Folk music collection in the 1920s and 1930s was not monolithic in its methodology or in its goals. The public debates between Richard Dorson and Benjamin Botkin about whether folk music should consist of fieldwork and scholarship or of mass culture and folklore signaled a wide disagreement over what constituted folk music and culture. As such, each commentator drew their own cultural lines as they attempted to define America’s folk music along cultural boundaries of geography, class, and race. Some delineated very clear hierarchies of race and culture. Others sought to break down assumptions about a single folk culture for the United States and embrace diversity, but doing so often ironically emphasized their singular viewpoint of that exercise. Writing about one such attempt, the Radio Research Project, Benjamin Filene concludes:

The project’s goal, in effect, was to turn on its end the process by which radio technology was creating a national culture: instead of envisioning culture as diffusing from urban centers to the rest of the country, the project wanted to decentralize the process of cultural dissemination so that diverse local and regional sources could contribute as equal partners to a multifarious national culture. ...[B]ut they were trying to promote this diversity with shows produced from a single, urban-based, government-controlled, centralized source.<sup>41</sup>

Thus white, urban, or Northern men and women maintained cultural control even as it might have aimed to promote African-American, rural, or Southern culture, for their value relied on their preservation as primitive and simple. Invocations of the concepts of the folk and authenticity were a way of legitimizing and naturalizing such divisions and thus delegitimized

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<sup>40</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, 250–1

<sup>41</sup> Filene, 148.

the cultural mixing and miscegenation that was at the heart of American music. It was these divisions that Harry Smith would take aim at in his anthology.

## Recovering the Folk: Collecting, Compiling, and Collaging Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*

Recordings of folk music made in the 1920s and 1930s served dual purposes, a documentation of folk culture and the marketing of a commercial commodity. Both functions ensured the records would fade into obscurity, buried either in a library or in the dustbin as cultural tastes demanded new releases. Not long after these records were made, the practice of collecting folk music was succeeded by a new practice: the collecting of old records as historical and aesthetic documents. Record collecting first gained prominence first in the world of jazz, and like those who took an anthropological interest in collecting and recording folk music, jazz record collectors tended to be white, urban, and Ivy League-educated men. In the 1930s, jazz focused on white and sweet musicians, but record collectors sought out hot jazz records from earlier days, and especially from African-American musicians. Jazz critics lauded their efforts as crucial to keeping jazz growing as an art form and for preserving its historical archive in the form of these recordings.<sup>42</sup> Their enthusiasm led to vocal public advocacy for hot African-American jazz clubs in the 1930s. Charles Edward Smith and Charles Frederick Ramsey Jr. eventually published *Jazzmen*, a work full of naïve inaccuracies and exaggerated tales but highly

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176.

influential for its casting a spotlight on jazz's historical roots in New Orleans and on Jelly Roll Morton.<sup>43</sup>

After jazz, blues would catch the attention of record collectors; Ramsey would go on to publish *Been Here and Gone*, documenting his fieldwork throughout the South in the 1950s. Along with Ramsey, collectors Samuel Charters and James McKune both shaped the debates surrounding blues in the 1950s. Charters published the book and compiled the album *The Country Blues*, which introduced the blues and its history to audiences. He focused not on rarities but on popular music that had found an audience among African Americans. McKune publicly criticized Charters, insisting that aesthetics should guide collecting, and positing himself as the chief arbiter of such tastes.<sup>44</sup> Like the folk music collectors before them, record collectors were faced with decisions about the criteria behind their collecting, such as whether to embrace or reject modern commercial tastes, and whether to collect all songs and stories or to more assiduously discern among them. But all of these collectors shared a certain racial fascination as white men searching for black voices untouched by white influences, and all did so through a form of tourism on white America's margins, be it the black urban areas of New York or Chicago for hot jazz or the black rural South for the blues. They were, as John Dougan points out, not unlike Ralph Peer, acting as a cultural mediator in a foreign world.<sup>45</sup>

This was the world in which Harry Smith trafficked, although not one in which he entirely belonged. Smith's biography set him apart from the aforementioned collectors. Smith

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<sup>43</sup> A comprehensive history of the work of record collectors, writers, and record companies in the eventual revival of hot jazz can be found in Chapters Two and Three of Bruce Boyd Raeburn, *New Orleans Style and the Writing of American Jazz History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, 227.

<sup>45</sup> John Dougan, "Objects of Desire: Canon Formation and Blues Record Collecting," *Journal of Popular Music* 18, no. 1 (April 2006), 41–2. An excellent examination of the process of "singularization," where once commonplace items gain cultural and economic value through collecting can be found in Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.



grew up not in New England but on the West coast. Smith's parents played a formative role in Smith's love of folk music. His father had been a cowboy, frequently sang cowboy songs, and supplied Smith with books on the subject. Smith's mother was fond of singing Irish songs, and taught on the nearby Lummi Native American reservations.<sup>46</sup> It would be Smith's continuing interest in Irish songs that first led him to discover country music.<sup>47</sup> Smith also became interested in Native American music and dance through his mother's work, inventing his own systems of transcription for what he observed.<sup>48</sup> He graduated high school with the ambition of being a composer of art music, but studied anthropology for several semesters at the University of Washington before leaving for the bohemian community in Berkeley, California where he began to make his name as an experimental filmmaker, continuing his work in New York City in the 1950s.<sup>49</sup>

When or what Smith began collecting is only partially known through the few comments Smith made on the subject. Helping to build airplanes in Washington during World War II, Smith drew a large salary, enough to sustain his growing collection; by the time he moved to New York City in 1950, his collection was large enough that he had to ship it collect, and it would continue to grow.<sup>50</sup> Smith's methods of collections place him within the broader subculture, collecting through stores like the central General Store on Long Island that sought to get rid of stock, through magazines like *The Record Changer*, and through correspondence with other prominent collectors, including Pete Kaufman and James McKune. Repeatedly, he

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<sup>46</sup> Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, 98.

<sup>47</sup> "A Rare Interview with Harry Smith," by John Cohen in *Sing Out!* 19, no. 1 (1969). Reprinted in *American Magus, Harry Smith: A Modern Alchemist*, ed. Paola Iglioni (New York: Inanout Press, 1996), 127–8.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by P. Adams Sitney from *Film Culture* 37 (1965). Reprinted in *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith, Selected Interviews*, ed. Rani Singh (Seattle: Elbow/Cityful Press, 1999), 56.

<sup>49</sup> Rani Singh, "Harry Smith, an Ethnographic Modernist in America" in *Harry Smith: The Avant-Garde in the American Vernacular*, ed. Andrew Perchuk and Rani Singh (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 21.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton. Breslin Hotel, March 1, 1983. Tape FS-5113, Gary Kenton Collection, Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

emphasizes seeking out unusual records. Smith described hearing a record by Uncle Dave Macon and thinking, “I’d never heard anything like it.”<sup>51</sup> He acquired a record by Tommy McClellan by accident and had a similar reaction, which led him to find an album by Memphis Minnie, which in a separate interview he said he considered his first record, followed by one by Reverend F. W. McGee.<sup>52</sup> Smith described his criteria simply as “looking for exotic records. ...Exotic in relation to what was considered to be the world culture of high class music.”<sup>53</sup> This interest in the exotic led him to admit with some shameful hesitation a familiarity with the commercial, even as he again emphasized its status as a curiosity: “Now this sounds horrible and ruins my reputation, but one of the first people I heard was John Jacob Niles. ...It was a commercial version of the song, a curiosity because something that had survived orally for a long time suddenly turned into something that Sears Roebuck sold.”<sup>54</sup> A few other comments fill in his practices more broadly. Elsewhere, Smith recalled a more general process of collecting blues records first, then encountering hillbilly records via other folk music, possibly Irish or Romanian. He acquired some folk albums issued by the Library of Congress while in Washington, through which he became familiar with the Carter Family. His interest in ballads came from a similarly early encounter with Carl Sandberg’s *American Songbag*, and he later owned some Folkways albums, with a preference for Leadbelly, as well as multiple bebop albums.<sup>55</sup>

Collecting formed the underpinning of Smith’s aesthetic interest in collage. Smith’s collecting was not limited to records; he also amassed impressive collections of string figures from around the world, Ukrainian eggs, Seminole quilts, and paper airplanes. For Smith, collecting was in part an appreciation of patterns, something that would guide his construction of

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<sup>51</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 127.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton. Breslin Hotel, March 1, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 127.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* and Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton. Breslin Hotel, March 1, 1983.

the *Anthology* as well as his broader appreciation of music, noting, “My essential interest in music was the patterning that occurred in it.”<sup>56</sup> Smith also saw in patterns and collections the hidden connections between separate objects: this is the heart of collage. As part of the bohemian avant-garde in Berkeley, Smith became well acquainted with surrealist collage. Colleagues likened Smith’s film collages to Max Ernst’s collages, a book of which Smith owned, and described a typical visit to Smith as “listening to his music, playing Exquisite Corpse, scrutinizing strange collages.”<sup>57</sup> Music and visual collages were linked in Smith’s activities. Smith created paintings based on jazz recordings; one painting involved a brushstroke for each note of Dizzy Gillespie’s recording of “Manteca,” another synchronized a film animation precisely with Thelonious Monk’s recording of “Misterioso.” This interest extended into his fascination with global forms of transcription, from his own work with Native American music and dances to ring shouts, Bulgarian music, and Buddhist and Byzantine chants.<sup>58</sup> Smith also notes an interest between visual designs and music that grew out of his transcriptions, explaining his photographs of Sara Carter (of the Carter Family) at work on patchwork quilts. Smith elaborated, “I wanted to find out if there was any correspondence between certain color patterns and certain sounds. ...I’m sure that if you could collect sufficient patchwork quilts from the same people who made the records...you could figure out just about anything you can from the music.”<sup>59</sup> Smith would also record sequences of landscapes at sunrise or night club conversations or, in a move borrowed from Charles Ives, the events of Fourth of July celebrations, create aural

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<sup>56</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 134.

<sup>57</sup> Jordan Belson, “[Interview with] Jordan Belson,” by Paola Iglioni in Iglioni, 19–21. Exquisite Corpse is a surrealist party game where each player draws an anatomical feature on a figure (e.g. nose, arm, feet) but with the paper folded so that the rest of the figure is hidden. The result is something of a Frankensteinian collage.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton. Breslin Hotel, March 1, 1983.

<sup>59</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 134.

collages from them and then scrutinize them, listening over and over for patterns of noise inherent in the sonic collage of the world.

Moses Asch and his company Folkway Records would prove a natural fit for Smith and his anthology. To be sure, Asch and Smith did not always get along, in part due to Asch's business-mindedness and Smith's capricious interests, penchant for distractions, and completist approach to documentation. But Asch and Smith shared a philosophical approach to folk music. Asch, like Smith, first encountered American folk music through his parents: Asch's father supplied him with books about cowboys and their songs, which he said "guided me through life because [Teddy Roosevelt, in the introduction to John Lomax's collection] said that folklore and songs are the cultural expression of people. So here I had these books and was able to show that we had this kind of uniqueness to our culture which was not just a melting pot, but were part of a whole bunch of other things."<sup>60</sup> Asch's perception of American culture as more collage than melting pot resonates with Smith's aesthetic and would carry forward in terms of the Folkways catalog, which Asch described as a "mosaic" and included music that Smith found so appealing, including jazz, avant-garde art music, anthropologic field records of music from around the world, and of course the reissuing of older records of which the *Anthology* was a central part.<sup>61</sup> Asch felt artists should control all aspects of the album design, from theme and selection to cover photos and liner notes. The cover and liner notes Asch felt were particularly important, partly because they distinguished the label at the time, and partly because he was extraordinarily sensitive to the educative possibilities of these albums, adhering to the philosophy "music is music in context" and orienting his releases toward museums, libraries, and schools. Asch also remained sympathetic to artists with politically sensitive material, envisioning albums as a sort of

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<sup>60</sup> Tony Olmsted, *Folkways Records: Moses Asch and his Encyclopedia of Sound* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 12.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Carlin, *Worlds of Sound: The Story of Smithsonian Folkways* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 223.

“living newspaper.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, just as Smith hoped to see America changed by music, so too Asch sought to use his label to further social causes. To support civil rights for African Americans, Asch issued albums with the music and poetry of the movement and coverage of the Nashville sit-in, and to further global and national harmony, he felt that his devotion to American and global folk music were “helping Americans to feel at home with themselves and with their global neighbors.”<sup>63</sup>

The *Anthology of American Folk Music* bears out all of Smith’s and Asch’s history. It is a political tool, an informational musicological treatise, a work of avant-garde art, and a sampling of one collector’s aesthetic whims and interests. The *Anthology* is a collage in every aspect: visual, auditory, literary, and even in its method of construction, which followed a number of different, simultaneous impulses. In assembling the *Anthology*, Smith had a few criteria, both regarding the recordings selected and their placement. In one interview, he held that “The first criterion was excellence of performance, combined with excellence of words.”<sup>64</sup> In another, he qualifies and expands upon this:

The *Anthology* was not an attempt to get all the best records (there are other collections where everything is supposed to be beautiful), but a lot of these were selected because they were odd—an important version of the song, or one which came from some particular place. For example, there were things from Texas included that weren’t very good. There was a Child Ballad, Henry Lee. It’s not a good record but it had to go first in the set because it was the lowest numbered Child Ballad. Then there were good performances. The Brilliancy Medley occurs to me. You couldn’t get a representative cross-section of music into such a small number of records. Instead, they were selected to be ones that would be popular among musicologists, or possibly with people who would want to sing them and maybe would improve the version. They were basically picked out from an epistemological, musicological selection of reasons.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Olmsted, 67.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 44

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Harry Smith March by Gary Kenton, 1983/84. Reprinted in Singh, *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith, Selected Interviews*, 27.

<sup>65</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 126. Henry Lee is not the first ballad in Child’s collection, but presumably was the lowest numbered Child Ballad within Smith’s collection.

Quality, the first criterion, could be overridden by historical importance, rarity, or it seems by the possibility of revived popularity and improvement. Indeed, Smith regarded popularity as not antithetical to the value of these musics, but as a mark of quality, and believed “that the dissemination of music affects the quality. As you increase the critical audience of any music, the level goes up.”<sup>66</sup>

As for the ordering of the discs, Smith never discussed his methodology, but a document housed at the Smithsonian outlines the ordering, though whether this predated the album or not is unknown:

1. British Ballads
2. Early American Ballads 1800
3. American Ballads 1900
4. American Topical Songs
  
5. Religious—Early
6. Religious—Band
7. Dance—Tunes
8. Dance—[illegible]
  
9. Songs [something crossed out] Love Songs
10. ~~Work~~ Social Songs
11. Blues
12. Crime Prison<sup>67</sup>

This appears to serve as a rough model for the final album and mirrors how music might be categorized for sale or publication: chronologically, sacred/secular, blues, and thematically connected songs. But the final ordering was more a collage than appears here, retaining just enough of this structure to suggest certain logical connections or narratives between tracks while enriching it with other contrasts and connections.

A closer examination of the music and notes suggests, within this basic framework, a host

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>67</sup> Folder FA2951-2953 Anthology of American Folk v.1-3, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

of strategies (Appendix 3A). Smith began, as noted above, with “Henry Lee” (track 1) the lowest numbered Child Ballad on the collection, and followed with four more in ascending order of their Child Ballad listings. The subsequent four are not Child Ballads, but are given some British lineage. After those nine, the rest of the ballads anthologized are squarely American, at least in Smith’s acknowledgement of them. Thus he sets out a form of ancestral lineage, both in terms of acknowledging the musical lineage of the ballads themselves as coming from Great Britain to the United States and the lineage of previous collectors like Child, as the initial organizational impulse of the volume.<sup>68</sup> The notes for this volume also stress history in Smith’s relentless documentation of the historical events and people that inspired some of the ballads, and the previous versions collected and published. Yet Smith’s depiction of history resists any sense of stasis; ballads move and change over time and place, medieval poetry gives way to songs about trains and the Titanic, history emerges as a flexible and forward-moving, opening the way for Smith to not simply anthologize the past, but subject these same tunes to the alchemy of the present.

The second volume, *Social Music*, also begins with a very clear agenda: a lesson on the diverse instruments and their cultural associations, with close attention to rhythmic patterns. The first selection, “Sail Away Ladies” (track 28), presents the fiddle, which Smith explains European Americans preferred to the West African banjo. The next four tracks introduce the guitar to the violin, remarking on its introduction from the Spanish Caribbean following the Spanish-American war. While not terribly descriptive, Smith calls the listener’s attention to the rhythmic accompaniments in tracks 29–31, noting especially the regional contrasts between Texas and Louisiana. Track 32 likewise notes a balance between rhythmically contrasting urban

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<sup>68</sup> Smith also demonstrates an interest in lineages of the people who worked at Folkways in his interview with Kenton in Singh, *Think of the Self Speaking*, 24.

and rural styles, and track 33, which introduces the banjo to the violin and guitar, demonstrates a more archaic technique coupled with a more modern arrangement of tunes. If anything, Smith's aim is to provide a musical account of diverse cultural interactions: old meets new, urban meets rural, Spanish meets European meets African, all set in the diverse world of the deep South. This theme continues to be borne out through the first half of this volume, with increasing and startling variety. An inauthentic, romanticized "Indian War Whoop" (track 34) is thus rescued by Smith, who writes, "The effect of pre-Columbian America on contemporary music has been chiefly to act as a catalyst between European and African elements." Furthermore, the following track, Henry Thomas's "Old Country Stomp" (track 35), is a square dance with authentically pre-Columbian (and African) panpipes. Later on in the volume, we are given a fuller tour of French-Caribbean-derived Cajun music and its hallmark accordion—including a waltz version of the popular American song "Home Sweet Home" (track 39), a rendition of "Newport Blues" (track 40) by a jug band deriving from the West Indies, and Frank Cloutier and the Victoria Cafe Orchestra's "Moonshiners Dance (part 1)" (track 41), a novelty jazz ensemble from Minnesota (making this the only track from outside the South, although Smith does not mention this in his notes) which Smith hails as "one of the musical ancestors of Spike Jones."<sup>69</sup> There are a variety of dances, from called square dances to Acadian fox trots and a waltz to Cloutier's jazzy polka, which itself is a collage in miniature, stringing together various popular songs and the hymn tune "At the Cross."

That hymn tune provides a clever linchpin for transitioning from the volume's first half

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<sup>69</sup> An impressive examination of Cloutier's background, including the pinpointing of this release's geographic origin, was done by Kurt Gegenhuber at [www.celestialmonochord.org](http://www.celestialmonochord.org). Two other tracks were recorded in the north, Rev. F. M. McGee's "Fifty Miles of Elbow Room" and Rev. D. C. Rice's "I'm in the Battlefield for my Lord" were recorded in New York and Chicago respectively, but both reverends hail from the south, and with the Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities, no doubt a significant portion of their listenership would have come from a southern church tradition. Nevertheless, these tracks confirm that the industrial age decentered the south as the site for authentic folk music quite literally.



of dance music to its second half of sacred music. As with the *Ballads* volume, Smith presents this music in a roughly chronological fashion, beginning with the lining out method in tracks 42 and 43, continuing through the Sacred Harp recordings in tracks 44–6, and one final unaccompanied verse-chorus. From here, the music gains accompaniment, and in the final three tracks, the music is sung by choruses and backed by large ensembles. Thus, the second volume provides an audible amassing of community from what had been a diverse array of individuals chronicled earlier. The album's arrangement of these religious tunes is by far the most straightforward of any in the anthology, so much so that it overrides other parallels. The use of a secular melody in "Dry Bones" (track 51), for instance, might have made for a nice immediate successor to Cloutier's use of a religious melody. Nevertheless, its presence on the disc does further suggest that the strict segregation between secular and sacred observed within this volume was not always observed in practice by musicians.

The first two volumes suggest that Smith designed the anthology to be heard as a continuous sweep, a chronological path of history across the first, or the building of a diverse community across the second. The third album challenges an easy reading, however, by abandoning clear organization entirely. Even the title of the volume, *Songs*, is devoid of any real marker, unlike the formal distinction of *Ballads* and the functional distinction of *Social Music*; indeed, the boundary between *Ballads* and *Songs* is unclear and frequently traversed in this third album. Instead, it functions as a catch-all, a collage at its most cryptic and potent, containing possibly any recordings Smith wanted to include but could not fit in either of the previous two more didactic volumes.

Connective material from the first two volumes are scattered throughout the third like an archaeological dig. Matters of historical importance from the first volume are here. The inclusion

of “Single Girl, Married Girl” (track 67) was recorded at the very first recording session by the Carter Family; “See That My Grave Is Kept Clean” (track 76) mirrors this by virtue of its being recorded at Blind Lemon Jefferson’s final session. Smith’s documenting is found on the notes to some tracks, such as a thorough linguistic account and lineage for “Ninety-Nine Year Blues” (track 74). Smith’s interest in instruments, which guided the second volume, reappears when he documents the replacement of the banjo with the mandolin in his notes for “Expressman Blues” (track 70), as does his interest in delineating regional styles from the Memphis style vibrato in “Minglewood Blues” (track 59), to the conversational deliveries of Louisianan music in “I Woke Up One Morning in May” (track 60) and “Le Vieux Souldard et Sa Femme” (track 68) to the clear Texan style of “Prison Cell Blues” (track 75). Artists like Mississippi John Hurt, Clarence Ashley, The Carter Family, and Buell Kazee return, as does some subject matter: a drunkard and his wife (tracks 4 and 68) and John Henry (tracks 18 and 80). We also get a few more Acadian tracks (tracks 60, 69, and 77) as well as more examples of jug bands (tracks 59, 66, 72, and 81).

One repeated theme that occurs most frequently within the third volume, and links it with the previous two, is interchangeability. Smith notes that track 7 from the first volume and tracks 57, 58, and 62, and 73 all share a history of having interchangeable lyrics; likewise, tracks 71–5 come from a common pool of interchangeable lyrics about prison. This interest in cross-song borrowing continues in “Bob Lee Junior Blues” (track 66), which interpolates a rumba, much as “Georgia Stomp” (track 32) interpolated a regional Louisiana melody or Cloutier interpolated several tunes (track 41). As before, the thrust is one of cultural mixing. As lyrics, artists, and musical genres reappear, released from their earlier narratives, Smith seems to take what the first two volumes suggested and put it to practice: that America’s history is not fixed and its community is diverse. Artists from elsewhere in the anthology move around and meet other

singers, lyrics are just as migratory and can be interchanged from one song to the next, and stray snatches of music can make their way into entirely different genres.

Narrative connections like those I've described have been a prominent strategy among scholars of the *Anthology*. Indeed, most readings of the album strive explicitly to locate hidden narratives within Smith's collage, a number of which I will discuss here. This is hardly surprising, given the ability of collage to stress both points of connection and contrast. Nor is it surprising that the *Anthology* has yielded so many possible narratives within it, for again collage allows multiplicity and in its non-linear organization often denies any single, directional, narrative reading. There are, of course, too many instances of Smith's linkage between tracks to be ignored or dismissed as random. For example, the first volume closes with three ballads that all contend with failing farms. The three before them recount one shipwreck and two trainwrecks, with an additional lyrical connection between the shipwreck of the Titanic in "When the Great Ship Went Down" (track 22) and the trainwreck in "Engine One-Forty-Three" (track 23): the latter ends with the line "And the very last words poor Georgie said was 'Nearer My God to Thee,'" the very tune that musicians purportedly played as the Titanic sank. Such connections easily invite speculation: what was Smith trying to say through these juxtapositions in his collage about the declining agrarian age and the rampant industrialization of America?

At the same time, textual connections are far from uniform. In the first volume, for instance, both "Peg and Awl" (track 12) and "Gonna Die With a Hammer in My Hand" (track 18) deal with the dangers of industrialization but do not appear consecutively. "Charles Giteau" (track 16) and "White House Blues" (track 20) both address presidential assassinations, and while they are not grouped together, each is grouped with other tales of murderers. These juxtapositions are grist for the listener's interpretive mill. Are assassinations no worse than other

murders? Why is “A Lazy Farmer Boy” (track 11) not included with the other failing farm ballads that close the volume?

In the face of such obvious and careful organization in other places, such questions have understandably loomed large for scholars and listeners trying to understand the *Anthology*'s message in light of its purported social agenda to change America. Robert Cantwell's chapter on the *Anthology* in his *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* laid much of the groundwork, connecting multiple threads of Smith's life to the *Anthology*, paying specific attention the multitude of media Smith engaged—objects, texts, sounds, technologies—to provide a more textured reading. Rock critic Greil Marcus followed a year later in a book about Bob Dylan, who was a fan of the *Anthology*, and soon eclipsed Cantwell in terms of influence on others who approached the *Anthology*. Marcus relies less on historical connections and more on interpretation; he envisions the first two albums as something ephemeral and dreamlike, the first a nightmare rushing into present, the second an escapist reverie into the simple past, and posits the third volume and its strangeness as a concrete world: the mythic town of Smithville where “The streets... have been rolled up, and the town now offers that quintessential American experience, the ultimate, permanent test of the unfinished American, Puritan or pioneer, loose in a land of pitfalls and surprises.”<sup>70</sup> Marcus details a form of alienation and strangeness at the heart of the album, a politically charged opportunity to see the songs as embodiments of the performers and to call attention to the marginalized voices absent from American mythology. He writes, “Part of the charge in the music on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*... comes from the fact that, for the first time, people from isolated, scorned, forgotten, disdained communities and cultures had the chance to speak to each other and to the nation at large.”<sup>71</sup> Since Marcus,

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<sup>70</sup> Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, 110.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

other readings have been asserted. David Janssen and Edward Whitelock uncover a tale of apocalyptic inevitability in the age of the atomic bomb.<sup>72</sup> John Street finds in the songs' progression from danger and desire, to prison and work, to death to Paradise "a new national epic, dealing with models of enslavement and freedom."<sup>73</sup> Kevin M. Moist, even as he acknowledges the impossibility of any single reading, adds his own analysis by reading the unreleased fourth volume—a problematic choice, as it was released posthumously—as a romantic cautionary tale of the dangers of the modern world with the solution found in returning to America's folk roots.<sup>74</sup>

Such readings are not merely fanciful constructions or ungrounded; on the contrary, they offer much depth to a fuller analysis of the album. But by privileging narrative over collage,

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<sup>72</sup> David A. Janssen and Edward J. Whitelock, *Apocalypse Jukebox: The End of the World in American Popular Culture* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> John Street, *Music and Politics* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 144

<sup>74</sup> Kevin M. Moist, "Collecting, Collage, and Alchemy: The Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music* as Art and Cultural Intervention" *American Studies* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 111–27. The fourth volume was issued on CD by Revenant Records in 2000. Like the 1997 reissue of the first three volumes, it featured a lavish book of notes and essays, with contributions by Ed Sanders, John Cohen, John Fahey, Dick Spottswood, and Greil Marcus. The album claims to present the volume as Smith intended, but Smith's plans for the fourth volume shifted over time. The initial release of the *Anthology* promised three more volumes dedicated to documenting "rhythm changes between 1890 and 1950." Smith occasionally made reference to tracks he intended to include in the fourth volume, which he apparently later redesigned to reflect his interest in tracing lyrical trends of words and topics in songs of the Depression. He once remarked that he never issued it because "the problems that were involved in those interrelationships have been solved since then, so there is no particular reason to bring those records out," indicating a continued interest to the *Anthology* as having a socially meaningful impact, a tool for changing America through folk music. See "A Rare Interview with Harry Smith," 134. Elsewhere, he blames Marian Distler at Folkways for insisting a recording of "We've Got Franklin Roosevelt Back Again" be included, and Smith disliked the track. See Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton March 1983/84 in Singh, *Think of the Self Speaking*, 27. Asch gives a different tale, claiming that he had tapes prepared for the fourth volume, but it proved difficult without Smith's record collection (he had sold it off, half given to the New York Public Library and others dispersed), which meant he couldn't assemble the notes: "I have the tapes...but I can't get the documentation. There is no sense in just issuing it without the documentation." See Olmsted, 71. On top of that, the burden of the issue weighed the project down, as Asch recalled, "never issued because everyone wanted a hand in it." See Moses Asch, "The Birth and Growth of Anthology of American Folk Music as told by Moses Asch," in Iglori, 95. Yet, the tapes on file at the Smithsonian from Asch are a completely different set than that issued on CD, which does contain several tracks Smith claimed would have been included: The Carter Family's "Black Jack David," "Hello Stranger," and "No Depression in Heaven"; The Blue Sky Boys' "Down on the Banks of the Ohio"; and The Monroe Brothers' "Nine Pound Hammer," suggesting a basis in some form of plans laid by Smith. These five songs are included in Josh Dunson and Ethel Raim's selected transcriptions from the *Anthology*, although their source for a planned volume that included these songs is unknown. See Dunson and Raim, 108–18 and "What Happened to Volume IV?" in Dunson and Raim, 20.

scholars only ever illuminate one aspect of the whole. Smith provides many productive points of connection between his selections, but it is the listener who selects certain points and draws their own narrative line through them, as if creating their own constellations and mythologies from a field of stars. Since the narrative is the creation of the listener, not Smith, the multiplicity of readings that have been offered was perhaps inevitable. Examining the *Anthology* as a collage supports a number of simultaneous narrative threads, which collectively shape our understanding of the album's political efficacy and of the role of folk music in defining national identity. Furthermore, collage also highlights points of contrast, whereas a narrative stresses continuity—something key to a more nuanced evaluation of the *Anthology*'s impact on our understanding of how conceptions of the folk and the nation co-evolved.

Put simply, Smith's claims of the album's social ambitions are too direct to simply dismiss as wishful thinking, and so it is that the majority of these readings of the album attempt to frame the album in political and social terms. The strongest case can be built around the album's addressing of racial issues and civil rights. Folk music overtly aligned with the cause during the 1950s and 1960s, and Smith's work on the *Anthology* remains an early step in this direction. As mentioned earlier, emphasis on racial purity was a part of the rhetoric surrounding both white and black folk music in the 1930s, not to mention the segregated marketing practices. These racially essentialized categories guided much of the subsequent collecting practices and revivals, particularly among white fans of black music; Smith breaks with this tradition. In the foreword to the album, he condemns the still-active labels "race" and "hillbilly" records. Likewise, the bibliography contains old advertisements from these segregated catalogues that Smith suggests "[give] a good idea [*sic*] of the companies [*sic*] attitude toward their artists." Smith delighted in breaking down this segregation by placing black and white artists on equal

footing. Whites as well as blacks play the blues, a white and a black artist each sing about John Henry, and Furry Lewis, a black artist, performs a white-associated ballad about Casey Jones.<sup>75</sup> Smith also delighted in including performers whose vocal performances obscured racial, and sometimes gender, lines. He explains,

Before the *Anthology* there had been a tendency in which records were lumped into blues catalogs or hillbilly catalogs, and everybody was having blindfold tests to prove they could tell which was which. That's why there's no such indications of that sort (color/racial) in the albums. I wanted to see how well certain jazz critics did on the blindfold test. They all did horribly. It took years before anybody discovered that Mississippi John Hurt wasn't a hillbilly.<sup>76</sup>

Of course, there were indications of race in the notes, which included pictures of artists scattered throughout the notes. As such, critiques of the album's "color-blindness," such as Robert Cantwell's complaint that the *Anthology* was a "comprehensive effacement that yields up an imagined people of no-race, no-time, no-place," are overstepping.<sup>77</sup> The *Anthology* neither slavishly adheres to nor ignores the racial categories that shaped much of this repertoire, but instead challenges expectations of race within folk music through his choice and arrangement of material, as I will later detail.

Extrapolating from its position on racial inequity, some have championed the anthology as a broader critique on American mythology and inequity. Marcus again suggests that the album's message is that

no one is exactly like anybody else. No one, in fact, is even who he or she was ever supposed to be. No one was supposed to step out from their fellows and stand alone and say what he or she had to say, in the peculiar way he or she had to say it, to thrill those who stand and listen with the notion that they, too, might have a voice, to shame those who stand and listen because they lack the courage to do more than that. I think it's a great victory—a victory over decades of losing those who did have the courage to speak

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<sup>75</sup> For a fuller delineation of the racial associations and history of Casey Jones, see Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2009), 198–9. Tosches likewise finds the same evidence of racial crossing in Henry Thomas, who appears twice on the *Anthology*. See Tosches, 195–8.

<sup>76</sup> "A Rare Interview with Harry Smith," 134.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Cantwell "'Darkling I Listen': Making Sense of the Folkways *Anthology*" in Perchuk and Singh, 199.

out in the sociologies of their poverty—that anyone can now hear these men and women, and those they sing about, as singular, as people whose voices no particular set of circumstances could even ensure would be heard.<sup>78</sup>

Such a perspective resonates with a broader historical movement to reclaim marginal voices within American studies. It also resonates for 1952 as a critique against McCarthyism. Asch certainly battled the political climate of the day, releasing politically sensitive material, fostering global musical connections, and seeing his diversity of musical material as a challenge to the norms of political and social conformity in 1950s America. Indeed, the very strategy of reclaiming commercial property as public property, of reissuing recordings with no regard for copyright, was subversive. Smith also relished the odd, although whether that was purely an aesthetic preference—again, his participation within the surrealist avant-garde should not be forgotten—or was partly political is unknown. Smith was at least adamant that folksong should remain a living tradition and found a kindred spirit in Pete Seeger, and in that sense his aesthetic ambitions aligned with leftist folk circles.

Those seeking a stronger counternarrative of social politics within the *Anthology* have fixed their attention on the penultimate track, “The Lone Star Trail” (track 83). The tracks that precede it have been dark, filled with death, heartbreak, labor, and prisons. And all have seemingly embraced Marcus’s reading of the last track, Henry Thomas’s “Fishing Blues” (track 84), as an expression of “absolute liberation.”<sup>79</sup> Yet whereas Marcus similarly romanticized the cowboy of “The Lone Star Trail” as a towering figure of stoicism and loneliness, Robert Cantwell suggested the song was nothing more than an absurd, if ingenious, intrusion “utterly out of place.”<sup>80</sup> The cowboy is out of place both because of his Hollywood connection—the song

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<sup>78</sup> Greil Marcus, “Uncle Dave Macon: Agent of Satan?” in Perchuk and Singh, 185.

<sup>79</sup> Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, 112.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 230–1.



was taken from the soundtrack to the film *The Wagon Master*—and for its “high-pitched upland nasality and stiff, nervous rhythms, placed... in a musical context now steeped in complex and driving beats, dark open calls, languid melismatic detours, and sliding blue tones.” Others have made what this implies more explicit. William Gay suggests something similar, that the song is out of place and may be a joke, but mostly it urges you to reconsider “the tale you have been told about a lost America.”<sup>81</sup> Once again, the *Anthology* is envisioned as a challenge to white- (and Hollywood-) dominated national myths. Even stronger is John Street’s critique: “a deliberate impertinence that reminds us of white America’s willingness to airbrush out exactly the kind of pain and unabridged oppression that the preceding songs document.”<sup>82</sup> Not only do these critiques overlook the collage nature of the *Anthology*, they both seek a problematic cultural sameness that demands not to be interrupted and reify a different myth, that of the essentialized, authentic black voice—a myth that guided much of the interest in the blues and finds its way into Cantwell’s musical description of the album’s denouement.<sup>83</sup> The dismissal of “The Lone Star Trail” says more about what modern listeners may want the album to be, a progressive document of social justice. But in doing so, it ignores Smith’s praising of the track as a rarity, “one of the very few recordings of authentic ‘cowboy’ singing,” not to mention the prominent place cowboy songs have had within American folk culture and the personal connection both Smith and Asch had with cowboy songs via their fathers. Musically and thematically, this song should easily count as something of a labor song or a song of loneliness, and the high yodel of the cowboy connects nicely with the train whistle in the preceding track, which connects to the cane pipe whistles in the final track.

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<sup>81</sup> William Gay, *Time Done Been Won’t Be No More: Collected Prose*, ed. J. M. White (Johannesburg: Wild Dog Press, 2010), 172.

<sup>82</sup> Street, 148.

<sup>83</sup> See Cantwell, *When We Were Good*, 231–8.

Smith's act of racial mixture comes as part of a broader, if incomplete, corrective at deconstructing not simply the myth of racial purity of folk music, but the myth of the South as a product of cultural isolation and preservation as well. To be sure, the *Anthology* propagated several myths about the folk. Smith's reliance on commercial recordings, including one from a Hollywood film, over field recordings partly bridges the folk/commercial divide, but his aesthetic preference for oddities meant that Smith, like his predecessors, also rejected anything that sounded commonplace, or in other words, commercial.<sup>84</sup> Smith's record on racial and geographic categories is similarly spotty. On the one hand, he effectively dismantles the black/white dichotomies, and likewise calls attention to urban and rural stylistic mixtures, suggesting a dynamic rather than static population. On the other hand, he ignores other ethnic populations with the exception of Cajun music. One possible reason might be that Smith did not have them in his collection, the record of which no longer exists, though his encyclopedic knowledge, renowned by fellow collectors, makes this doubtful.<sup>85</sup> Whatever the reason for Smith's decision to include Cajun music but not other ethnic music, the presence of Cajun music reinforces the mythology that the folk was exclusively retained in the South.<sup>86</sup>

Elsewhere, Smith achieves more unequivocal success in breaking down the myths that shaped America's folk cultures. Kevin M. Moist's analysis of the posthumous fourth volume, about which Smith left contradictory accounts but which others assembled and released on CD, suggested the album warned of encroaching modernity and demanded a return to America's folk roots. Yet I find the extant three volumes subtly suggest the opposite, stripping away the myth

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<sup>84</sup> See also Joanne Marie Mancini, "'Messin' with the Furniture Man': Early Country Music, Regional Culture, and the Search for Anthological Modernism," *American Literary History* 16, no. 2 (2004), 227.

<sup>85</sup> For one such account, see Luis Kemnitzer, "West Coast Record Collector," Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 30.

<sup>86</sup> The one track that comes from the north, "Moonshiners Dance (part 1)," is not listed as such—either Smith ignored this, deliberately breaking his rather thorough attention to musical geography to maintain an illusion, or Smith didn't know and perhaps believed the album to have been Southern. See also Neil V. Rosenberg, "The Anthology of American Folk Music and Working-Class Music" *Labour/ Le Travail* 46 (Autumn 1998), 327.

that the folk remains accessible to the modern urban man as a pristine cure-all. Certainly, the three volumes contain songs that spell out the dangers of the industrial life, but the ancient ballads that open the work or the tales of agrarian life are no less riddled with hardship and sorrow.

Smith's liner notes strongly support this view. These notes are often oddly overlooked in analyses of the album, even though Smith considered them highly important. "The notes are elaborate, do you understand?" he told one interviewer. "They're philosophical statements regarding the science of musicology."<sup>87</sup> Examining them, they reveal a wealth of technological images related to the folk music they accompany. The notes are a visual collage constructed out of commercial, technological creations, from the record labels and advertising images from catalogues to the emulation of newspaper headlines and telegraphs that summarize the lyrics, placing the commercial and industrial life of these recordings front and center.<sup>88</sup> Folk instruments like the banjo, guitar, and harmonica are represented via advertisements and textual explanations of how to play them. Just as Smith was fascinated by commercial folk music from early on as "a curiosity because something that had survived orally for a long time suddenly turned into something that Sears Roebuck sold," these images betray the same fascination with the technologic present (Figure 3.2).<sup>89</sup> Likewise, in his notes for "The Spanish Merchant's Daughter" (track 65), Smith includes a facsimile of a piece of sheet music that gives both a different title and a different arrangement of lyrics, while the subsequent track, "Bob Lee Junior Blues," Smith pairs the song with a melodic transcription of the modern dance tune "Careless Love" that is interpolated into the work, suggest just how much the folk and modernity are

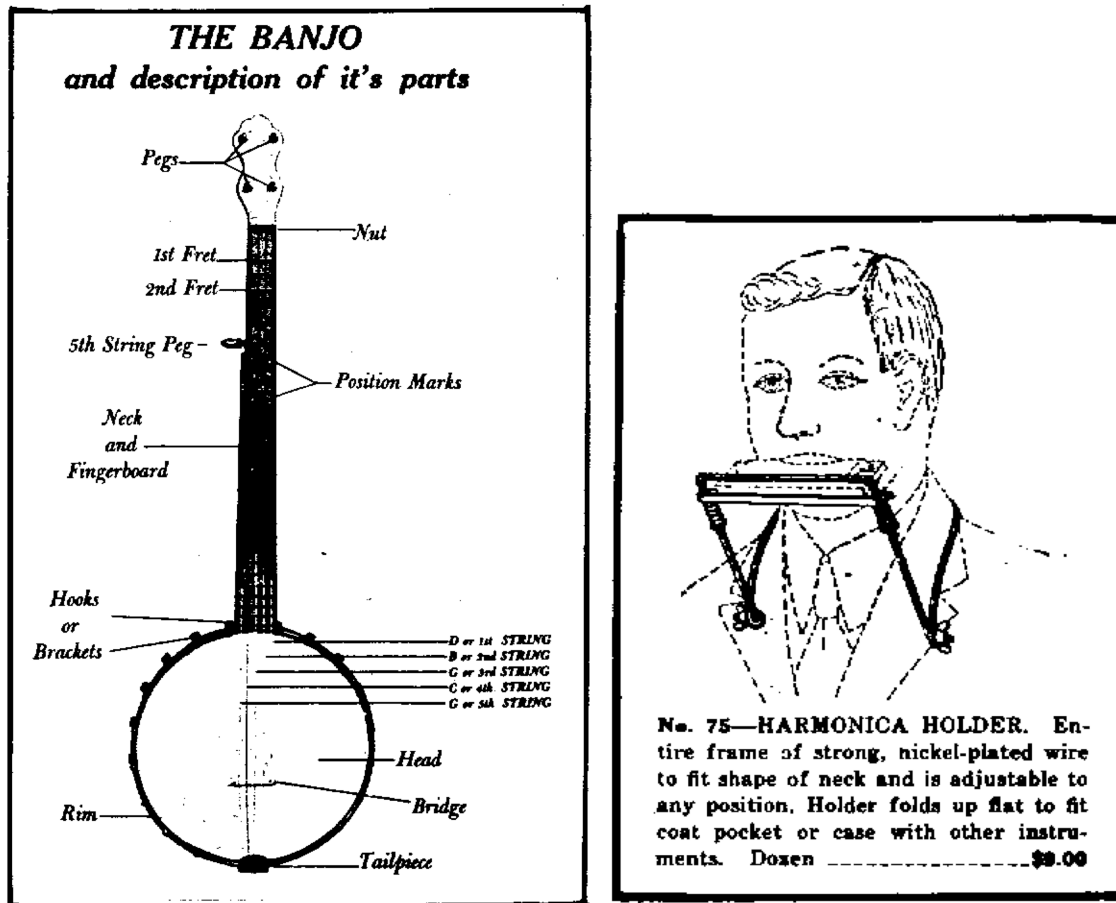
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<sup>87</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton March 1983/84, in Singh, *Think of the Self Speaking*, 34.

<sup>88</sup> Newspapers were an important component of collage as an art form since its inception. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

<sup>89</sup> "A Rare Interview with Harry Smith," 128.

intertwined. Indeed, the transcription of “Careless Love” includes both “the old way” and “how they play Careless Love now,” for the modern tunes are equally subject to change, and that change is something to be embraced, not shunned (Figure 3.3).



**MEDIEVAL WOMAN DEFEATS DEVIL DESPITE HUSBAND'S PRAYERS**

**SINGLE GIRL: DRESSED FINE, GOES TO STORE BUYS, GOING WHERE PLEASE. MARRIED GIRL: WEARS ANY KIND, ROCKS CRADLE CRY, BABY ON KNEES**

Figure 3.2: Technological images, “Headline” and “Telegraph” Song Descriptions

"No Sir"  
Tell me one thing, tell me truly  
Tell me why, you scorn me so  
Tell me if when asked a question  
You should always answer, "No"  
No sir, No sir, No sir, No sir  
No sir, No sir, No sir, No.

If while strolling in the garden  
Picking flowers, do with little care  
Tell me, should you be offended  
If I walked & talked with you?

My father was a Spanish merchant  
And before he went to sea  
He told me to be true & answer  
No to all you said to me.

If while walking in the garden  
I should ask you to be mine  
And should tell you that I loved you  
Would you then my heart decline  
Oh no, No sir, No sir, No sir, No sir,  
No sir, No sir, No sir, No.

65

THE SPANISH MERCHANTS  
DAUGHTER  
(E. STONEMAN)  
BY STONEMAN FAMILY  
VOCAL DUET BY HATTIE AND ERNEST STONEMAN  
WITH HARMONICA, VIOLIN, GUITAR.

Figure 3.3: Accompanying Images in the Notes for "The Spanish Merchant's Daughter" and "Bob Lee Junior Blues"

Jan - 1930.

**W. McCune.** **CARELESS LOVE BLUES.**  
THE SOUNDS. FOR VOICE. COMPOSED BY EDWARD CLAWSON.

**66**

**BOB LEE JUNIOR BLUES**  
 (CLAYTON SHADE)  
 BY MEMPHIS JUG BAND  
 VOCAL SOLO WITH KAZOO, BANJO-MANDOLIN,  
 JUG, GUITAR.  
 RECORDED IN MEMPHIS TENN. 1927.

Figure 3.3 continued

The power of collage is central to the effectiveness of the *Anthology's* dismantling of myths of folk's purity and its imagined boundaries. The embrace of the modern, as I describe above, suggests a kindred spirit to Walter Benjamin, whose theories suggest how the *Anthology* could operate as a tool of social improvement. Benjamin's final and unfinished work was a massive study of the Paris Arcades as a tool for examining modern industrial society. Benjamin

assembled the text as a great collage, an assembly of quotations reworked to his purposes, not much different than Smith's assembly of the *Anthology* and its notes. Benjamin saw his act of collage as a cultural salvage mission, collecting "the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them."<sup>90</sup> Benjamin understood montage—a form of collage—to have explosive dialectic powers, or as Kristin Ross defined another form of collage, bricolage, "the wrenching of everyday objects from their habitual context to be used in a different way."<sup>91</sup> Thus, Smith's salvaging of old records and old catalogs and refashioning them into their present state as an anthology proves a similar project with similar results. Indeed, Smith's *Anthology* deviates from the insularity of collecting, a practice wherein author William Davies King remarks, "Usable things sometimes become collectible, but collectible things rarely become usable."<sup>92</sup> Benjamin saw in the modern city itself a collage of history through what he called the "colportage phenomenon of space," where the traces of history that had occurred in a single space accrued to be simultaneously visible to those willing and able to see, much as Smith's musical selections often bear the traces and influences of generations of performers across time and space, an audible colportage.<sup>93</sup>

Benjamin's critique of progress and industrialism lends credence to Marcus's view of the *Anthology* as a view of America from those who were marginalized or buried under the process of industrialization. In a later interview, Smith cautions against industrialization's sociopolitical effects, insisting that "the performance of music has to be removed from phonographs and radios and such—because those require a technological development of a high order, and consequently

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<sup>90</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 460.

<sup>91</sup> Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 36.

<sup>92</sup> William Davies King, *Collections of Nothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 27.

<sup>93</sup> Benjamin, 418.

cannot help but suppress somebody.”<sup>94</sup> In the *Anthology*, Smith reveals a folk culture that does not recede from modern life, but is reflected through it.<sup>95</sup> His folk is one filled with hardship, to be sure, and a certain amount of sharp critique. The recording of “When That Great Ship Went Down,” (track 22) remains one of the most aurally striking, a tragedy recounted to a gleeful, raucous accompaniment by a black performer—Marcus notes that this subject was popular among blacks, as the entire crew was white—and Smith gives it a similarly sharp headline in his notes: “Manufacturer’s Dream Destroyed At Shipwreck. Segregated Poor Die First.”<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, the use of collage preserved not just the diversity so often cited as the heart of American identity, but the cultural tensions and multivalent sites of these mixtures that shape it. No single America, and no single heritage, is to be found here (though there are many heritages that are not). Smith’s notes about musical and lyrical interchangeability and interpolations, his carefully delineated notes about European, African, and Caribbean influences and cross-pollination in the second volume, his wide sampling of multiple white and black vocal and instrumental styles, his documenting of regional performance variations—most notably the recovery of Louisianan and Texan styles that had fallen off the map, his similar praising of the period represented on the discs in his foreword as “retain[ing] some of the regional qualities evident in the days before the phonograph, radio and talking picture had tended to integrate local types,” and his hope that the tunes would be improved upon by modern performance: all of this suggests a powerful interest in championing variety, diversity, and fluidity over ethnic essentialism, a static folk culture or a single melting pot. In other words, the *Anthology* achieved

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<sup>94</sup> “A Rare Interview with Harry Smith,” 142.

<sup>95</sup> Smith was not alone in perceiving this; Charles Seeger also lamented the overvaluation of the past at the expense of the present, and the problems due to viewing the folk and non-folk as opposites rather than complements. See Charles Seeger, “The Folkness of the Non-Folk vs. the Non-Folkness of the Folk” in *Folklore and Society: Essays in Honor of Benjamin A. Botkin* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1966), 6.

<sup>96</sup> Marcus was speaking at a symposium; a recording of the symposium was archived: Audio Tape 6 2006-595, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.



a better representation of the lived practice of folk music from the 1920s and 1930s than others had, displacing myths about the folk, and in doing so called attention to the artificiality of social and musical segregation as practiced in 1950s America. It was this charge of diversity that would change America through music.

## Reviving the Folk: Assessing Harry Smith's Musical Impact

When Harry Smith's album was released in 1952, its popular impact was fairly minimal. As Katharine Skinner has documented, the album sold only 50 copies upon release, 47 of which were to libraries and schools, and the media barely remarked on it for much of the decade.<sup>97</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising, given the limited scope Folkways had and the rather niche appeal of reissuing old recordings. But neither is it difficult to imagine the album fitting into its time and finding acceptance, and specifically its presentation as a collage was not out of place at the time.

Collage was becoming a crucial component of the popular music industry. The jukebox, for one, emulated the shuffling of short-playing records within the *Anthology*. But more pervasive was the stylistic collage of American popular music of the 1950s. In his study of the era, *I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America*, Albin Zak reveals the rapid breakdown of musical marketing categories and the social anxieties that it produced. Pop music had similar racially drawn marketing lines as folk music did, as well as a tradition of crossover hits. Zak notes that "cross-market covers still bore traces of their origins, which meant that an element of cultural fusion was practically unavoidable," a statement Smith corroborates throughout the anthology.<sup>98</sup> "As the nation entered the 1950s," Zak writes, "audiences made it increasingly clear that boundaries between musical styles and the cultural values they embodied

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<sup>97</sup> Katharine Skinner, "'Must Be Born Again': Resurrecting the Anthology of American Folk Music" *Popular Music* 25, no. 1 (January 2006), 57–75. Skinner asserts that the earliest popular press review of the *Anthology* was in 1958, however it should be noted that the album was reviewed in scholarly circles upon its release, including the journal *Notes* in 1952.

<sup>98</sup> Albin Zak, *I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 115.

were more porous than ever.”<sup>99</sup> Folk music played a prominent role in this new order. Frankie Laine’s cowboy novelty hit “Mule Train” (1949) was a number one hit, and his equally successful follow-up, “Cry of the Wild Goose” (1950), was marketed as “folk poetry at its purest.”<sup>100</sup> Zak even finds in “Goodnight Irene” a collage where “the folksingers and studio orchestra and chorus coexisted in bizarre juxtaposition. . . . All of the track’s main elements exuded a sense of musical times past, but in their electronic fusion they became a modern pop collage, a concoction without precedent.”<sup>101</sup> The polystylism that producer Mitch Miller and his followers favored soon marked the music industry rocked the boat noticeably and made some uneasy:

In a 1953 feature on Miller in the *New Yorker*, Robert Rice characterized contemporary pop records generally as pieces of ‘fast-selling musical bric-a-brac’ that included ‘almost all types of rhythmic noise—new songs, old songs, show songs, drinking songs, plantation songs, Hawaiian songs, cowboy songs, Venezuelan songs, operetta songs, Elizabethan songs, college songs, Yiddish songs, Stephen Foster songs, holy songs, cradle songs, songs of the South African veldt, and even songs by William Saroyan.’<sup>102</sup>

This account of the present-day musical landscape is made to sound hyperbolic, yet the panoply of sources listed makes the *Anthology* look tame by comparison. Zak also notes the racial and gendered confusion that greeted listeners. “As with Laine, many listeners mistakenly took [Johnnie] Ray’s emotional delivery as a sign of blackness. . . . Or if not black, then perhaps it was female, as the Columbia sales team guessed when they heard the recording.”<sup>103</sup> Similar confusions had unsettled listeners of folk music, and moreover had deliberately guided Smith, who had been pleased by his ability to stump listeners with Mississippi John Hurt’s race.

One might have expected rock and roll and its sudden ubiquity to bury the folk music of

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 56.

Smith's *Anthology* a second time. Instead, rock and roll became retroactively understood as the result of it, the change. Zak notes that Elvis Presley, the apex of the new style, recorded country, R&B, pop, blues, gospel, and Christmas songs. "Rather than use pencil and paper, he used his voice and recording tape to fashion 'compositions'—not of words and melody but of vocal gestures and stylistic collage reflecting his spongelike musical experience."<sup>104</sup> The regional and racial overlapping that Smith championed was what gave rock and roll its distinct aesthetic and social power. Indeed, Smith takes credit for rock and roll in a manner that complement's Zak's account of Elvis. When John Cohen told Smith that the *Anthology* anticipated rock and roll, Smith said, "That's what I was trying to do, because I thought that is what this type of folk music would lead to. I felt social changes would result from it."<sup>105</sup>

While the overt reception of the *Anthology* was minimal, it had a strong underground following where it counted, among enthusiasts and musicians, creating what Robert Cantwell aptly terms "living anthologies."<sup>106</sup> Scholar and performer Neil Rosenberg recalls encountering it through an active underground trade of bootleg tapes and photocopied notes, a fitting way to encounter an album that was itself already a pirated copy of sorts.<sup>107</sup> The album also found its way into the hands of some prominent and influential figures. Dave van Ronk, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, and David Johansen all recounted being early fans of the album. Peter Stampfel called the *Anthology* "the very foundation of rock and roll." Van Ronk agreed, "The *Anthology* was our Bible. We all knew every word of it, including the songs we hated."<sup>108</sup> John Fahey brazenly wagered, "I'd match the *Anthology* up against any other single compendium of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>105</sup> "A Rare Interview with Harry Smith," 134.

<sup>106</sup> Cantwell, *When We Were Good*, 192.

<sup>107</sup> Harry Smith Symposium Tape IV 2006-232, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>108</sup> Gay, 162.

important information ever assembled. Dead Sea Scrolls? Nah, I'll take the *Anthology*.”<sup>109</sup> Other musicians reacted in a similar fashion. Philip Glass obtained the records early on and felt his writing for violin in *Einstein on the Beach* came from the fiddle playing he encountered on the *Anthology*.<sup>110</sup> Fluxus artist Al Hansen would also draw inspiration from the album in creating his collages; he would also pass it on to his grandson, Beck, who recalled being “immersed” in the *Anthology*: “Of course a certain amount of it was romantic and macabre and intriguing and fascinating. That faraway strange quality is definitely something I gravitated towards when I was younger. And I guess traveling through America, I realized that a lot of that strangeness is still out there.”<sup>111</sup> And beyond the musical field, the *Anthology* was admired by photographer Robert Frank and likely played an influential part in the development of his landmark work *The Americans*, which in turn would adorn the cover of the Rolling Stones’ collage tribute to American blues, *Exile on Main Street*. In this context, it seems entirely purposeful that the number that Dylan opened his infamous electric set at Newport in 1965 was none other than “Maggie’s Farm,” a cover of “Down on Penny’s Farm” from Volume 1 of the *Anthology*. There would be no more potent or more controversial indictment of the anti-modern myth of the folk, which Smith’s *Anthology* took aim at, than Dylan’s electric guitar.

The *Anthology* was neither the only nor the first reissue of older records, but according to John Cohen, it was the most important to the revivals.<sup>112</sup> Certainly it helped create, and in turn was fed by, a growing market for old recordings, which would lead to the founding of new labels like Yazoo dedicated to reissuing forgotten music. Asch would continue selling the anthology,

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<sup>109</sup>Jannsen and Whitelock 52.

<sup>110</sup> *The Harry Smith Project: The Anthology of American Folk Music Revisited* Shout Factory B000ICLTMS DVD, 2006.

<sup>111</sup> Geoff Ward, *The Writing of America: Literature and Cultural Identity from the Puritans to the Present* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2002), 102.

<sup>112</sup> Ronald D. Cohen, [Interview with] John Cohen, “Wasn’t That a Time!”: *Firsthand Accounts of the Folk Music Revival*, ed. Ronald D. Cohen (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 33.

but its cultural influence no doubt helped establish him as a vanguard of the folk revival and encouraged further reissues of older records that found an audience, from the blues to Woody Guthrie. Not just old records were dusted off, but careers as well. Inspired by the music from the *Anthology*, ardent fans went out to find out more about the artists on the album, only to find many of them still alive and performing. Ralph Rinzler and others collected oral histories, and some artists became active and popular musicians in the revival, including Mississippi John Hurt, Dock Boggs, and Clarence Ashley.

But more than anything, Cohen notes, it was through its contribution of repertoire that the *Anthology* offered the most lasting and profound impact: “it introduced us to old-time music...to early blues...to Cajun music, and to authentic cowboy singing. The significance of these recordings extended beyond folk festivals and eventually provided an invigorating infusion of “folk” into mainstream commercial music.”<sup>113</sup> Artists like Dylan, Van Ronk, and Seeger gained an air of authenticity by reaching into folk roots, unearthing repertoire that was not simply old but sounded old and unfamiliar. Dylan recalls:

I heard that record early on when it was very difficult to find these kinds of songs...That’s where the wealth of folk music was, on that particular record. For me, on hearing it, was all these songs to learn. It was the language, the poetic language—it’s all poetry, every single one of those songs, without a doubt, and the language is very different than current popular language, and that’s what attracted me to it in the first place.<sup>114</sup>

Similarly, for Seeger the anthology resulted in what Benjamin Filene calls a canon, “stunning in its eclecticism, encompassing everything from Child ballads to cowboy songs, spirituals, play-party tunes, and work songs.”<sup>115</sup> Seeger’s canon would encompass his broader interest in folk music from other cultures, while his *Goofing Off Suite* created a collage of folk, classical, and

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<sup>113</sup> Ronald Cohen, 33.

<sup>114</sup> Ward, 101.

<sup>115</sup> Filene, 191.

popular musics in a politically charged act, writing, “After all, barriers are being broken down all over the world, between races, nations and peoples. We might as well break down a few musical barriers, and show that there is nothing heretical in liking several different kinds of music at the same time.”<sup>116</sup> Heretical, no, but it was certainly politically and socially meaningful.

Smith believed that the greatest value of the *Anthology* was in its continuation of live performance, that it “provided tunes that people made things off of.”<sup>117</sup> As previously noted, Smith selected performances that new performers could improve upon, and that a continuing revival of this music was crucial. “The needs of folk music,” he quipped, “are met by nothing more than re-prints of earlier books on the subject,” which ought to be extended to records as well because they captured the music even more precisely.<sup>118</sup>

The impact of Smith has been keenly felt in popular music, if not always understood as his impact. The blues revival that fueled so much of 1960s and 1970s rock owed much to the reissuing of old blues records, which in turn was indebted to Smith’s pioneering reissue. Bob Dylan had once again returned to the album for material on *Good As I Been To You* (1992) and *World Gone Wrong* (1993). If the repertoire Smith hoped to make long-lasting has dropped off, other artists have continued Smith’s work of uncovering seemingly lost music and reconstructing that sonic landscape, from the Carolina Chocolate Drops’ interest in black string bands to Ry Cooder’s album *Chávez Ravine*, which reconstructs the Chicano neighborhood of Los Angeles that was razed to build Dodger Stadium. Contemporary artists such as Beck, Sufjan Stevens and The Castanets have continued Smith’s influence in a different direction by retaining Smith’s avant-garde collage sensibility in their own dark, folk music-electronic collage compositions.

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<sup>116</sup> Pete Seeger, Liner notes to *Darling Corey/Goofing-Off Suite* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40018 CD, 1993.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

## **Remastering the Folk: The 1997 Smithsonian Reissue of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music***

The *Anthology* maintained a steady if under-the-radar presence for forty-five years, at which time the Smithsonian reissued it on compact disc. Archivist Jeff Place notes that before its reissue, the *Anthology* had been the most requested item since he joined the Smithsonian in 1988.<sup>119</sup> Marketing Director Brenda Dunlap confirms this: “Given the requests we've received over the Web, and handwritten postcards and that sort of thing, I do see a lot of interest in it. We have kids at radio stations asking about it as well, which is always a good sign, so there is a new generation of interest there, too.”<sup>120</sup> The decision to reissue the album was not like Smith's decision, then. This music had not completely vanished from public awareness as it had in 1952, although the Smithsonian probably saw it as a profitable venture and a way to bring in newer, and specifically younger, audiences by making the set more accessible. Yet in doing so, the Smithsonian had to reconcile once again two seemingly inescapable diverging impulses: to document a historical object and moment and to update it for new audiences.

When asked what sort of audience she would be targeting, Dunlap responded, “We'll be doing mailings to academics at all different levels, American Folk Society members, ethnomusicologists. . . . In terms of retail, a lot of the folk stores . . . are perfect outlets for it. Places like Best Buy and Borders Books tend to carry a lot of Smithsonian Folkways, and they'll

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<sup>119</sup> Chris Morris, “Smithsonian to Reissue Its Classic Folk Anthology Set,” *Billboard* June 21, 1997, 8.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*



probably have some available. I think collectors will be a large part of this.”<sup>121</sup> Though hoping to find a new generation of interest, the *Anthology* reissue was largely aimed at the extant one, especially those likely to already be aware of it: academics, collectors, and committed folk enthusiasts. A fundraising flyer that went out to supporters seeking donations to help with the \$146,000 estimated price tag of the reissue further elucidates the principles that guided the reissue.<sup>122</sup> The flyer again targets the academic aim of the reissue, particularly through the language of canonization and scholarship. It labels the anthology “perhaps the most influential set of records in the history of recorded sound” and describes a “digitally remastered” box set wherein the Smith’s notes “will be framed by an historical essay, expanded song annotations, testimonials by literary and musical figures, and archival photographs.” The flyer promises it “will be a landmark educational tool for generations.” Likewise, the flyer is designed to appeal to novelty and rarity, including the aforementioned “digitally remastered” tracks and the true if somewhat misleading claim that “This historic collection of sound has not been available commercially for almost half a century.” Furthermore, the flyer adopts an aim of social change more broadly. It reminds readers that “the Center and Smithsonian Folkways provides models for facilitating public dialogue among diverse ethnic, racial, and regional groups” and although it does not, oddly, play up the claims of these same diversities in the album, it does imply that this reissue is in line with the cause. It also champions economic and aesthetic diversity, by contextualizing the original as a fight against consolidation of record companies in the 1950s, which were “producing musical sameness.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, the flyer, indeed the process of reissuing the *Anthology*, is best understood as an extension of the Smithsonian’s mission of

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>123</sup> This claim is again contestable, as Albin Zak has demonstrated, discussed earlier in this chapter.

preserving heritage, expanding access, fostering education, and championing diversity.<sup>124</sup>

Perhaps the biggest change from Asch's release was that the tracks had to be licensed under copyright, a long, difficult process of retracing the conglomeration of numerous now-defunct recording companies and seeking copyright permissions that represented over 40% of the total cost, and which largely benefitted Sony.<sup>125</sup> These tracks bear a long history of economic forces, not even counting the lyrical content on the matter. When these records were made, record companies sought out ballads and other folk material that was not subject to copyright; performers were usually given a lump sum—that is if they were paid at all—and the recording company held the rights to the recording. The Depression left companies with large stockpiles of unsold records, which became the cheap source for Smith's collecting habit as stores tried to clear out space. During World War II, the records were melted down for shellac, rendering what was on the record economically inert. Once the recordings found new listeners, Asch skirted musicians' unions to record during the strike in 1942, and later used Folkways to return ownership of the nation's folk music to the nation, using subsidiary labels to help protect him from charges of piracy. Asch went through several legal battles from his reissues, but successfully argued that people had a right to hear this music and that if record companies were no longer willing to make these recordings available, they could not block his assurance that the music would still be available.<sup>126</sup> Victor records disputed his reissue of Woody Guthrie's *Dust Bowl Ballads* after it became profitable, but Asch insisted, "cultural property belongs to all and is limited to individual ownership only in so far as the copyright of the material is subjected to and

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<sup>124</sup> Paraphrased from the Smithsonian's Mission and Vision, accessible at <http://www.si.edu/About/Mission>

<sup>125</sup> For a fuller explanation of copyright and reissues, see Tim Brooks, "How Copyright Law Affects Reissues of Historic Recordings," *ARSC Journal* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2005), 183–203.

<sup>126</sup> Olmsted, 66–8. Asch's whole career, in fact, amounts to a stand against big companies, after early failures with popular music bankrupted him, he retained a very small profit margin and focused exclusively on music larger corporations would not offer.

limited to. ...[R]ecords do not carry this copyright.”<sup>127</sup> For the reissue, the necessity for copyright was simply a matter of fact. A memo from March 7, 1996 elucidates the confusing and long path to do so:

MCA’s inability to clear tracks has to do with the ambiguity of their ownership of the Paramount catalog, and we are looking into potential alternative repertoire owners. BMG’s delay seems to come from the amount of research involved in clearing this quantity of tracks. Many of these tracks are obscure and may not have been used since they were licensed for the original release of this album in 1952. Although these tracks were legally licensed for the original issue of this package, today’s licensing administrators may not feel confident licensing material without the proper contractual proof. Also, catalogs constantly change hands.<sup>128</sup>

The modern necessities behind the licensing of the reissue make the commentary made in the aforementioned fundraising flyer about musical conglomerations even more pointed, although once in production the Smithsonian rarely made any similar references, perhaps not wishing to jeopardize Sony’s cooperation with the project.

Once licensed, the tracks had to be located and in many cases cleaned up. Peter Reiniger, the sound engineer, began by examining the master tapes held by the Smithsonian and documenting for each the crackles, clicks, splices, dropouts, skips, distortions, noises from the wind or passing vehicles, or inability to discern instruments. Two tracks by Dave Lunsford, numbers 51 and 63, were not listened to but directed to an extant reissue CD. Only three tracks, numbers 7, 8, and 27, merited a simple “pretty good,” while twenty-one tracks were given the suggestion that an alternate source be sought. A second, unsigned list directing the reader to locate sources almost exactly replicates Reiniger’s original list. A third list, also unsigned, notes that alternate sources should be found for nine tracks, only four of which overlap with Reiniger’s, and alternate sources should be considered for eleven additional tracks, seven of

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<sup>127</sup> Carlin, 74

<sup>128</sup> Memo from Ed Rahn to Amy Horowitz, March 7, 1996. Folder 2951. Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

which overlap with Reiniger's (Figure 3.4). In other words, what merited a search for an alternate source was somewhat subjective. Using Reiniger's notes, I can find no clear pattern to gauge what sonic defects prompted a track's rejection in favor of an alternate source. The reissue included alternate sources for twenty-seven tracks, only partially overlapping with various lists, suggesting that tracks where an alternate source was desired may have proven impossible to find, while others may have fortuitously presented themselves. It was fitting that the reissue relied on the availability of clean copies among collectors, the same strategies Smith employed in building his own collection. Striving for the cleanest sound possible aligns with what Asch's believed: "With my records, I think if I am documenting a thing, then I want as good quality as possible, because the person 20 years from that time should be able to reconstruct what I recorded."<sup>129</sup> Yet Asch opposed any electronic manipulation, resisting the move to stereo as much as possible. So while the fundraising flyer and reviews continually tout the digital remastering of the *Anthology*, the Smithsonian appears to have ultimately hewed somewhat closely to Asch's philosophy. Reiniger notes, "We have consistently adhered to the idea that it is far better to listen to some noise with the music than to eliminate all the noise and a good part of the audio spectrum with it," though he also admits that pitch justification was used to account for the variance of turntable speeds, and that other technical enhancements may have been employed.

The decision to leave in the noise no doubt appealed to vinyl enthusiasts, collectors and traditionalists among them, who regularly criticized digitization for its compression and diminishment of the richness of the sound. But sound quality would not be the only thing lost.

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<sup>129</sup> Olmsted, 15.

Track	A	B	C	D
A Lazy Farmer Boy				X
Bandit Cole Younger	X	X	(X)	
Brilliancy Medley				X
Country Blues	X			X
Drunkard's Special				X
Dry Bones	X			X
East Virginia	X	X		X
Expressman Blues				X
Fatal Flower Garden				X
Frankie	X		(X)	
Georgia Stomp				X
Got the Farm Land Blues			(X)	
Home Sweet Home			X	
I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground	X			X
James Alley Blues				X
John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man			(X)	
John the Baptist	X	X		X
John the Revelator			(X)	
King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O				X
La Danseuse	X	X		
Moonshiner's Dance (part 1)	X	X	X	
My Name is John Johanna			X	X
Newport Blues			X	
Old Country Stomp	X	X	(X)	X
Old Lady and the Devil	X	X		X
Peg and Awl	X	X	X	
Poor Boy Blues	X	X	(X)	X
Present Joys	X	X		X
Prison Cell Blues	X	X	X	
Rabbit Foot Blues	X	X	X	
Rocky Road				X

**Figure 3.4: Tracks selected for replacement with alternate sources on the reissue of *Anthology of American Folk Music***

**A= Notes from Sound Engineer Peter Reiniger; B= First Unsigned List; C= Second Unsigned List (“(X)” for “also considering”); D= CD Reissue**

Track	A	B	C	D
Sail Away Ladies				X
Saut Crapaud				X
See That My Grave is Kept Clean	X			
Single Girl, Married Girl			X	X
Spike Driver Blues	X	X	(X)	X
Stackalee	X	X		
Sugar Baby				X
The Coo Coo Bird	X	X	(X)	X
The Mountaineer's Courtship	X	X	(X)	X
When That Great Ship Went Down			X	
White House Blues	X	X	(X)	X

**Figure 3.4 continued**

The presence of that noise confirms audibly, even invites the imagination, that what you are hearing is not a new CD box set at all, but an old one, a vinyl LP or even the noisier shellac of the original 78s. Scholars have noted the continued championing of vinyl over digital as an exercise in nostalgia and authenticity, perceived as communing with or listening to the dead, physically preserving a historical item.<sup>130</sup> The effect for the listener effectively mirrors the palimpsest effect listeners of the original had: the feeling that what you are hearing is from a distant and strange past whose traces remain buried under the present, the performers long dead. When William Gay remarked that the voice of Dock Boggs was “so dissociated it seems to be coming not just from some other time but from outside time itself, from beyond the pale, a voice half-filtered through a mouthful of graveyard dirt,” he tied the act of listening to disembodiment, death, and decay. The reissue, released at the boom of the vinyl revival of the 1990s, retained the

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<sup>130</sup> Emily Chivers Yochim and Megan Biddinger, “It Kind of Gives You that Vintage Feel’: Vinyl Records and the Trope of Death,” *Media, Culture, Society* 30, no. 2 (March 2008), 183–95. Vanessa Chang examines a similar effect in the course of sampling through vinyl, identifying a particular sonic aura of historicity that emerges particularly in the light of reissues. See Vanessa Chang, “Records that Play: The Present Past in Sampling Practice,” *Popular Music* 28, no. 2 (May 2009), 153–4.

distinct sound of the record, as potent a symbol as the sepia tone of old photographs, preserving this paradoxical aesthetic immediacy of temporal and corporeal distance. The interest in vinyl has also been understood as a subcultural move in opposition to the recording industry, which plays off of the Smithsonian's characterization of the original album doing the same, defiantly refusing to play by the industry's rules, while the reissue itself backed away from this stance and indeed released not vinyl but CDs that only carried the sound of the vinyl and shellac records.<sup>131</sup>

If the sound was designed to mimic the effect of the original, the look of the reissue was practically indistinguishable. This aesthetic was not, however, the goal from the start. An email describes the initial plan as an inexpensive reissue: a set of three simple, \$6, 2-CD reissues.<sup>132</sup> The production team, however, felt the *Anthology* demanded a box set treatment. To be sure, the high retail price of the resulting box set, \$79, helped to offset the extraordinary cost of licensing all the tracks. But the price tag also reflects the shift of their target demographic from new audiences to audiophiles, collectors, and educational institutions. Minutes from a production meeting confirm that the decision was guided not just by economics, but also by a more emotional attachment to the *Anthology* like collectors, as production team members wondered, "How will we maintain the integrity of the original work if we don't do it all at once in a 12x12 box set?"<sup>133</sup>

Maintaining integrity, as it would turn out, meant replicating the look of the original boxes of LPs, material, size, and all. The outside label replicates Smith's original cover: a copy of a celestial monochord engraved by Johann Theodor de Bry taken from a publication by Robert

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<sup>131</sup> David Hayes, "Take Those Old Records off the Shelf": Youth and Music Consumption in the Postmodern Age," *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 1 (2006), 51–68.

<sup>132</sup> Email from Michael Maloney to Rani Singh, January 10, 1997. Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>133</sup> Minutes from Meeting on Reissue of Harry Smith Anthology, Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

Fludd. The simple addition of a frame around it is suggestive, elevating the cover image, and by extension the whole *Anthology*, to the realm of a museum piece to be preserved. And like any museum piece, Smith's cover was effectively restored, as it had been replaced in the 1960s by Irwin Silber, who selected a Depression-era photograph by Ben Shahn taken of a rehabilitation client in Boone County, Arkansas from October 1935. It was this image that was used in the fundraising flyer, perhaps to resonate with the flyer's more political claims, perhaps simply to foster a sense of familiarity with the more commonplace image that had fronted the album for three decades.

Returning to the original was not the obvious choice, however. Five covers, including the selected original, were proposed by designer Scott Stowell (Figure 3.5). The first depicts an outline of North America, with radio waves emanating from the center of the image, from the iconic heartland (rather than the South). Stowell writes, "This solution keeps the things that we liked about the original version (including the general concept) while making the map a much more non-political image. Instead of talking about the U.S.A., this becomes a window onto this part of the world, without political boundaries of any kind, and thus could be from any time period, 1952...1927-32...or even centuries before."<sup>134</sup> From this, we can glean that the original image was neither the Depression-era photo, nor the monochord, but at heart an American map, playing up the nationalist aspect of the *Anthology* reissue. Yet there must have been concerns, and the solution was to create an America without borders, something I have argued was very much at the heart of Smith's vision, as well as a sense of timelessness coupled with the modern technology of radio, a central tension in the *Anthology*. A second image retains the radio waves, and scatters around them stars and circles. Stowell notes it "has one foot in Harry Smith's mystical world of the Celestial Monochord, and the other in Smithville....What look like stars in

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<sup>134</sup> Ellipses appear in the original.



some sort of celestial diagram are actually towns and cities from a map of the Southeast (or in this case, from a *Crossroads* CD label). The radio waves here are emanating from people in the villages, towns, and cities that could be anywhere, at any time." Here, the mythology of the South, central to Smith's vision of the folk, is present, if abstractly, while the concept of timelessness is again emphasized. Versions three and four feature the monochord image, one without and one with radio waves. Stowell preferred the one with the radio waves because it made "a direct connection between the ancient and the modern, and by extension between the myths and traditions on the *Anthology* and modern listeners." The fifth design abstracted from the fourth the circles of radio waves and the circles emanating from the monochord, precisely what he liked about the relationship in the fourth design. Yet he also felt he should add text "much like the type used in the booklet," presumably because he feared the design to be too abstract.<sup>135</sup>

The selection of the original does not appear to have been made by Stowell, whose enthusiasm for that design was muted—probably because he, as a graphic designer, had very little to do with it. As such, I would venture the image was included on request from someone at the Smithsonian, a strong enough recommendation that Stowell visually or textually referenced the monochord in four of the five designs. Indeed, Stowell's designs are effective collages of the past, Harry Smith's original celestial monochord, and the present day, characterized by the technological radio waves and geographic allusions to the United States, mirroring the collaging of past and present, regional and national/international that Smith's *Anthology* undertook. Only

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<sup>135</sup> Fax from Scott Stowell. Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.



Figure 3.5: Five Suggested Cover Designs for the Reissue of *Anthology of American Music*

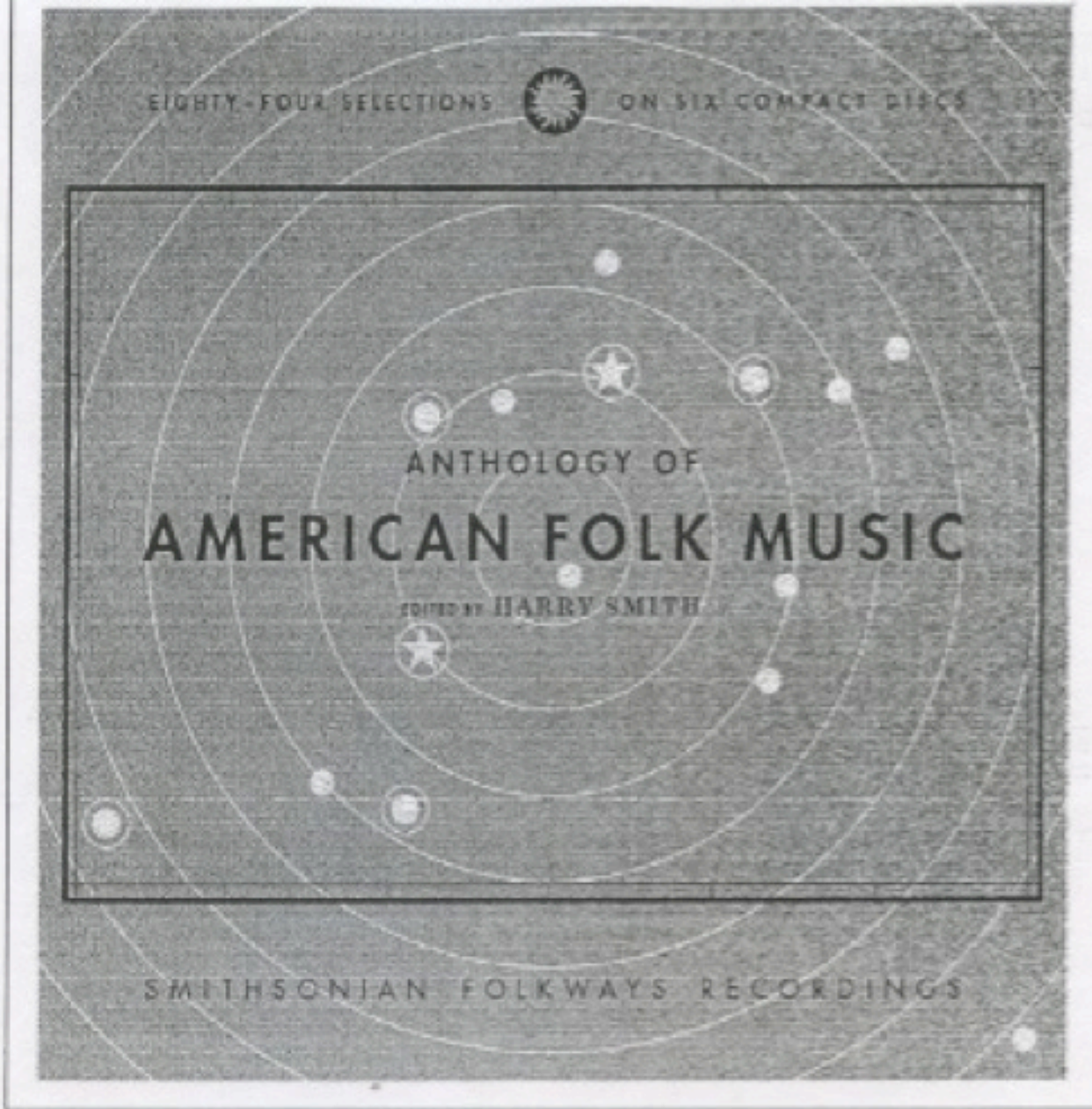


Figure 3.5 continued



Figure 3.5 continued



Figure 3.5 continued



Figure 3.5 continued

the first, which was a continuation of some unretained earlier design plan, made no reference to the monochord. Yet it was the third, which made no reference to the modern American present, and which made no effort of collage, that succeeded through its historical accuracy and continuity and a perceived purity of Smith's vision.

This preference for Smith's original vision, elevated as I have described it to a museum piece, reflects the broader shape that took hold of the project, nowhere more clearly than the booklet. The original booklet was perhaps the hallmark of the *Anthology*, totally unlike anything else. And as the producers take pains to note, its inclusion in the reissue was a precise facsimile:

Enclosed is a facsimile of Harry Smith's original handbook, which he composed, designed and laid out himself. There have been several reprintings since the original edition, each with changes in art, copy, and design. This reproduction is faithful to Harry's creation. It has been produced with the same reprographic methods in use at the time of the original edition: film negatives were shot with a photostat camera from a printed copy of the 1952 handbook because the original mechanical boards had been lost. We did no retouching or cleaning up and made no changes to the original art or copy. Offset plates were then made from these negatives, and paper was selected to match the original. The result is a reproduction which is as close as possible to the original artifact.<sup>136</sup>

The language here exceeds the language regarding the audio transfer, proudly touting the absence of any retouching or alterations, the careful selection of the smallest details, and the careful modeling upon an mythic Urtext preceding all copies and reissues.

Accompanying the original booklet in the box set are "supplemental notes" crafted by Jeff Place, which strike a similar aesthetic. Tracks are arranged in vertical columns left to right, each introduced with a large number at left, label information next to it. Both Smith and Place create similar keys to the annotations in their introductions. Place even scatters a few images throughout the notes—certainly not to the extent of Smith's collage, but enough to recall the original. Smith's marginalia commentary has been replaced by commentary about Smith from

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<sup>136</sup> Unsigned note, Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 34.

others, the content of which will be discussed later on in the chapter. The notes Place assembled focus largely where Smith did not, on the performers, all meticulously researched, and often even corrected the extensive work of Smith, as he apparently got dates and instrumentation wrong on numerous tracks—a task Place downplayed as merely “updat[ing] Smith’s notes as necessary.” The result is something of a paean to Smith, tied to the original even as it promised a path of independence away from Smith and toward a future of self-discovery, equally venerating the traditional and the modern in Smithlike fashion. Place saw these notes as a way to “present personal portraits, social landscapes and historical perspectives intended to lead you on your own to find out more. ... Hopefully, the new *Anthology* will evolve with new channels for exchanging information and will serve as a model for presenting important audio recordings to an interested public.”

Place further contrasts “the 1952 world of published books and records that are frozen in form” to the modern “more extensive and ever-changing” world of the internet. He planned a sort of living anthology on the internet, accessible via an enhanced CD, which could be updated with new information as it became available. Such an approach might well have adapted Smith’s approach to collage to the modern day culture that thrives on the same collage approach to breaking down cultural boundaries. For a new generation, a digital *Anthology* might have echoed the iPod’s shuffle function, or the connected the wide leaps across musical content to its digital counterpart in sites like StumbleUpon or the practice of wikisurfing, where readers of Wikipedia click on link after link, taking them farther and farther afield to new discoveries. Or Smith’s detailed history of various versions and performances might have been adapted to a remix culture, where music is frequently remixed or covered and shared in forms that echo folk culture,



contributing to a living anthology in a digital format.<sup>137</sup> Given Smith's distrust of technology, it seems a fitting irony that computing technology has changed such that I have been unable to find any machine that will play the enhanced CD, thus making the supplemental notes just as frozen as the original they emulate. Furthermore, by placing the most modern features of the reissue as bonus features on an enhanced CD, hidden from view rather than front and center, affirms the priority of historical authenticity over an updating for a new generation.

Perhaps the broadest hand the producers of the *Anthology* reissue held was in the additional notes that accompanied the box set. In a memo from editor Peter Seitel from October 17, 1996, he urges that the notes should cover four principal areas:

- 1) What does this musical snapshot taken in 1928-1932, the Harry Smith Collection, represent?" How is our picture affected by the means of recording at the time—the technical equipment and the social organization/ economic practices of the music industry at the time? Who are these people and what is their relationship to the music that they sing?
- 2) What was the impact of this collection on American music?—told both anecdotally...and based on the evidence of styles and repertoires of subsequent musicians. ...
- 3) What does this collection represent in the context of Harry Smith's work? ...
- 4) What can be added to the annotations of individual songs in terms of their significance or their history from 1952 to the present?<sup>138</sup>

Seitel maps out an ambitiously thorough and scholarly assessment of the full range of contextualizing and understanding the anthology. This appears to have held some sway early on.

An undated memo remarks that:

we have notes from Jon Pankake (which appear to be for volume 4). Note in the file from Kate Rinzler saying that they are too personal and need to be focused to include comments on the early recording industry and the anthology's impact on it in the early 50s. She says Mike Seeger will talk with Pankake and ask him to revise the notes. The first question is which volume do these notes go with?<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Tok Thompson has suggested that technologically mediated music making through mashups is a current manifestation of folk music processes. See Tok Thompson, "Beatboxing, Mashups, and Cyborg Identity: Folk Music for the Twenty-First Century," *Western Folklore* 70, no. 2 (Spring 2011), 171–93.

<sup>138</sup> Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>139</sup> Folder 2951, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

Here, the desired tone for the notes are similarly scholarly and contextual, with even less room for personal reflection than Seitel's, which allowed for anecdotal tales. An early list of names of potential contributors demonstrates producers cast a wide net, angling to cover the anthology from multiple angles (Appendix 3B). Musicians made up the largest share, covering a wide range of styles and generations: Bono, Laurie Anderson, Michael Stipe, Loretta Lynn, Ornette Coleman, Patti Smith, Johnny Cash, Pete Seeger, Oscar Brand, Phil Spector, Beck, Doc Watson, Yoko Ono, and Bob Dylan. Colleagues and collaborators with Smith like Moses Asch, Peter Bartok, Jon Pankake, Allen Ginsberg, Sam Charters, and Ralph Rinzler were naturally included, as were a variety of prominent artists and intellectuals: Thomas Pynchon, Robert Frank, Sam Shepard, LaMonte Young, Dennis Hopper and Amiri Baraka.<sup>140</sup> It seems the notes themselves might have constituted a collage of personalities and viewpoints.

Rani Singh, the director of the Harry Smith Archives, sent an update on the status of notes. Notes had been received from several artists, 11 of which constituted long, multiple page remembrances, and others that offered short anecdotes or pithy, heartfelt comments. Singh noted that she needed to edit Taylor's and lightly edit Rinzler's note, and that Pankake's eight-page contribution, by far the longest, could be edited though she didn't want to. A host of other contributors had also committed to the project, though they had not sent anything in, and still several others Singh remained hopeful about getting involved. Singh's approach retained the wide variety of viewpoints that could touch upon all four of the areas recommended by Seitel: big name performers to draw attention to the *Anthology's* impact; others who assisted the folk movement behind the scenes through production and management like Young, Rooney, and Pearl; colleagues to offer a deeper account into Smith like Asch, Rinzler, Saunders, and

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<sup>140</sup> Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

Ginsberg; and a number of scholars and writers who could provide the appropriate historical and cultural context—Kahn, Cantwell, Sante, Heylin, and Ivey, who would soon chair the National Endowment for the Arts.

Singh was also particular about the ordering of the notes. In her plan, the set opened with her own contribution as director of the archives, followed by critic Pankake, fellow record collector Kemnitzer, musicians Stampfel, Von Schmidt, musician-scholar Cohen, scholar Cantwell, musician Fahey, friend and collaborator Ginsberg, and ending with Pirtle. The contribution by Moses Asch, she said, needed to be decided on where to go, if at all. There's a Smith-like flow to the arrangements: the two scholars together in the middle, musicians on either side, and the two poets at the end. Furthermore, her insistence upon Pirtle to close was meaningful, for Pirtle's rather touching note tells of how he reintroduced Smith to the album in his later years and how Smith had been moved to tears by the experience, providing I think a logical conclusion to the narrative shaped here. Smaller pieces were to be collaged throughout the document, as many as could fit.<sup>141</sup>

The final result was much smaller in scope than either Seitel or Singh had hoped. No doubt this was a practical move to keep costs down and maintain a manageable size. Yet it also bears the distinct imprint of a careful editorial hand. While some recollections were scattered throughout, as Singh had envisioned, only four were "short"; indeed, six authors who had contributed longer works filled the margins where shorter reminiscences might have gone, filling the margins of multiple consecutive pages, much like magazine articles that are continued on later pages in thin columns. The prioritizing of longer works may have stemmed from wanting to recognize the effort that went into crafting them, or possibly from agreements made with the authors, but it also speaks to the scholarly and documentary aims the collection had, giving the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

volume some heft. The essays given pride of placement in the anthology are particularly scholarly or historically-minded: Neil Rosenberg's essay on recording practices of the 1920s and 1930s, Luis Kemnitzer's in-depth look into the practice of record collecting, Jon Pankake's personal yet detailed remembrance of the *Anthology* and the folk revival, and Moses Asch's recollection of the album's conception and production.<sup>142</sup> Biggest of all was a full twenty-one pages devoted to an adapted excerpt from Greil Marcus's chapter on the *Anthology* from his just-published *Invisible Republic*.<sup>143</sup> Marcus's name did not appear at all in earlier documented plans for the notes, but the decision to excerpt part of a book, rather than devote the space to other notes, speaks to the scholarly ambitions of the reissue. But given that other scholars like Robert Cantwell had submitted contributions, the selection of Marcus, a more public and famous figure, suggests that commercial appeal was also strong; Marcus offered the right combination of scholarship and fame to match the competing goals of the organizers. Other contributions scattered throughout the margins largely gave anecdotal color: personal testimonials about the *Anthology*'s impact on their work and reminiscences about Smith's eccentric behavior. It was to these margins that Pirtle's essay, with which Singh wanted to close the notes, was inconspicuously consigned.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Neil Rosenberg, "Notes on Harry Smith," Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 35–7; Kemnitzer, 29–31; Jon Pankake, "The Brotherhood of the Anthology," Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 26–8; and Asch, "The Birth and Growth of Anthology of American Folk Music as told by Moses Asch," Reprinted in Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 32–3.

<sup>143</sup> Greil Marcus, "The Old, Weird America," Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 5–25. No other note was longer than three pages.

<sup>144</sup> Chuck Pirtle, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 52. Other contributors included were John Fahey, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 8–12; John Cohen, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 15; Elvis Costello, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 18; Peter Stampfel, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 21–5; Luc Sante, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 30–1; Dave Van Ronk, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 36; Eric von Schmidt, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music*

More telling is what was collected but not included. The producers steered clear of anything too critical or controversial. Sam Charter's pointedly asked in his note "Why do you want to propagate the myth of Harry Smith? He wasn't doing anything that anyone else wasn't doing at the time."<sup>145</sup> Pat Conte used Smith's *Anthology* to critique other anthologies, such as Henry Cowell's 1951 *Music of the World's Peoples*, "seemingly arbitrary in selection, and lackluster in production, critiqued with vague musicology," and thus sought to bring Smith's revitalizing energy to future global music projects.<sup>146</sup> Steven Taylor wrote extensively about the racial and commercial exploitation inherent in these older recordings. Indeed, one of his critiques echoes the Smithsonian's criticism of media conglomeration, albeit more strongly worded:

A number of factors contributed to the virtual disappearance of the music represented on the *Anthology*. One major factor was the Great Depression, another was radio, and a third was the increasing consolidation and monopolization of the musical mass media by Tin Pan Alley—a group of mostly white men, most of whom had no direct experience of African and European American folk musics, and many of whom had never ventured outside of New York City, but who had the business acumen to monopolize the national publishing, performance, and broadcast media with their catalogs of "hit" songs periodically refreshed by the selective appropriation of "Negro" or "Hillbilly" affects.<sup>147</sup>

Including this charge of white men might have been incongruous with the reissue, all of whose contributors were, in fact, white men. This underscores a central paradox of the *Anthology* and its influence on the folk movement. The *Anthology* had been leveled at a segregated society, and yet the folk and avant-garde movements it fed were dominated by white men. The reissue of *Anthology* was never able to come to terms with this. More troubling still, it seems to deliberately skirt the issue, for one of the very few instances I could find where a contributed note was edited for inclusion was Eric Von Schmidt's account of his introduction to folk music.

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Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 42–4; Allen Ginsberg, [Liner Note], Supplemental Notes, *Anthology of American Music* Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090 CD, 55–9;

<sup>145</sup> Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

Schmidt's note in the anthology ends with his description of his group of folkies as romantics, and details how he named a boat after John Hurt, how another friend hoped to find Blind Lemon Jefferson's grave and sweep it, a reference to his song on the *Anthology* "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean, and how he mourned the fact that Leadbelly had died before he met him. This is where the reissue note ends, on a moment of pathos and indebtedness. Von Schmidt's paragraph continues, however, in the original draft: "It was a mostly white, middle-class bunch of college kids calking up little discoveries on the slates of their young lives."<sup>148</sup> The omission of this line speaks volumes about all that the reissue does not say about race, class, and status.

Like the cover art discussed above, the editorial decision here minimizes the potential for collage to reveal multiple and new perspectives. In this case, the original plan created a dazzling variety of voices approaching the *Anthology* from multiple angles akin to how Smith's compilation so richly approached the idea of American folk music. Moreover, just as Smith used variety to unsettle mythology about folk music, it's clear that many contributors might have performed a similar task upon the *Anthology* itself, deconstructing a half-century's worth of mythmaking. Sam Charter's pointed comment that Smith was not doing anything original, or Eric von Schmidt's invocation of racial politics behind the folk movement would have painted a more complex and realistic portrait of the *Anthology* as it stands. Yet the repeated desire to replicate in exacting detail the original suggests that the project was about honoring the myths surrounding Harry Smith, the "integrity" of the original as it were.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

## **Conclusion: Retracing and Rethinking the *Anthology*'s Folk**

The comparison of approaches taken by Smith and the Smithsonian underscores the distinction between collage as an action and the resultant collage as an object. For Smith, the *Anthology* was a vibrant, novel approach to folk music. It projected a view of folk culture and history as fluid and transient. Its power to effect social change was derived from its surprising juxtapositions. It was, effectively, a well-curated exhibit of the American past that listeners moved through and discovered anew. But while Smith, at heart, aimed to reshape history through his collage, the Smithsonian aimed to preserve history. By paying honor to Smith's work and to his historical moment it turned his act of collage into an object, embalming it, as it were, to render it both everlasting and lifeless. Consider, by contrast, their attempt to create an interactive CD-ROM component, which remained lifelike in spirit, but quickly became obsolete and impractical. Smith's collage had created porous borders, across which musical and lyrical ideas flowed and conversed, mimicking the similarly porous racial, chronological, and geographic borders music traveled across. For the reissue, Smith's borders became fixed. The supplemental notes carefully matched the precise collage layout of the original. For these supplemental notes, it is important to understand that this is not a collage in the same way; rather, what was a collage had become a single design, a template to follow, with none of the surprising juxtapositions that collage thrives upon. This is not to suggest that Smith's collage no longer retains its power today, or that the task of preserving such an important document is without or lesser in value, but I do want to underscore the different approaches to history the *Anthology* and its reissue raise, and

how different interpretations of collage aid those histories.

The reissue of the *Anthology* sparked a resurgence of activity. Symposia were sponsored by the Smithsonian, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Getty Research Institute, and other institutions, where scholars kept alive questions of the *Anthology*'s cultural meaning. Books and articles have flourished, many of which have been discussed in this chapter. But of particular interest to me is that musicians found renewed interest as well, and two sets of tribute performances were released. Every year since at least 2003, fans of the *Anthology* gather in Greenfield, Massachusetts to partake in the Harry Smith Frolic, a weekend-long outdoor jam session in which the entirety of the album is played live by its various participants. One participant, Alec McLane, told me that the Frolic attracts multiple generations, and found it worth noting to me that often it is the younger musicians who take a more traditional approach to the music. Given Smith's statements about the *Anthology*'s contribution of repertoire, no doubt he would be delighted to see this happening. But the Harry Smith Frolic also makes a fitting tribute to the collage aspects of Smith's *Anthology*. Like the reissue, it pays tribute to Smith's curatorial choices by producing the album in its entirety, track by track. But like Smith's original, it highlights the social contact of different populations gathering in a collage of live performances, interspersed by other social and musical interactions, and the flexibility to include other musical gestures performers decide to bring in to the collage.

Since the reissue, two CD/DVD sets have been released. *The Harry Smith Connection Live*, issued by the Smithsonian, is the more conservative of the two, largely centering on an older generation of folk musicians, with liner notes that again emulate Smith's (as well as adopting the radio waves for the cover that were considered for the reissue). *The Harry Smith Project*, by contrast, features from everyone from David Johansen, Richard Thompson, and Van



Dyke Parks to Philip Glass and Percy Heath to a new generation of musicians Beck, Wilco, Sonic Youth, and Beth Orton. Two DVDs accompany the CDs. On one, viewers can watch some of Smith's films and choose an accompaniment: music composed by Philip Glass or either of two Smith-inspired mash-ups by DJ Spooky and Mocean Rocker. The two DVDs also include interviews, performances, excerpts of the originals abutted with new covers, archival footage, and black-and-white found footage from old films. The whole effect is delightfully in keeping with the spirit of Smith's album: a collage of a diverse cast of performers and musical styles, as well as a collage of old and new. This juxtaposition is made evident at the outset of the first DVD, which opens with an introduction by producer Hal Willner holding a banjo and an archaic ventriloquist's dummy, while sitting at a modern mixing board. Indeed, the ventriloquist dummy seems particularly pointed, for was Smith not essentially ventriloquizing and puppeteering the voices of the folk recordings made so long ago, who spoke what Smith, through his act of collage, wanted them to say?

Perhaps the most bizarre moment of *The Harry Smith Project* is the appearance and performance by the fictional folk group The Folksmen from Christopher Guest's mock-umentary *A Mighty Wind*. Their presence indicates a blurring of the line between fiction and documentary, and calls attention to the way even documentaries and reissues are scripted, and how myth becomes its own reality. The amorphous concept of "the folk" is a particularly charged example, freighted with political and social significance, and so often creating a false sense of purity, unity, and timelessness. While the *Anthology* unsettled certain myths propagated about American folk and, by extension, America, the eventual canonization of the album dangerously reasserts new myths about America's folk. As Mark Clague reminds us in his discussion of critical editions and editing, "Critical editing and cultural criticism are as intertwined as text and context,

writing and interpretation. Editing is itself an art, one-like all scholarly work-that not only documents and interprets, but also produces its own social meaning and furthers its own cultural and social agenda.”<sup>149</sup> The treatment of Smith’s *Anthology* as its own Urtext in the reissue risks overlooking Smith’s and Asch’s twin editorial hands, the contexts at which Smith leveled his criticism through, and other crucial elements.

Newspapers reviewing the reissue glowed at such a fine tribute to a now canonic work of Americana, praising the handsome package and the indispensable notes and largely affirming the *Anthology* as the foundation of rock and roll that followed. David Fricke in *Rolling Stone* captures the romanticization and authenticity wrapped up in the reception:

It first appeared, with little fanfare, in 1952, on the Folkways label. It was of questionable legality - basically a bootleg - and eccentric in its packaging (three double-LP sets) and annotation (the copy was laid out and illustrated like a 19th-century broadsheet). Even the title, implying broad academic authority, was misleading....Today, it is impossible to overstate the historic worth, sociocultural impact and undiminished vitality of the music in this set, and of Smith's idiosyncratic scholarship and instinctive wisdom. Dressed up for the CD age in a deluxe six-disc box set, the *Anthology of American Folk Music* constitutes a bedrock of our national musical identity. The songs of hard labor ("Peg and Awl"), fatal attraction ("Henry Lee"), sudden violence ("Stackalee") and last requests ("See That My Grave Is Kept Clean") document in raw detail and poetic swing the immigrant struggle and the pioneer life.<sup>150</sup>

Some noted the way the *Anthology* challenged the reigning conceptions of America in the 1950s, but in doing so affirm something true about the *Anthology* by exposing the falseness of the other view. Geoffrey O’Brien’s review in the *New York Review of Books* marks a rare resistance to the master narratives of canonicity:

It provides further confirmation that the CD box set is, in its reverent attention to detail, our moment’s equivalent of the medieval illuminated manuscript. It is not enough to have learned how to capture sound; there must be an appropriate monument to enclose it and keep it from escaping, to stabilize what would otherwise remain a drifting accumulation

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<sup>149</sup> Mark Clague, “Portraits in Beams and Barlines: Critical Music Editing and the Art of Notation,” *American Music* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 46.

<sup>150</sup> David Fricke, Review of *Anthology of American Music* edited by Harry Smith, *Rolling Stone* September 18, 1997, 101–2.

of sound effects. Hearing is the most slippery and intangible and therefore most haunting of experiences; and we have heard so much, more than we could remember or even process. . . . Now even the folk revival is ancient history. They all have their boxed sets—Leadbelly, the Weavers, Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, row upon row of freeze-dried echo chambers. The metallic wheels have that gleaming, hygienic impersonality by which we recognize the new technologies: the home entertainment library is now ready to be loaded on the rocket ship. We have entered an Alexandrian phase—or is it a Noah’s Ark phase?—of storing and classifying and anthologizing the works of the past, and discover that an Alexandrian life has its distinct pleasures.<sup>151</sup>

Perhaps because O’Brien is not a music reviewer, he can maintain a critical distance fans cannot, pinpointing a certain inertness to the box set phenomenon.

The process of collecting and reissuing old blues and jazz recordings has received scholarly criticism for their problematic racial and gendered tactics, wherein white men control the canonization and depiction of black music.<sup>152</sup> Smith’s *Anthology* has largely escaped this, the deep irony being that the *Anthology* is celebrated for pushing social change through civil rights and inspiring the interracial roots of rock and roll, yet the *Anthology* held an equally formative influence on the blues revival. Robert Christgau at *Spin* is notable for rightly concluding that “we needn’t believe the *Anthology of American Folk Music* represents the ‘real’ folk, much less the ‘real’ America,” and noting Smith’s “pro-weird bias.” Yet his review betrays the allure of the *Anthology*’s myths, romantically praising the black artists as “a notch better than the hillbilly. They’re less repressed, musically and sexually,” momentarily re-segregating the tracks and uncritically employing time-worn myths about black music, and elsewhere argues for a sort of exceptionalism in Smith’s work: “Formally, the *Anthology* is simply one more compilation, a fact of commercial life as labels recycle catalogue for CD purchase. But where even the best of

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<sup>151</sup> Geoffrey O’Brien, “Recapturing the American Sound,” *The New York Times Review of Books* April 9, 1998, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1998/apr/09/recapturing-the-american-sound/>.

<sup>152</sup> See, for instance, Dougan or Chapter Six in George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

these...are hemmed in by profit motive, the *Anthology* is a collagist's act of love."<sup>153</sup> Just as Ernest Gellner theorized that "a shared amnesia, a collective forgetfulness, is at least as essential for the emergence of what we now consider to be a nation," a forgetfulness of the *Anthology*'s specific point of view and its own mythology has been necessary for its canonization as something authentically folk.<sup>154</sup>

The inertness of the box set I alluded to above returns us again to collage. Indeed, the power of the original album operated through its radical juxtapositions, its refusal of any singular reading or meaning, all made possible through collage. Reading the *Anthology* should be difficult and inconclusive; appraising the *Anthology* should be no different. Even Smith himself produced a cornucopia of contradiction and elusive remarks regarding its legacy. He disavowed the entire *Anthology*—"I reject that entire approach to music."<sup>155</sup> He was moved to tears of joy listening to it.<sup>156</sup> He felt disappointed by the *Anthology*'s effect: "I thought it would develop into something more spectacular than it did, though... I imagine[d] it having some kind of social force for good."<sup>157</sup> He felt pride its effect: "I would lacking in self respect if I said that the Anthology of American folk song had anything less than a powerful influence on what happened later."<sup>158</sup> Consider the definitive reissue of the fourth volume, a resurrection of a singular, definitive lost artifact that relies of the careful dismissal of any doubts or alternatives.<sup>159</sup> Once one remembers that other plans existed, including an unauthorized fourth album planned by Ralph Rinzler that sought to correct Smith's vision by celebrating ethnic music from multiple communities in

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<sup>153</sup> Robert Christgau, "Words and Guitars: Bohemian Rhapsody," *Spin* October 1, 1997, 139.

<sup>154</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Harry Smith March by Gary Kenton 1983/84, in Singh, *Think of the Self Speaking*, 31.

<sup>156</sup> Note from Chuck Pirtle. Untitled Folder, Moses and Frances Asch Collection, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington DC.

<sup>157</sup> Carlin, 65.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Harry Smith by Gary Kenton. Breslin Hotel, March 1984. Tape FS-5114, Gary Kenton Collection, Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>159</sup> See footnote 74.

America, the fourth volume reactivates the open-endedness that Smith's collage celebrates, and the editorial hand in shaping that volume is revealed, displaying as much about what contemporary scholars wanted to find in the fourth volume as what Smith planned.<sup>160</sup> Similar hands were at work in the *Anthology* as well as its reissue.

To put it another way, the box set becomes another collectible—inert and indispensable. It is this view that allows the *Anthology* to loom so large in the American national consciousness. And yet, I would contend it goes against the very spirit of the *Anthology*, for Smith was not content to simply collect, but was compelled to turn the private collection into a public tool, undoing the careful order of a cataloguer's or a collector's impulse through collage. That was the heart of Harry Smith's America.

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<sup>160</sup> Conversation with Jeff Place.

**Appendix 3A: Track Listing for *Anthology of American Music***

**Volume 1: Ballads**

1	Henry Lee	Dick Justice
2	Fatal Flower Garden	Nelstone's Hawaiians
3	The House Carpenter	Clarence Ashley
4	Drunkard's Special	Coley Jones
5	Old Lady and the Devil	Bill and Belle Reed
6	The Butcher's Boy	Buell Kazee
7	The Wagoner's Lad	Buell Kazee
8	King Kong Kitchie Kitchie Ki-Me-O	"Chubby" Parker and His Old Time Banjo
9	Old Shoes and Leggins	Uncle Eck Dunford
10	Willie Moore	Burnett and Rutherford
11	A Lazy Farmer Boy	Buster Carter and Preston Young
12	Peg and Awl	Carolina Tar Heels
13	Ommie Wise	G. B. Grayson
14	My Name Is John Johanna	Kelly Harrell
15	Bandit Cole Younger	Edward L. Crain
16	Charles Giteau	Kelly Harrell
17	John Hardy Was a Desperate Little Man	The Carter Family
18	Gonna Die with My Hammer in My Hand	Williamson Brothers and Curry
19	Stackalee	Frank Hutchison
20	White House Blues	Charlie Poole with the North Carolina Ramblers
21	Frankie	Mississippi John Hurt
22	When That Great Ship Went Down	William and Versey Smith
23	Engine 143	The Carter Family
24	Kassie Jones	Furry Lewis
25	Down On Penny's Farm	The Bentley Boys
26	Mississippi Boweavil Blues	The Masked Marvel [Charlie Patton]
27	Got the Farm Land Blues	The Carolina Tar Heels

Appendix 3A continued

Volume 2: Social Music

28	Sail Away Lady	"Uncle Bunt" Stephens
29	The Wild Wagoner	J. W. Day (Jilson Setters)
30	Wake Up Jacob	Prince Albert Hunt's Texas Ramblers
31	La Danseuse	Delma Lachney and Blind Uncle Gaspard
32	Georgia Stomp	Andrew and Jim Baxter
33	Brilliancy Medley	Eck Robertson and Family
34	Indian War Whoop	Floyd Ming and his Pep-Steppers
35	Old Country Stomp	Henry Thomas
36	Old Dog Blue	Jim Jackson
37	Saut Crapaud	Columbus Fruge
38	Acadian One Step	Joseph Falcon
39	Home Sweet Home	The Breau Freres
40	Newport Blues	Cincinnati Jug Band
41	Moonshiner's Dance (Part 1)	Frank Cloutier and Victoria Cafe Orchestra
42	Must Be Born Again	Rev. J. M. Gates
43	Oh Death Where Is Thy Sting	Rev. J. M. Gates
44	Rocky Road	Alabama Sacred Harp Singers
45	Present Joys	Alabama Sacred Harp Singers
46	This Song of Love	Middle Georgia Singing Convention No. 1
47	Judgement	Rev. Sister Mary Nelson
48	He Got Better Things for You	Memphis Sanctified Singers
49	Since I Laid My Burden Down	Elders McIntosh and Edwards' Sanctified Singers
50	John the Baptist	Rev. Moses Mason
51	Dry Bones	Bascom Lamar Lunsford
52	John the Revelator	Blind Willie Johnson
53	Little Moses	The Carter Family
54	Shine On Me	Ernest Phipps and His Holiness Singers
55	Fifty Miles of Elbow Room	Rev. F. W. McGee
56	I'm in the Battle Field for my Lord	Rev. D. C. Rice and his Sanctified Congregation

## Appendix 3A Continued

### Volume 3: Songs

57	The Coo Coo Bird	Clarence Ashley
58	East Virginia	Buell Kazee
59	Minglewood Blues	Cannon's Jug Stompers
60	I Woke Up One Morning in May	Didier Hebert
61	James Alley Blues	Richard "Rabbit" Brown
62	Sugar Baby	"Dock" Boggs
63	I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground	Bascom Lamar Lunsford
64	The Mountaineer's Courtship	Mr. and Mrs. Ernest V. Stoneman
65	The Spanish Merchant's Daughter	Stoneman Family
66	Bob Lee Junior Blues	The Memphis Jug Band
67	Single Girl, Married Girl	The Carter Family
68	Le Vieux Soulard et Sa Femme	Clemo Breaux and Joseph Falcon
69	Rabbit Foot Blues	Blind Lemon Jefferson
70	Expressman Blues	Sleepy John Estes
71	Poor Boy Blues	Ramblin' Thomas
72	Feather Bed	Cannon's Jug Stompers
73	Country Blues	"Dock" Boggs
74	Ninety-Nine Year Blues	Julius Daniels
75	Prison Cell Blues	Blind Lemon Jefferson
76	See That My Grave is Kept Clean	Blind Lemon Jefferson
77	C'est Si Triste Sans Lui	Clemo Breaux with Joe Falcon and Ophy Breaux
78	Way Down the Old Plank Road	Uncle Dave Macon
79	Buddy Won't You Roll Down the Line	Uncle Dave Macon
80	Spike Driver Blues	Mississippi John Hurt
81	K. C. Moan	Memphis Jug Band
82	Train on the Island	J. P. Nestor
83	The Lone Star Trail	Ken Maynard
84	Fishing Blues	Henry Thomas



**Appendix 3B: Contributors of Notes to the Reissue of *Anthology of American Folk Music***

(A) “Jeff [Place]’s List” (B): Checkmarked on “Jeff’s List”; (C) Contact information on “Jeff’s List”; (D) “Received” on Rani Singh’s List; (E) “Waiting On (committed)” on Rani Singh’s List; (F) “Hopefully Will Get” on Rani Singh’s List; (G) Notes found in the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage archive; (H) Included in reissue.

Contributor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Laurie Anderson	X	X						
Moe Asch	X	X		X				X
Joan Baez	X	X						
Amiri Baraka	X	X						
Peter Bartok	X							
Beck	X	X			X			
Charles Bernstein	X	X						
Bono	X	X						
Oscar Brand	X		X					
John Cale	X							
Robert Cantwell	X	X		X				
Johnny Cash	X		X					
Rosanne Cash	X		X					
Nick Cave	X					X		
Sam Charters	X	X		X			X	
John Cohen	X	X		X			X	X
Leonard Cohen	X	X						
Larry Cohn				X			X	X
Ornette Coleman	X	X						
Judy Collins	X		X					
Bruce Conner	X	X						
Pat Conte	X						X	
Ry Cooder	X					X		
Gregory Corso	X	X						
Elvis Costello	X	X		X			X	X

Appendix 3B continued

Contributor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
David Crosby	X	X						
Robert Crumb				X			X	
The Dead	X	X						
Kim Deal	X							
Josh Dunson					X			
Bob Dylan	X	X				X		
Jacob Dylan	X							
Ramblin' Jack Elliot	X	X						
Donald Fagen	X					X		
John Fahey	X		X	X			X	X
Marianne Faithfull	X	X						
Henry Flynt	X							
Raymond Foye	X	X						
Robert Frank	X	X				X		
[review by Alfred] Frankenstein						X		
Dave Gahr	X	X						
Jerry Garcia	X	X		X			X	
Jimmy Dale Gillmore	X	X						
Allen Ginsberg	X	X		X			X	X
Tony Glover	X		X					
Archie Green	X		X					
David Grisman	X		X					
Merle Haggard	X		X					
P. J. Harvey	X							
Percy Heath	X							
Johnny Herald	X		X					
Clinton Heylin	X	X			X			
Dennis Hopper	X	X						
Gart Hudson	X							
Robert Hunter	X	X						
Bill Ivey								
Denis Johnson	X							
Ed Kahn				X			X	
Danny Kalb	X	X						
Lou Kemnitzer	X			X			X	X
John Koerner	X		X					
Tuli Kupferberg	X	X				X		
Jim Kweskin	X							

Appendix 3B continued

Contributor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Alan Lomax				X			X	
Loretta Lynn	X		X					
Ewan MacColl	X							
Kate MacGarigle	X							
Taj Mahal	X		X					
Greil Marcus								X
Michael McClure	X	X						
Sharyn McCrumb	X							
Roger McGuinn	X		X					
Joni Mitchell	X		X					
Graham Nash	X	X						
Fred Neil	X							
Paul Nelson	X							
Traci Nelson	X		X					
Willie Nelson	X		X					
Richard Nevins	X		X					
Odetta	X		X					
Yoko Ono	X	X						
Tom Paley	X			X			X	
Jon Pankake	X			X			X	X
VanDyke Parks	X		X					
Tom Paxton	X		X			X		
Ed Pearl	X		X		X			
Chuck Pirtle				X			X	X
Thomas Pynchon	X							
Bonnie Raitt	X		X					
Dave Ray	X		X					
Lou Reed	X	X						
Ralph Rinzler	X	X		X			X	
Robbie Robertson	X							
Jim Rooney	X		X	X			X	
Neil Rosenberg								X
Tom Rush	X		X					
Buffy Saint Marie	X		X					
Ed Sanders	X	X			X			
Luc Sante					X			X
Paul Schaffer	X							
John Sebastian	X		X					

**Appendix 3B continued**

Contributor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Mike Seeger	X		X	X			X	
Peggy Seeger	X		X	X			X	
Pete Seeger	X		X					
Sam Shepard	X					X		
Rani Singh							X	
Patti Smith	X	X			X			
Phil Spector	X		X					
Dick Spottswood	X		X					
Bruce Springsteen						X		
Pete Stampfel	X			X			X	X
Stephen Stills	X		X					
Michael Stipe	X	X						
Chris Strachwitz	X		X					
Steven Taylor	X	X		X			X	
Derek Taylor	X							
Happy Traum	X		X			X		
William Vollman	X							
Dave Van Ronk	X		X	X			X	X
Eric Von Schmidt	X			X	X		X	X
Doc Watson	X		X					
Bob Weir	X				X			
Hal Willner	X	X						
Bob Yellin	X		X					
LaMonte Young	X							
Neil Young	X	X						
Izzy Young	X	X		X				

## **Chapter Four**

### **Missing Pieces: Collage, Commemoration, and Musical Memorials**

September 11, 2001. One of the more powerful moments on this dark, unsettled day occurred through music as members of Congress gathered on the steps of the Capitol and broke out into a seemingly spontaneous, unison rendition of “God Bless America.” The sight and sound of the leaders of the United States singing in unison both demonstrated to the nation a resolve in the face of tragedy and offered a comforting, if rare, moment of unity. Similarly, the media’s repetition of the phrase “we are all Americans” both across the United States and around the world underscored this unity on local and global terms.<sup>1</sup>

The unity experienced after 9/11 was not, however, a single unity, but several collective unities among its survivors, including familial unity, as relatives called to confirm loved ones were alive; local unity, as New Yorkers banded together to help with recovery efforts, and many other towns, college campuses, and other communities across the country gathered to find comfort in each other and hold their own vigils; national unity, as Americans reaffirmed their identity when the country was at its most vulnerable, something very much on display when members of Congress sang; and a more universal, human unity, as when other nations expressed solidarity with the phrase “We are all Americans.” Under careful examination, however, even these most iconic and public expressions of unity undermine that very concept. American culture

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase “Nous sommes tous americains” appeared on the front page of *Le Monde* on September 12, 2001. Since then, the phrase has been repeatedly employed by local and national publications within the United States in conjunction with observing 9/11.

scholar Paul Allen Anderson has observed the ambiguity of the Congressional performance of God Bless America, hearing in it “a humble request for a blessing after an unbearable Tuesday; an adamant announcement of continued strength in the face of an unknown threat; [and] another verse in the music of war’s unending melody,” to which I would add an observation of the post-9/11 emphasis on religious differences that were echoed in the song’s performance at the Capitol and in the many subsequent performances.<sup>2</sup> The phrase “We are all Americans” is also ambiguous despite its protestation of unity, for it both proclaims national identity boldly above all other identities (“American”) and undermines national identity in favor of human empathy (“all”). What then, we might very well ask, did it mean to be American after 9/11?

One thing it did not mean, as it turned out, was unity. Political concerns over security, civil liberties, and military action quickly frayed both the American and global unities that had so suddenly appeared. Perhaps it was inevitable. Even as news anchors commented upon the display of unity at the Capitol they did so with surprise, commenting incredulously on the partisan rancor that had instantly vanished. The process of depicting and memorializing 9/11 since then has remained equally fraught with politics and charges of racism, xenophobia, cowardice, exploitation, and censorship, as this chapter will document. As journalist George Packer, arts critic Michiko Kakutani, and others have concluded in the intervening years, 9/11 may have in fact changed nothing.<sup>3</sup>

September 11, 2011. As the nation observed the ten-year anniversary, I was in Elgin, Illinois, attending a memorial concert of John Adams’s *On the Transmigration of Souls* and

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Allen Anderson, “The World Heard: *Casablanca* and the Music of War,” *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 483.

<sup>3</sup> George Packer, “Coming Apart,” *The New Yorker*, September 12, 2011, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/09/12/110912fa\\_fact\\_packer](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/09/12/110912fa_fact_packer); Michiko Kakutani, “American Culture: And Now, Back to Our Regularly Scheduled Programming,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 2002. Accessed <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/11/us/american-culture-and-now-back-to-our-regularly-scheduled-programming.html>.

Johannes Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, where the question of unity was rendered rather vividly for me. I was there to conduct research on audience reception of *On The Transmigration of Souls*, a project that took me to eleven performances in six cities between 2010 and 2012.<sup>4</sup> Most were there to support the Elgin Choral Union, a community choral group of volunteers, and many in the audience seemed to know members, celebrating unity through community.

The concert began with an implicit call for patriotic unity. Four elderly veterans shuffled out between the cellos, their attempted unity through exaggerated march steps made all the more apparent for their lack of unity due to the cramped space and their age. Two held rifles, the other two held American flags. The chorus and orchestra struck up “The Star Spangled Banner” and were quickly joined by the audience, who rose respectfully. The moment recalled the performance on the Capitol, but unity now was orchestrated rather than spontaneous or natural, and the presence of veterans with rifles issued an unspoken reminder that the military repercussions of 9/11 are still being acutely felt.

The concert concluded with a gesture of unity as well: Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. While the work is often noted for its textual disunity, assembled from various Biblical passages, or its formal unity as the final movement returns us to the opening text and musical ideas, more germane was symbolic unity the piece carried. It was performed by the New York Philharmonic on September 20, 2001; to perform it here was to transport us ten years earlier and remember. The Brahms *Requiem* carried local significance as well, as the work was the first piece the Elgin

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<sup>4</sup> Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010; Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011; Elgin Choral Union, Elgin, IL, September 11, 2011; Madison Symphony Orchestra, Madison, WI, September 16–18, 2011; University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale, Women's Chorus, and Northern Iowa Symphony Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, October 11, 2011; and Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix 4A.

Choral Union ever performed. The group was organized, in fact, for the very purpose of performing it.<sup>5</sup>

In between the national anthem and the Brahms, the Elgin Choral Union performed John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, a work that stands out as a much less unified expression of remembrance. The work is a collage of textual and musical sources, mixing chorus, children's chorus, and orchestra with prerecorded sounds and voices. The pre-recorded collage of voices in the work was not the only collage of voices heard in the concert hall, however. Like most modern and modernist works, it is often dissonant and disjunct and has provoked strong, divided responses from audiences. Among the audiences I surveyed, some found it "simply beautiful" and "absolutely perfect" while others found it "boring" or "awful."<sup>6</sup> One patron beseeched, "Please play this annually in every state in every symphonic or other hall," while another promised to "contribute vast sums to any orchestra that promised never to play it again."<sup>7</sup>

Opinions were not the only example of disunity on display here. The performance of *On the Transmigration of Souls* concluded with no applause, per the conductor's request, given the somber occasion of remembrance. This is understandable—applause strikes the wrong tone with this piece, and remembrance and patriotism do not feel like efforts that merit self-congratulation. But applause would have created a moment of unity where the performing forces collectively bow and the audience plays an active, reciprocal role in creating community within the concert hall. Here, the work's last recorded sounds faded into somber silence, the lights dimmed, the

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<sup>5</sup> About the Elgin Choral Union, accessed at <http://elginchoralunion.org/about.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Surveys, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012; University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale, Women's Chorus, and Northern Iowa Symphony Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, October 11, 2011; Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010; Madison Symphony Orchestra, Madison, WI, September 16–18, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Surveys, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.



conductor—the symbolic creator of unity—left the stage, and after a spell the lights came up. The audience filtered out more quietly than usual and eventually broke into the usual small, talkative clusters at intermission. The reflective silence without applause following the work left me to process the experience in a more solitary, rather than collective, manner.

After the concert, I lingered to continue interviewing patrons and handing out surveys to solicit feedback on audience reception. I was soon approached by a police officer, who proceeded to ask me some questions about what I was doing and then informed me that I would no longer be allowed to hand out these forms, speak with patrons, or remain on the premises. This moment sharply underscored the liabilities unity carries, and brought to the fore the tensions only hinted at with the armed veterans. The years since 9/11 have elevated the concept of unity over difference as an essential part of, signifier of, or even requirement of patriotism. For those who remained defiant, doing so brought a heightened sense of peril—if unity was patriotic, would dissent be considered essentially un-American? Realizing that even just a breach of unity on something as simple as concert etiquette registered such deep suspicion made me very uneasy and made the fears about stifling dissent immediate. The military and the police presence at this concert reinforced the very real, physical consequences of post-9/11 security and its suspicion of difference and dissent, which left me weighing the risks, benefits, and costs of not just preserving unity but also enforcing it.

Tensions between unity and disunity, between national, individual, and other cultural identities, are at the heart of the contemporary process of memorialization. Memorials provide a space for individuals to reflect, to grieve, to remember, and ultimately to heal. They also provide a permanent marker of cultural memory for future generations to reflect on history, reifying cultural and social values. Art historian Erika Doss describes a steady shift in the twentieth

century away from “statue mania” to the more modern “memorial mania.” The former “was symptomatic of turn-of-the-twentieth-century anxieties about national unity” and sought to create official public statements of national values.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, “memorial mania” and modern America are characterized by “an American scene especially disposed to individuals and special interests and focused on self-expression and personal feeling” such that “the traditional monuments invocation of a ‘unitary’ mass ethos may seem oppressive and exclusionary.”<sup>9</sup> Building on Doss’s work, I argue that collage, with its multiplicities and polysemic, open readings, has found a place at the heart of the contemporary American memorial, which negotiates not just identity politics, but many boundaries, including trauma/healing, remembering/forgetting, past/present, death/life, and private/public.

While Doss examines physical memorials, the musical memorials I focus on serve similar roles. They too provide a space for reflection, remembrance, and healing, providing emotional stimulus for the audience. Recordings and scores ensure that the works achieve a similar level of permanence. There are, of course, many forms the musical memorial can take. They can be celebratory, somber, angry, ironic, or hopeful, practically any mood or combination of moods. Works can be composed for a specific memorial purpose, such as Paul Hindemith’s *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d* (1946) to commemorate the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt; be composed independently with a memorial function or idea appended later by the composer, such as the Vietnam War program of George Crumb’s *Black Angels* (1970); or be adopted associatively as memorials through repeated performances or broadcasts within memorial or funereal settings, as in the case of Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* (1936).

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<sup>8</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 39

In this chapter, I focus on two modern memorial compositions: John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 "Of Rage and Remembrance," written in 1989 in response to the AIDS epidemic, and John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, a work commissioned and premiered in 2002 to commemorate the victims of the 9/11 attacks. Both were composed by high-profile composers and enjoyed a sizable amount of success and public attention.<sup>10</sup> While popular music has engaged directly and indirectly with both these tragedies, sometimes with equal or greater impact than the works discussed here, I focus on classical music because it retains a certain high cultural position akin to the statues, murals, and architecture that make up other memorials. Classical music, more than pop music, is still commonly imbued with a timelessness and permanence, and with a more civic, non-commercial function.<sup>11</sup> In particular, I seek to transcend previous discussions of musical memorials, which typically circumscribe the analysis to how a particular work of music comments upon the subject it memorializes, and offer through these two works a broader consideration of how the process of memorialization works, and how collage facilitates and shapes that process.

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<sup>10</sup> John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 was awarded the 1990 Grawemeyer Award; John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* was awarded the 2003 Pulitzer Prize. Both have been awarded Grammy Awards for Best New/Contemporary Composition, Best Orchestral Performance, and Best Classical Album. Both have also maintained a continued presence in the orchestral repertoire. Corigliano's symphony was performed over 80 times between 1990 and 1995, while Adams's has been performed 92 times between 2002 and 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, John Adams cited this distinction as part of his reason for accepting the commission: "For once our popular music, so highly esteemed throughout all layers of culture, fell flat." See John Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York: Ferrer, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 262. Both Corigliano and Adams have often incorporated popular music elements into their work, but neither turned to American popular music for their memorial compositions, rather drawing solely from the classical tradition.

## Collage as Form

Before examining the various ways in which collage functions in these memorials, it is worth briefly noting the types of collages, formally speaking, these works adopt. Visual collages provided inspiration to both composers. John Corigliano was moved after viewing the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt to compose a work that would commemorate the friends he had lost to AIDS. The Quilt was conceived by Cleve Jones after a candlelight march in 1985, when Jones asked people to write the names of those who had died of AIDS on cards and post the cards to the façade of the San Francisco Federal Building. That makeshift collage of names reminded Jones of a quilt and, in February 1987, he made the first panel for his friend, Marvin Feldman. By October of that year, nearly two thousand panels were assembled and displayed on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Collage operates both on a small scale, as contributors juxtapose images or texts and literally paste memorabilia onto their panels, and on a large scale, as the quilt never assumes a fixed form or limited size, as panels are continually added and displayed next to each other in differing configurations. John Adams was moved by a sight similar to the posted cards that inspired Jones to begin the Quilt, namely the “missing” persons posters that covered the area around Ground Zero bearing the names, pictures, and descriptions of those lost. Adams also drew from the “Portraits of Grief” series that ran in the *New York Times* and from online forums.

Collage in both works grows out of the act of naming the dead, replacing the collective, single, monolithic memorial of the past (at the heart of “statue mania”) with the collection of individuals common today. The use of names in memorials has its roots back in World War I,

but it was Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial that made the practice of honoring the individual deaths seemingly indispensable.<sup>12</sup> Unsurprising, then, that both Corigliano and Adams made prominent use of names and related texts in crafting their memorials.

Both works have a textual collage at the center of their design. Adams's commission was to replace Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* in a concert pairing with Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, meaning he knew he could employ a choir from the very start. He began by simply transcribing fragments of names and text from the missing posters and the "Portraits in Grief" series and recording family and friends reading them. The resulting collage of texts laid the foundation for the rest of Adams's compositional process. Corigliano's use of text is less obvious but no less central to the composition. His symphony, unlike Adams's work, uses no voices or even any direct text in the program notes. Yet the score annotates several melodic phrases in the third movement with names of friends Corigliano had lost to AIDS. Corigliano had asked his friend and collaborator, the poet William Hoffman, to compose short eulogies for these friends, which Corigliano then set to music and placed within the work. The work also "names" friends through other musical choices. The tango, heard in the first movement, was a favorite piece of one friend, while the second movement reworks the final movement of Corigliano's *Gazebo Dances*, which Corigliano had dedicated to another friend, while a tape of a third friend's improvisations on the cello formed the foundation for the third movement. In other words, Corigliano names through association, just as some quilt panels do.

Corigliano's use of textual collage as memorial was made explicit in 1991 when, commissioned by gay men's choruses in New York, San Francisco and Seattle, he turned the third movement of his symphony into a choral cantata, also titled *Of Rage and Remembrance*.

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<sup>12</sup> Peter S. Hawkins, "Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993), 752–3.

The texts of the short eulogies that inspired the wordless symphonic movement were reinstated, along with a larger poem about loss written by Hoffman (Example 4.1). Interwoven with these remembrances are a quotation from Chekhov’s *The Cherry Tree*, the text of Psalm 23, and the word “goodbye” in French, Spanish, Hebrew, Russian, and German. Corigliano also provides a space at the end where chorus members are invited to speak the names of their own friends who have been lost, making the work inclusive and flexible like the Quilt that inspired it.

The musical design of each work is equally indebted to collage. Both Corigliano and Adams are by their own admissions eclectic in their compositional styles, so it is hardly surprising that each should draw from other works in fashioning their memorials. Yet neither work is polystylistically eclectic. Instead, collage occurs in three principal ways within these two works: quotation and allusion to other music, sequential juxtapositions of contrasting material, and layered simultaneous but independent sounds.

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is a piano solo for E.H., marked 'Solo E.H.' and 'Paul Jacobs, pianist'. The music is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a piano (*mp*) dynamic and the instruction 'with simplicity'. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, ending with a fermata. The bottom staff is a vocal line starting at measure 77. It is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are: 'Paul Ja-cobs: Brill-iant pia-nist — and dry wit, \_\_\_\_\_ fare - well. \_\_\_\_\_'. The music includes a fermata over the word 'wit' and a double bar line at the end of the phrase.

**Example 4.1: Musical “naming” in John Corigliano’s Symphony No. 1 (1989) and Cantata “Of Rage and Remembrance (1991)**

The first movement of Corigliano's first symphony introduces two principal forms of collage that he uses throughout the symphony. First, Corigliano juxtaposes large sections of music with contrasting moods. This method is reflected in the work's subtitle and derives from Corigliano's own conflicted reaction to the death of friends, between "the tension of anger and the bittersweet nostalgia of remembering."<sup>13</sup> The work is cast in a rounded binary form—ABA, with the A sections presenting rage, and the central B section remembrance. The rage sections are dissonant, percussive, and rhythmically agitated, and frequently employ ostinatos or aleatoric figures collaged on top of one another, not meant to be strictly held together in time by the conductor. The middle remembrance section centers on a plaintive melody in B minor. This melody evolves from a second form of collage, namely a quotation of Albeniz's *Tango in D*. The quotation begins on an offstage piano against a static, high string accompaniment whose lack of tonal or metric organization contrasts with the tango. Corigliano specifies in the score that the piano "must not align with the orchestra. It should play at a slightly slower tempo." The two musics are simultaneous yet unrelated, a collage evoking perhaps the oxymoronic adjective Corigliano uses, "bittersweet," or the distance between present pain and past delight. At m. 99, however, the cellos seem to "hear" the descending B minor melody in m. 9 of the quoted tango, and in taking it up transform it into an elegiac lament of remembrance. Other fragments of the tango appear—the second measure of the tango is heard in the clarinets at m. 131, followed by the opening measure in the flutes at m. 136. The tango is fragmented, and the bits are collaged throughout the section. At m. 143, the distinctive percussive beats that marked the rage section are heard underneath the solo viola's tango-based melody, both intimating the return of the rage section as well as a breakdown of the boundary between the two sections. As the horns take up

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<sup>13</sup> John Corigliano, Program note for *Symphony No. 1*, accessed at [http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?tabId=2420&State\\_2874=2&workId\\_2874=27006](http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?tabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=27006)

the remembrance theme at m. 180, the strings return to the opening gesture, a held A that becomes increasingly unstable, marking a return to the rage section proper, which carries until the end, when the offstage piano plays another fragment of the tango and is left hanging as the violins shift to harmonics and evaporate to nothing. This is a collage that, like the twin emotions that inspired it, cannot observe strict boundaries and must be embraced at the same time.

The second movement uses similar collage techniques to suggest mental and physical disintegration. Corigliano again quotes from pre-existing material, this time the final movement, the “Tarantella” from his own *Gazebo Dances*. Like the first movement of the symphony, the original “Tarantella” is cast in an ABA form, with the A sections characterized by a light, skipping melody, and the B section by a frenetic shout of a single chord pounded out, embellished by a little turn. The symphony’s adaptation makes effective use of both, but makes it even more collage-like through fracture. The B material is heard in both its original form and a variant: an ominous, booming ostinato of minor chords. These ideas—A, B, and B’—alternate and overlap throughout the movement. Corigliano furthers the collage effect by continually contrasting timbres and registers of the orchestra. At m. 77, for instance, the A melody is played in half-bar segments traded between the trombones, clarinets, French horns, trumpets, tubas, piano, contrabassoon, flute, and xylophone. Various sections prominently feature brass, strings, winds, or percussion, and at the end Corigliano starkly contrasts low and high registers. Finally, as with the offstage piano in the first movement, the movement also makes use of aleatoric simultaneity. In m. 22, Corigliano creates a dreamscape through layered ostinatos and renditions of the A melody in free tempi, while at m. 102, he instructs the winds, percussion, and trombone to pull “out of phase” with the trumpets, relying on time cues measured in seconds rather than meter. These moments stand in stark contrast to the sharply unison rhythms elsewhere in the



movement. The climactic ending makes use of both aleatoric glissandos and unison rhythms, accelerating to a frenzy where keeping together is almost impossible.

Yet another form of external music is collaged into the third movement, which Corigliano directly modeled on the Quilt. Here, Corigliano weaves a series of newly constructed melodies over a chaconne. These melodies were inspired by short eulogies to lost friends written by Corigliano's friend and collaborator William Hoffman, which Corigliano then set to music. Whether the chaconne progression was in mind as he wrote these, was derived later, or is completely unrelated is unknown. A third layer is found in two cellos, one dedicated to Fortunato Arico, a cellist, the other presumably to Giulio Sorrentino, an amateur cellist whose name is given to the movement: "Chaconne: Giulio's Song." According to Corigliano, the cello music is derived in large part from an old recording of Giulio's improvisations. Not acknowledged—and, given how straightforwardly the movement eulogizes the dead, potentially not accidental—is Corigliano's possible modeling the cello line on two meaningful works. The "song" begins with a rising sequence of whole tones: B (Cb), Db, Eb, F, the same four pitches that Berg uses at the end of the P0 tone row of his Violin Concerto, which he connects to Bach's chorale "Es ist genug." Berg's concerto is also a memorial work, dedicated to the memory of Manon Gropius, daughter of Walter Gropius and Alma Mahler, who died of polio at a young age. The second phrase of the cello concludes with the first four pitches of the *Dies irae* chant, used as a mass for, and later a symbol for, the dead. These two ideas provide the seed from which the song germinates. At m. 125, the opening of the first movement is recalled, and out of this feverish ghost grows a somewhat triumphant fanfare reminiscent of the appropriately ghostly end of Respighi's *The Pines of Rome*.

This apparition gives way to an epilogue (a title that echoes the first movement's "Apologue") that provides unity by collaging elements from all three movements: the tango, the cello duet, and the clarinet's tarentella dance, set against two alternating cascading brass chords and static string harmonies. It is worth noting that the reprised material all comes from previously extant material, thus they are remembrances of remembrances, doubly removed from their present place. The symphony ends with the cello holding the same A that began the symphony.

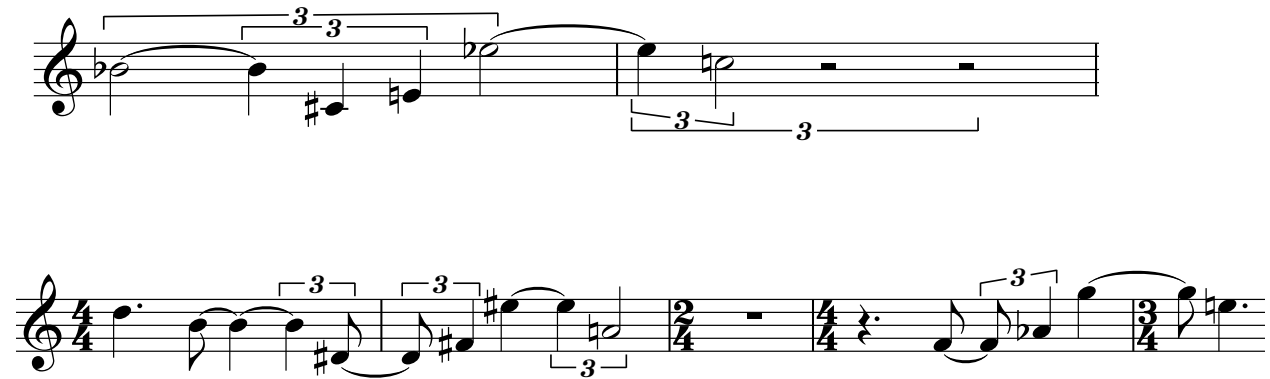
Whereas Corigliano's symphony makes much of borrowing and linear contrast and juxtaposition, Adams's collage is primarily one of vertical, simultaneous layering. *On the Transmigration of Souls* is cast in a single movement and rather than conform to a familiar form, it takes a more reflective and static path, marked off by two climaxes. These climactic moments provide the only sharp points of contrast, juxtaposed directly with moments of sparse textures and quiet dynamics to offset them.

Collage is audibly present in *On the Transmigration of Souls* from the beginning, opening with a tape recording of a cityscape, itself a collage of three separately recorded tracks, as notated in the score: footsteps, a siren, and street noises comprising voices, traffic, and other background noise. Audiences likely experience them as a single idea, underscoring the very quotidian aspects of collage. Over these tracks, we hear a collage of voices: a boy's voice repeating the word "missing," soon joined by other voices who read the names of the dead, and by the orchestra playing (and chorus singing on a wordless "oo") open fifths. The orchestral forces begin small and ethereal—harp, strings, and celesta—but the work grows to employ the full orchestra, as well as a second ensemble playing a quarter-tone higher than the others, the chorus and children's chorus singing texts Adams selected, and more, increasingly overlapping

recorded voices. This form of collage was inspired by Charles Ives, who favored simultaneous and unrelated sounds and distinct ensembles, and whom Adams calls his “guardian angel” in writing this piece. Here, though, what Adams terms the “mixing board” approach he admired in Ives is made literal, and much of the work’s challenge is achieving a balance in the performance space between the live forces and the recordings, a balance that changes based on where in the hall you are and on the hall itself. Thus, any two audience members at different performances, in different halls, or even in different parts of the same hall during the same performance will experience the work differently because of the collage structure—a recorded voice may be brought more into the foreground or recede into the din, a musical gesture may color whichever recorded voice or sound it coincides with in one performance, but not coincide in another.

Adams also makes use of quotation and allusion throughout the work. In addition to the broader allusions to Ives in the simultaneous musics and the quartertone ensemble, Adams repeatedly draws on Ives’s *The Unanswered Question*. Like the Adams piece, Ives’s *The Unanswered Question* layers musical worlds: a questioning trumpet “answered” by a quartet of flutes, while an offstage string quartet represents “the silence of the Druids, who know, see, and hear nothing.” The iconic “question,” posed in the trumpet, is only alluded to by an offstage trumpet at m. 44, which plays a transposition of the final four notes of Ives’s theme at m. 49, a rising minor third followed by a falling minor third separated by a leap of a major seventh (Example 4.2). The strings (here onstage, fully inverting Ives’s conception), however, do directly quote from the Ives at several places, starting at m. 27, with its fullest yet most fractured quotation reserved for the end at m. 445 after the second climax has subsided and the cityscape audio track returns. Here the pure triads of the strings of Ives’s work fade in and out, as if heard

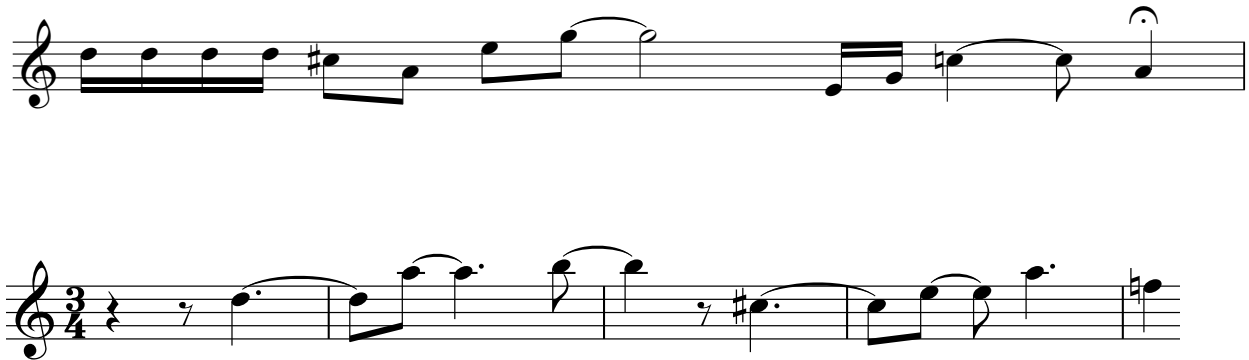
on a distant radio signal, or more like the beam of a lighthouse, piercing the dark noise with ephemeral flashes of glowing consonance.



**Example 4.2: Charles Ives, *The Unanswered Question* mm. 16–17 and John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* mm. 46–50**

Ives is the most prominent allusion, but not the only one. The trumpet solo at mm. 57–9 moves from alluding to *The Unanswered Question* to a paraphrase of 1m. before Rehearsal 2 of Aaron Copland’s *Quiet City* (Example 4.3). The work also makes a strong allusion to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which was performed alongside it at the premiere. In addition to the large size and symphonic/choral genre, the chorus and orchestra open the work on an open fifth, D and A, the same opening harmony Beethoven uses in his symphony. As in Beethoven, the gap is filled by an F at first (accompanied by its open fifth, Bb, here), suggesting D minor and later by an F# (or Gb, accompanied by its open fifth Db), at once condensing the harmonic progression of Beethoven, while at the same time retaining the ambivalence and eerie openness, as well as an Ivesian polytonality. Several other quotations can be found around the first climax. At m. 129, the children’s chorus has a repetition of rocking thirds that mimic an alarm siren, an

idea augmented a few measures later at m. 144, where their vocal lines quote the first four notes of the *Dies irae*, as the Corigliano cello line did. And finally, at the climax that follows, there is a reference to the “fate” motive from Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony in the brass, recalled in slow motion amidst the chaos.



**Example 4.3: Aaron Copland, *Quiet City* 1 m. before Reh. 2 and John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* mm. 56–60**

Collage, in its multiple forms, is integral to the aesthetic of both works, but collage is equally integral to their ability to function as national-scale memorials. Both the AIDS epidemic and 9/11 challenged Americans’ national identity—or rather, identities—and challenged the nation as it tried to unite around the tragedy while also demanding a respect for the diversity these challenges highlighted. Collage, quite simply, begins to do this necessary work of joining but not erasing these fractures through a tentative balance of resolution and resistance. In particular, I attend to the ways in which collage mirrors the process of trauma and healing and honestly acknowledges absence, signaling that something has broken even as we move on. Furthermore, as a testament to tragedy, collage seems to announce that no tragedy can be

summed up in a single statement, no collective memorial can truly exist apart from the individual perspectives that shape it.

## Collage as Trauma/Healing

After an emotionally traumatic experience, it's often suggested that we "pick up the pieces." As this phrase suggests, something has been irrevocably lost, ruptured by the trauma. To pick up the pieces, even to mend them, does not erase the fissures, the trauma, and the pieces may not fit together as they once did. Indeed, the visual imagery suggested by this phrase is one of collage, pieces torn away and reordered to create a new whole but with the seams showing.

Memorials perform the task of figuratively picking up the pieces, helping us to remember both the dead as well as the death. Sociologist Neil Smelser sums up the paradoxical role of memorials: "To memorialize is to force a memory on us by the conspicuous and continuous physical presence of a monument; at the same time a memorial also conveys the message that now that we have paid our respects to a trauma, we are now justified in forgetting about it."<sup>14</sup> The 9/11 memorial in New York City required workers to literally pick up the pieces and transform the site into both a site of remembrance—reflecting pools, gardens, a museum—as well a site of forgetting—the rebuilt towers and transit stations that occupied the site before. The role of depicting trauma ranges from the subtle, such as the gash-like design of the Vietnam Wall or the sunken pools at the 9/11 memorial, to the explicit, such as the Oklahoma City memorial, whose museum tour website proudly announces that "The impact of the explosion is heard and

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<sup>14</sup> Neil J. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma" in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53.

felt through the only known audio recording of the blast...visitors can see and feel for themselves the confusion of the first minutes following the blast.”<sup>15</sup>

In the case of recent traumas of AIDS and 9/11, the quest for closure is difficult, if not impossible, because neither chapter is closed. AIDS continues to claim victims globally, and while its roots are inexorably linked with the discrimination towards gay Americans, the disease itself has not discriminated. The events of September 11, 2001 created a rift in the American psyche, which David Toop explains in collage-like terms: “Unlike the satisfyingly tidy impact and ‘closure’ of a Hollywood explosion, the sounds heard on television rolling news as the towers collapsed were fragmented, seemingly boundless, chaotic, resistant to understanding, intensely painful.”<sup>16</sup> Since then, the picture has become, if anything, more chaotic and unclear as the world strives to understand the causes of 9/11 and still reels from its repercussions. Collage echoes this process because it too resists closure and provokes no single reading or response.

Many contemporary memorials employ minimalism as a principal aesthetic, which serves several functions in the processing of trauma. Since the 1960s, minimalism has been critically and popularly received as passive, formalist, and self-evident, “aloof from politics and commerce and above personal feeling.”<sup>17</sup> In this regard, the critical history of minimalism is not so different from that of collage, which was long regarded in strictly formalist terms. Art historian Anna Chave critiques this view by identifying the subtextual violence in these works, drawing parallels between the industrial materials, massive size, and its “violence against the conventions of art” and the violent upheavals and power struggles surrounding the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> By now, the *de*

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<sup>15</sup> Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Official Website, accessed at <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=12&catid=136>.

<sup>16</sup> David Toop, *Haunted Weather: Resonant Spaces, Silence and Memory* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2004), 80.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power” in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (London: Phaidon Press, 1992), 266.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 269. Chave’s argument finds resonance too in minimalist music, which has also viewed in largely formalist terms but belies a political sensibility. Consider, for instance, the inhuman, machinelike demands of Nancarrow’s



*rigueur* use of minimalism in memorials is hardly an assault on convention. This shift has largely been accredited to the success of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. Yet the heated public debate surrounding the removal of Richard Serra's minimalist public sculpture *Tilted Arc* (1981) in 1985, contemporaneous with the opening of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, suggests that the success of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial as a memorial occurred not in spite of the anxieties over minimalism that Chave explores but because of them, making memorials more emotionally complex and befitting of what they commemorate.

Minimalism has been broadly linked with the theatricality of the act of viewing. This was put forth most famously by Michael Fried in his essay, "Art and Objecthood," in which he harshly criticizes minimalism for distancing the viewer, physically and intellectually, from the experience while also shifting the meaning toward the totality of a viewer's experience and thereby relegating the artwork to the status of object with no aesthetic agency.<sup>19</sup> Maurice Berger offers a more positive take on the same viewpoint: "The performative nature of minimalist art and dance is in its freedom from the conceits and historical allusions of traditional art objects, its foregrounding of the viewer as an equal player in the aesthetic experience."<sup>20</sup> Memorials naturally place the viewer in an active role and minimalism facilitates this, but Erika Doss argues that minimalism in memorial design goes beyond theatricality and "manipulates normal understandings of space and time in order to evoke trauma's dissociative affects of fear and anxiety."<sup>21</sup> The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and to a lesser extent the Vietnam Wall slowly bring the viewer into the sculpture by submerging them within a sunken space so

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music, or Steve Reich's *Come Out*, a work that also embraces technology and was written for a benefit after the police brutality of the Harlem Riot—and whose title must have resonated further with New York's gay population, another frequent target of police brutality in New York.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148–72.

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art* (Baltimore: Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland, 1997), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Doss, 40.

that the memorial physically overwhelms. Minimalist music, which Adams employs throughout and Corigliano at the end, similarly distorts awareness of time and produces an emotional numbness associated with trauma, while the reliance on offstage or stereo effects in both works manipulates space. One audience member at *On the Transmigration of Souls* went further, wanting “the audience right in the center of the orchestra and the music circling above,” a vivid depiction of bodily displacement that echoes the submersion of physical memorials described above.<sup>22</sup>

Minimalism creates a particularly complex and contradictory emotional state. On the one hand, its abstractness and temporal displacement refuse any sense of a teleologic progression toward victory or resolution. Indeed, both Adams and Corigliano end their works with material from their respective beginnings of their works. The effect refuses closure, powerfully echoing the experience of people grappling with the uncured AIDS epidemic or still reeling from the cultural/political repercussions of 9/11. It provides no false promise of an answer that doesn't exist. On the other hand, the repetition inherent in minimalism provides its own sense of comfort and stability. Robert Fink has connected minimalism to mood regulation, new-age meditation, and security through repetition, while Paul Attinello has heavily critiqued minimalism in AIDS music as “calculated retreats from the terrors of death.”<sup>23</sup> I would argue that, at least within Adams's and Corigliano's work, any retreat is one of traumatic response rather than fantasy. To hear the word “missing” or names read over a minimalist background is to be continually haunted by the echoing trauma, to be unable to escape it. This reliance on repetition inherent in minimalism has been linked to the process of not just experiencing trauma but overcoming it as

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<sup>22</sup> Survey, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 204; Paul Attinello, “Fever/Fragile/Fatigue: Music, AIDS, Present, and ...” in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, ed. Neil Lerner and Joseph N. Straus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 19.

well, as music theorist David Schwarz writes, “Repetition is crucial to lament since lament *is* a repetition, a working out of the significance of an already experienced trauma.”<sup>24</sup> So it is that minimalism and repetition play a complex role within musical memorials, both entreating audiences to relive the trauma and moving toward resolution as part of one singular process. Even if the musical memorials do not ultimately offer an easy answer, they offer a place to find questions.

Physical memorials have increasingly employed collage to accommodate the multiple needs of mourners and the multiple functions of a memorial. Most often, memorials accomplish this by simply combining different monuments or spaces within the same memorial site. The Vietnam Memorial offers its visitors not just the iconic wall, but a statue of soldiers in action as well, so that the memorial commemorates both individual deaths and collective military service. The memorial in Oklahoma City includes a reflecting pool, a sculpture of 168 empty chairs for the victims, a fence where visitors can leave items, and a museum. The 9/11 memorial also combines reflecting pools, gardens, a museum, and the rebuilt towers and transit stations that occupied the site before. These sites offer places to mourn, to find the name of a loved one who died, to reflect, and to learn.

The AIDS Quilt makes a different, rather inventive adaptation of collage to address the multiple functions of the memorial. Here the memorial is decentralized and unbounded, with no fixed size, structure, location, or author. Panels may be collaborative, individual, or even anonymous; messages may be serious, campy, political, religious, or coded in a private fashion.<sup>25</sup> The AIDS Quilt Songbook, begun in 1991, takes the same approach: an open-ended collection of songs from composers. Corigliano’s choral piece *Of Rage and Remembrance* concludes

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<sup>24</sup> David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 139.

<sup>25</sup> Hawkins, 762–4.

similarly, allowing performers a space to intone the names of friends they have lost. In response to 9/11, many found the spontaneous, grass roots memorial that took place at Union Square to be more fitting than any formal memorial.<sup>26</sup> For the tenth anniversary, John Schaefer of WNYC's program *Soundcheck* asked readers, "What music would you like to hear as you think about the events of 10 years ago? What music would you like to share with your fellow New Yorkers?" The results were then posted and some were crafted into a playlist that was broadcast.

To be sure, Corigliano's symphony and Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* are bounded works, works whose performance have a definite start and stop, a single author, and a fixed score. Yet each of these is constructed in a way to partially resist that fixedness and its sense of closure. Right from the start, the two works blur boundaries. Adams describes his decision to begin with a recording of a cityscape: "I just love the idea of New Yorkers coming in off of Broadway, walking into the hall and sitting down, and the lights coming down and then the traffic sound coming back up. In that way it was very nice that it was the first piece on the program, because it created this wonderful kind of blur between life and art."<sup>27</sup> Corigliano takes a similar approach, beginning with a sustained A, the same note used to tune the orchestra, and thereby connecting the piece to the "real world" sounds from the concert hall heard just prior.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the use of offstage piano in the Corigliano and offstage trumpet and pre-recorded sounds in the Adams implies a more unbounded and unfixed sense of time and space than the confines of the visible stage allows. Adams credits his use of simultaneous music to Ives's Fourth Symphony, a work he considers "such an imponderable behemoth of mysterious detail."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Whose Downtown?!?" in *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City*, ed. Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin (New York: Routledge, 2002), 33–44.

<sup>27</sup> John Adams, "John Adams Discusses *On the Transmigration of Souls*," interview by Daniel Colvard, in *The John Adams Reader: Essential Writings on an American Composer*, ed. Thomas May (Milwaukee: Amadeus, 2006), 202.

<sup>28</sup> Corigliano used this device several years earlier in his Oboe Concerto, a work that plays off the oboe's role in tuning the orchestra with an A.

<sup>29</sup> John Adams, "John Adams on Conducting Ives," interview by Ingram Marshall, in May, 265.

The philosophical openness of Ives in that work and in his *The Unanswered Question* matches the similarly unanswerable questions surrounding 9/11. Similarly, the enigmatic A that repeats throughout the Corigliano could be linked to an unanswerable question that haunts the listener.

While each work's ending does give a form of closure, it does not come easily nor does it settle all that precedes it. In effect, then, the use of collage, insofar as it prevents a single, closed narrative and retains instead tension and disjuncture, mimics the listener's processing of and slow recovery from trauma. Theorists have suggested that trauma occurs not in the original event or even the original reaction, but after the fact "in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on."<sup>30</sup> This can have an effect not unlike collage, sharp displacements of time or emotion, an inability to assimilate the parts into a whole experience.

*On the Transmigration of Souls* does not recount a narrative of the day's events, but it does vividly depict the experience of revisiting that trauma.<sup>31</sup> Adams specifically sought to avoid the former, because of the media's repetition and exploitation: "I was disgusted by the way the media had treated 9/11. ...It was an endless repetition of heart-wrenching scenes, constantly reminding us of how much pain we felt, to the point where people didn't feel anymore. They literally didn't feel."<sup>32</sup> By forming the work around two central climaxes, the work might seem to invite a reading where the collapse of the two towers are explicitly replayed again, as they were endlessly on television, the very media treatment that Adams rebukes. But I would argue that a more attentive reading reveals that the work's musical language and structure offers intense feeling and is akin to the processing of that trauma than to the initial events themselves.

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<sup>30</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3–4.

<sup>31</sup> In selecting the title, Adams has repeatedly stated it was meant to reflect not simply the passing of the souls of the dead, but the changes undergone by the souls of the survivors and living as well.

<sup>32</sup> Adams, "John Adams Discusses *On the Transmigration of Souls*," 197.

The work opens with real world sounds, a cityscape that does not suggest anything out of the ordinary, and is collaged with and overtaken by other voices reading names and a minimalist orchestral/choral accompaniment, which both evokes the numb or dissociative response traumatic memory can provoke and signals a quieter, more distant baseline of grief that the traumatic recollection disrupts. The collaged pairing of two disparate sound sources has the double effect of forcibly transporting the concert hall out of the hall and into a memory of the streets of New York and depicting an imagined pedestrian on the streets who suddenly dissociates from his or her environment to remember the events of 9/11.<sup>33</sup> A similar effect is achieved later in the piece through the superimposition of an ensemble playing a quarter-tone higher than the orchestra, producing an almost cinematic effect of madness, of that imagined pedestrian being removed from (literally out of tune with) the normal world and having a distorted mental perspective.

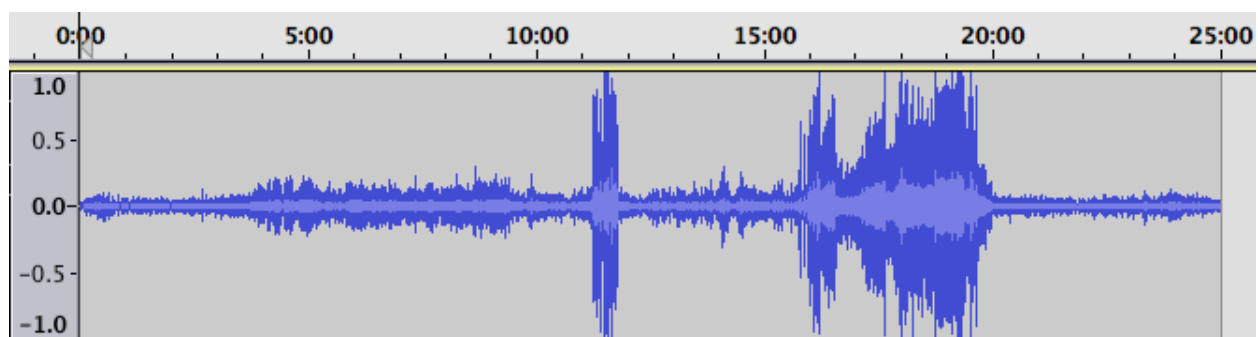
Although Adams has not stated such an intention—nor has anyone to my knowledge interpreted it as such—the two climaxes may easily be read as referencing the attacks on the two towers (Figure 4.1).<sup>34</sup> But rather than recreated literally, the two attacks are presented more akin to traumatic flashbacks by building up a sense of fear, releasing it, and quickly and disorientingly snapping back to that minimalist, dissociative quietude; a more narrative accounting would make the attack sudden and disruptive, only gradually fading away, not the reverse as happens here. The first climax seems to be set off by an encounter with the text from a missing persons poster—a plain, almost clinical description of a victim’s eye color, hair color, birth date, and weight along with a phone number. Another voice then reads and rereads the name Carl Flickinger, but the name grows increasingly fragmented, as two other voices intone the word

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<sup>33</sup> David Toop suggests that soundscapes can function as a substitute for memory. See Toop, 70.

<sup>34</sup> This image was created with the program Audacity.

“missing,” electronically distorted and increasingly out of sync with each other (mm 169–189). As the collage grows more fragmented, the trauma grows increasingly real, erupting into a brief full orchestral climax, and then drops off sharply at m. 213 into the same quiet, static music and street sounds that preceded the outburst, as if nothing had happened. The second climax occurs begins with the chorus sings one of the more moving texts at m. 332: “I wanted to dig him out, I know just where he is.” This passage is a rare response to the aftermath of the collapse, rather than a memory of life before the trauma. The text also mixes the past and present tense, beginning with the past, the act of recollection—I *wanted* to dig him out—which becomes so vivid as to move to reliving the trauma in the present—I *know* just where he *is*. To this end, the sense of time grows distorted as some singers slow the text down, while others speed it up. The orchestra mimics, with a flurry of string notes against a slower, dissonant brass chorale, and an even slower wind line. The text shatters into unconnected images—light, sky, day, love—furthering the sense of rupture. Again, the episode ends abruptly at m. 445, with a quartertone ensemble of piano and strings with the other strings, creating a lingering sense of displacement.



**Figure 4.1: Waveform of Volume of John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls***

For many audience members, the work induced visceral responses. Many recollected in some detail visual memories of the footage or their own experiences on that day, some more sharply or traumatically than others. A handful responded with the adjective “creepy,” suggesting that reliving this was undesirable and not cathartic, while others seemed to find the memories meaningful and helpful, and still others’ responses read inconclusively, like the audience member who wrote, “Disturbing. I saw it all again. Too vivid in a compelling way.” Another felt it was “as if I was in a dream but knew it was real when I woke up.” This description of “waking up,” possibly after the piece was over, reinforces the power of memorials to alter mental states. Several described physical reactions as well—holding their breath, crying, feeling chills; one audience member even believed that the auditorium deliberately lowered the temperature to manipulate the audience into feeling chills. Others felt or had visions of spirits or heaven. At least two concert-goers had what must be described as epiphanies:

I honestly feel that the piece changed my life and the way I will experience and write music from here on out. I will constantly be in search of music that is capable of quite literally moving my soul the way that *On the Transmigration of Souls* did.<sup>35</sup>

I felt I had been privy to entering the realm of that which Death yields. As a listener, I connected with the experience of moving beyond this earthly plane. Even though I was aware of the chaos and anguish and despair of those still earth-bound, including ones loved and cared about, I rose to experience the deep, abiding *comfort of acceptance* of a new and different state of being, floating, if you will, in eternal peace and unconditional love; a safe harbor. Such was my concert experience. Back in the present, I will say that this is close to what my *thinking* has long held true, but this great work actually allowed me to *access* that place. It's a comfort to *know* of the comfort.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, not all visceral reactions are unequivocally positive; memorials have the power to haunt in a difficult way, as one woman described in harrowing language:

I wanted to talk about it afterwards, but was too raw emotionally. I'm scared of nightmares, since I'm headed to bed one hour after the performance. Cacophony, intense,

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<sup>35</sup> Survey, University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale, Women's Chorus, and Northern Iowa Symphony Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, October 11, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.



disturbing, visceral. The archival statements from loved ones were painful, painful—esp. in their chanting delivery—the pounding repetitions. I ‘saw’ the ones left behind and I am shaken. Loss-pain-the movement between worlds that took place during this tragedy. Love the title, it prepared me for what I was to hear. I found myself rocking in time with the sweeping beats—caught myself realizing I was rocking like a person in grief rocks, After leaving the aud[itorium], I found myself growing increasingly grief-filled. The experience of the music/performance seemed to grow inside me as I walked to my car and made small talk with others. Really feel I need to cry to wash away my distress but have to wait til my husband and kids are in the other room so I don’t upset them.<sup>37</sup>

For this last audience member, the concert-memorial provided both a rush of unpleasant emotions and a safe space to grieve, including a sense of privacy lacking in the real world. All three experienced the concert-memorial as a form of physical and emotional displacement, a space to process trauma wholly apart from other experiences.

Corigliano uses the sharpest moments of collage to convey trauma as well, but in his case recreates the trauma of physical illness. This strategy departs from what Paul Attinello describes as the norm in most music dealing with AIDS, that is the placement of the illness offstage, and he asks, “Why do we have so much difficulty compassing the experience...the patience and awareness it implies, the possibility of living in a real and thriving temporal present, despite the knowledge of our mortality?” Corigliano’s symphony does not address the matter of living with AIDS (i.e., as opposed to dying from AIDS), but Corigliano attends directly to the trauma of the illness and disability, viscerally reliving it as is apropos of trauma. The first movement evokes rage, to be sure, but within this rage are indications of physical as well as emotional pain. The opening note, A, is played by the strings successively on the A, G, and D strings, increasingly physically straining the sound as well as the players. With the increasing vibrato, it suggests instability, an inability to hold on to one’s emotions, or even perhaps to daily life. The repetition of this on E at m. 21 only tightens the sound more. In addition, Corigliano gives these rage

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<sup>37</sup> Survey, University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale, Women’s Chorus, and Northern Iowa Symphony Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, October 11, 2011.

sections a “musical heartbeat,” a pulse beginning at m. 7, yet this pulse—a very physical metaphor—quickly deteriorates: the pulse quickens feverishly and becomes irregular, and ultimately “flatlines” at m. 65. Thus the “remembrance” section emerges out of a somewhat graphic recounting of a dying body’s final throes.

The second movement renders the physicality of death even more explicit, depicting a friend’s literal maddening descent into AIDS-induced dementia. The original composition from which this movement derives, Corigliano’s “Tarantella” from *Gazebo Dances*, describes the movement as “bouncy” within a quaintly nostalgic work that mimics the summer band concerts on countryside village greens. Yet here, the work bitterly turns its meaning from the lively concert tarantella to the dance’s roots as a supposed cure for a poisonous tarantula bite. The cure, however, is inverted to become the disease, the feverish insanity the tarantella is meant to ward off. In adapting this dance, Corigliano conjures its melody at m. 23 “dreamlike,” temporally distorted as the original version, and its performer’s untimely death, is summoned and made vividly present after a dirge-like recalling of the opening. The tune grows more fragmented as it is tossed among the instruments, and again the music grows distorted and distant around m. 101, as the instruments grow out of phase and the introductory music is heard “distant” and “elegant” before the clarinet takes up the melody at m. 132 in a “rude, coarse” fashion, mimicking perhaps the dance from the final movement of Berlioz’s *Symphony Fantastique*. As in that work, we are haunted by the specter of a violent death, rendered through hallucinatory distance and distortion and the carnal, living embodiment of a dance. At m. 180, the music both speeds up and slows down simultaneously, turning deathly silent, then crescendoing into madness, the “brutal scream” that ends the work.

Even though these works refuse to deny the pain of trauma, both works offer if not an answer or closure, at least a measure of healing of the trauma by the end. Adams transforms the line, “I see water and buildings,” the last words from American Airlines Flight 11 from the earlier alarm-like cry to a peaceful observation that reads like a heavenly vision of the world, or even an apt description of the 9/11 memorial itself. The final words spoken, “I love you,” offer a benediction and with them, the music ascends and dissipates into the celestial air, a bell tolls, and we are once again returned to earth, to normal life with the cityscape that opened the work.

When given a series of adjectives and asked to rate them on a scale from zero to ten as to how well each adjective described or applied to *On the Transmigration of Souls*, approximately two thirds of audience members rated “emotional” and “somber” an eight or higher. “Disturbing” was included on a smaller number of surveys, but yielded a fairly even distribution. All this suggests that recognition of trauma and tragedy was a central experience for many audience members. A large plurality of listeners rated “uplifting” a zero, but the second largest rating was for five, suggesting many found the work offered some measure of uplift. If the work wasn’t uplifting for audiences, “cathartic” and “spiritual” were more evenly distributed, hinting that for some, the work offered hope and closure in other ways, while for some it remained a solemn and dark remembrance (Appendix 4B). Furthermore, those who rated “uplifting” highest also tended to rate “somber” highly as well, as a scatterplot illustrates: each audience member’s numerical rating of “somber” and “uplifting” are signaled by a hollow circle. The scatterplot shows the relative frequency of responses to both adjectives; the darker the coordinate on the scatterplot, the more frequently audience members both gave that numeral rating for “somber” and also gave that numeral rating for “uplifting” (Figure 4.2).

Expectations also seemed to be mixed, sometimes met and sometimes not. Some were pleasantly surprised at the emotions, including the finale:

[I expected] a lot more chaos, dissonance and violence, unresolved phrases—a question as conclusion. Instead we resolved at the end to other-worldly peace and beauty. It was surprising that the anger and outrage of the climax didn't come until the piece was more than halfway through. As a New Yorker, that was my first reaction that awful Tuesday morning. But the final resolution was ethereal and strangely comforting.<sup>38</sup>

Others expressed disappointment that the music did not offer a hopeful resolution, or even a chance to find peace: “It was often too busy to think my own thoughts. . . . Because it was described as a “memory place” I expected at least some part of it to be tranquil enough that I would have peace of mind. I was disappointed.”<sup>39</sup> One listener felt the work was true to real life, even as they hoped it would offer more comfort than life does: “I waited for the resolution—the lifting change to a major chord, but there was none—just as there is none in our lives.”<sup>40</sup> And yet another listener felt similarly about the resolution, but remarked more affirmatively, “I thought it would be more hopeful. But I preferred what was rather than what I expected.”<sup>41</sup> Such statements reveal the multiple demands we face a memorial with, whether we want truth or something life can't supply, comfort or a chance to reflect on sadness or anger. It also suggests that Adams's work was open-ended enough to elicit multiple responses.

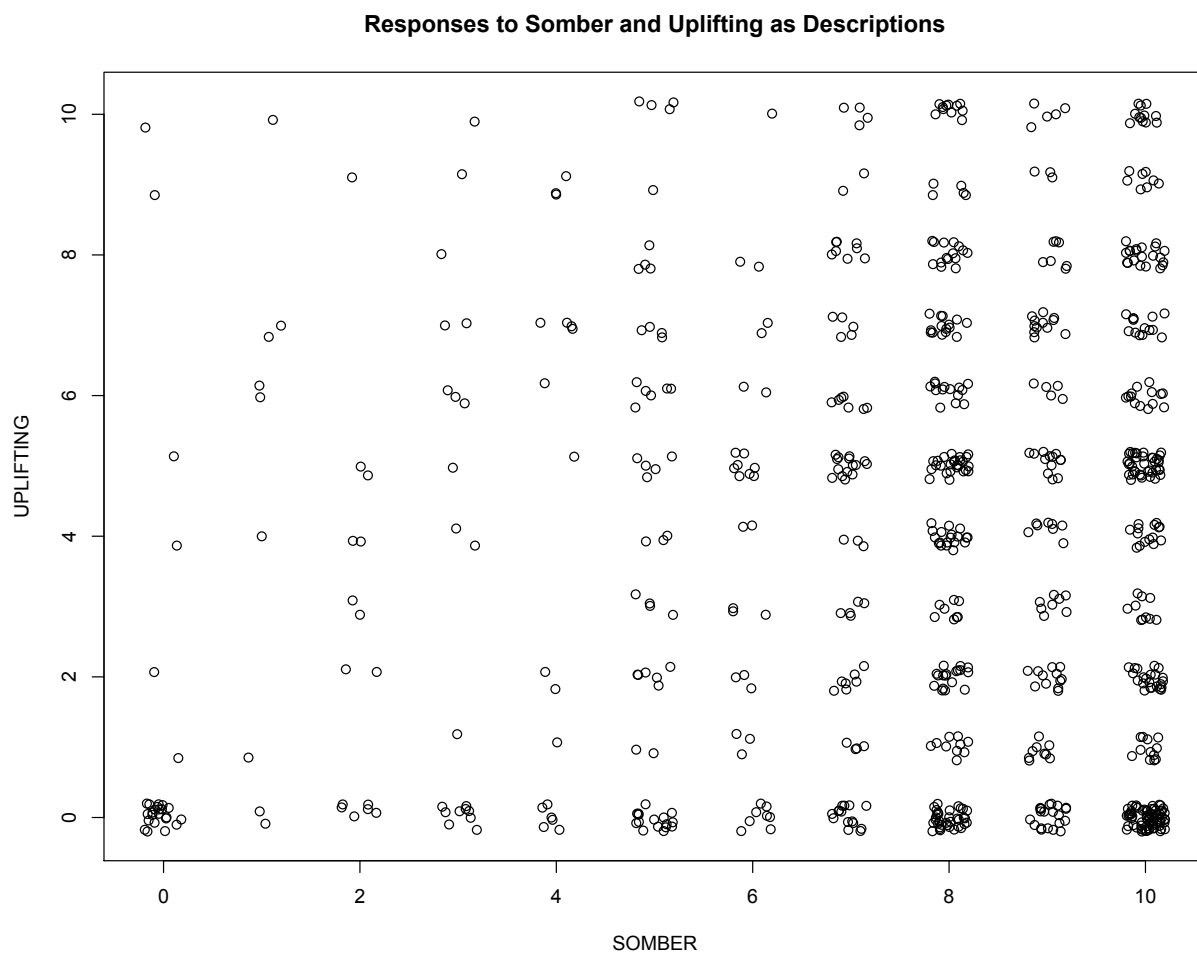
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<sup>38</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Survey, Madison Symphony Orchestra, Madison, WI, September 16–18, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Survey, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.



**Figure 4.2: Scatterplot of Audience Ratings of Somber vs. Uplifting for John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls***

Corigliano ends his symphony reflectively and openly as well, softly recalling motives from all three previous movements. The final word is given to the same A that opened the work, now functioning as both perpetual question as well as the resolution of the cello line, suggesting that asking question may be the answer for now. By ending at the beginning, both composers suggest that this is as much closure as these tragedies will allow, a comfort with the question rather than a need for the answer.

## Collage as Absence

Neil Smelser's observation that "to memorialize is to force a memory on us by the conspicuous and continuous physical presence of a monument," demonstrates that the memorial's power relies on the absence of what is being memorialized; to memorialize is in some way to make permanence out of absence. This process is precisely what art historian Rosalind Krauss has theorized as the central component of collage. Examining the semiotic readings of Picasso's collages made by Robert Rosenblum and Pierre Daix, Krauss argues that the sign must operate on a condition of absence. Returning to Saussure, she notes that the sign is a coupling of a material signifier and an immaterial signified, and "this opposition between the registers of the two halves of the sign stresses that status of the sign as substitute, proxy, stand-in, for an absent referent . . . the making of absence the very condition of the representability of the sign."<sup>42</sup> For the memorial, we can observe this process of signification at work: names on the wall, photographs, or other mementos stand in for the absent people that we remember.

Adams literally places absence at the very outset of his work as a voice intones repeatedly the word "missing," calling attention to an as yet unnamed absence. This moment is underscored with a musical absence: the open fifth on D and A, whose hollowness creates a static limbo, neither major nor minor. A collage of names follows: those killed in the attacks. These are the names of the missing of course, but these names as signs highlight their absence. As in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the AIDS Quilt, the name is only a stand-in for the

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<sup>42</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "In the Name of Picasso," *October* 16 (Spring 1981), 15.

absent life. They are not entombed in these memorials, but their absence is.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, as one audience member pointed out, the word “missing” is subtly polyvalent: “That person is missing. His family is missing him.”<sup>44</sup> Adams’s work then encompasses both the living and the dead from the outset and observes the inextricable connection between absence and presence.

The chorus’s text continually refers to absence through the fragment. In the beginning, there isn’t even the word; the chorus begins only with a blank vowel, notated “as in the ‘u’ in ‘lure.’” Words form slowly, beginning with the crucial directive: “remember.” The chorus tries to say “remember,” but only succeeds in “remem-” for the first five times. The fragment “remem-” highlights of course the fragmentary and incomplete process of remembering. The textual fragments, which come from missing posters, the *New York Times* “Portraits in Grief” series, and other sources, reinforce ideas of absence in two ways. First, the manner in which Adams sets particular phrases further emphasizes absence and loss over life and warm memories. The phrase at m. 79, “You will never be forgotten,” is delivered with a touch of cruel irony: what should be the most confident statement of presentness, wholeness, is never given a complete utterance by any single voice, fragmented instead between the children’s chorus “You will, you nev- be for-” and the adult chorus “you will, you will, -er forgotten,” suggesting that absence and forgetting has already taken place despite the plea not to. Immediately after this statement, there is a punctuating forte of C and F major triads that registers as the work’s most clear, triadic moment thus far. The event would seem to solidify the text’s claim, that the memory is solid and lucid, but immediately after the C/F chord sounds, the quarter-tone ensemble and celesta muddy it, with a chromatically descending line that suggests the memory slips away as soon as it forms.

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<sup>43</sup> The official 9/11 memorial in New York includes the housing of unidentified remains. The anonymity of these remains is another form of absence entombed here, namely an absence of specific identities. These plans have also proven controversial, as several families have pursued legal action to keep the remains out of the memorial.

<sup>44</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

Likewise, the static, staccato, fragmented rendering of “She looks so full of life in that picture” at m. 116 undermines the text, suggesting an absence of life. Finally, at m. 250, we are given a modestly amusing anecdotal remembrance: “He was tall, extremely good looking, and girl never talked to me when he was around.” Yet the fragmented version that occurs in the children’s chorus recasts it into a sad reflection on his absence: “He was tall, when he, he was around.” This phrase, rather poetic in its fragmentary setting, emphasizes the conditional relationship between his corporeal attributes and his presence—he was tall *when he was* around.

Second, the broader process of setting only short excerpts of texts from a variety of larger sources is similar to Picasso’s replacement of a newspaper with the fragment, or the violin with a visual symbol. Now, the fragments of text serve as signs for both the fuller accounts from which they are taken and the absent men and women these texts recall. It is also similar to the process of mourning theorized by William Watkin, wherein the mourner substitutes a metonym for the lost person. In *On the Transmigration of Souls*, metonyms come sometimes as intangible memories or recalled conversations and sometimes as tangible, physical items—“A gold chain around his neck, a silver ring, his middle finger, a small gap, his two front teeth, a little mole on his left cheek, a wedding band, a diamond ring”—that serve to highlight both individuality but also the absent bodies, and due to the violence of the act, easily evoke disturbing images of dismembered body parts. As Watkin notes, these metonyms pile up and only serve to distance and diminish the loss further.<sup>45</sup> Amassed here in fragmentary form, they are unmoored from specific bodies, names, or lives.

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<sup>45</sup> William Watkin, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 186.



In this way, the text fragments mirror a second point Krauss raises: that signs operate on difference, defined via opposition.<sup>46</sup> When Adams casts the survivors repeatedly through generic yet intimate relationships—father, sister, lover, neighbor—the texts suggest that these absent bodies are given meaning through their relationship to present, living bodies—the families of those killed, even as the text replaces and renders those living bodies absent as well. The use of recorded voices also plays off the live voices to underscore the absence of the dead. Whereas the chorus sings mostly remembrances of those who survived, beginning with the word “remember,” the recording conveys largely the names of the dead, beginning with the word “missing.” The presence at the outset of only pre-recorded sounds with a stage full of motionless, silent live musicians and singers only heightens this sense of absence through contrast and later collage. One listener remarked about the work that “it gives the dead a voice.”<sup>47</sup> That the live chorus is subsequently silenced following the second climax takes on a powerful resonance where the survivors are sonically absent and the dead/absent voices present.

For Corigliano, the fragment is most often musical rather than textual but serves the same purpose. The music is deeply personal and acts, like Adams’s texts, as a material signifier for the absent friends he had lost to AIDS. This means that Corigliano’s role parallels both those touched by tragedy who provided the memories and texts for *On the Transmigration of Souls* and Adams, who arranged and set them. This also means that the fragments are more ambiguous or private, because music does not carry the same wide semantic agreement that words do.

The Albeniz “Tango in D” quotation in the first movement was a favorite of a pianist friend of Corigliano’s. The tango is thus a signifier for the lost friend, yet it is not just the friend who is absent. The tango itself is rendered “absent” as well, played on an offstage piano, as if to

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<sup>46</sup> Krauss, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Survey, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010.

reinforce the idea of loss the way Adams uses pre-recorded voices. The tango's absence is also reinforced by its fragmentary nature, the quotation suggest the (unseen, unheard) complete tango. The orchestra's adoption of the tango as material for the "remembrance" section of the movement renders the music "present," but only can do so at the expense of the original. The piano—the very link to the signified lost friend, becomes absent entirely, and the music even more fragmented and foreshortened. Remembrance does not replace absence, but confirms it. The second movement operates almost identically. Corigliano composed the final movement of his *Gazebo Dances* for an amateur pianist friend, the work originally written for piano four hands. Here, the dance is orchestrated and further fragmented, the fragments virtually disintegrating by the end.

The third movement creates a network of signs through a more complicated network of absences. Here, by asking poet and collaborator William Hoffman to compose short eulogies, setting those eulogies to music, and then inserting the music but not the text into the work, Corigliano memorializes the loss of these friends through an act of loss himself: a loss for words, perhaps, but also a literal loss *of* words. The music signifies the dead by way of signifying the now absent text. To put it another way, the music was not composed in a direct eulogy for the dead, rather as an expression of words that did the eulogizing. Furthermore, absence is experienced more directly in this movement with the cello lines, which again carry a personal connection, derived from a personal tape Corigliano owned of a lost friend's improvisation on cello. At m. 111 the cello duet that has been central to the work becomes again a solo cello line, but now doubled by the flute. The registral shift, along with the shift from duet to doubling, is a marked change, one suggestive of the loss of a separate partner and the gain of something else

internal, perhaps an angel if I am to push this metaphor to its limit. Following this is a reprise of the “rage” music from the first movement, seemingly provoked by this felt absence.

The final movement is arguably the strongest yet subtlest testament to absence. Here, the content consists almost entirely of collaged material, placed upon a spare background of two oscillating brass arpeggios. Music from the past three movements return, each itself suggestive of absence: the tango, the cello duet, and the tarantella theme. Each of these musics is associated with a lost friend, and furthermore each has as its reference point a pre-existing musical work: Albeniz’s “Tango in D,” Corigliano’s tape of his friend’s cello improvisation, and Corigliano’s *Gazebo Dances*. But heard here, the signified is now even further obscured by another layer, namely this symphony. Each reprise recalls most immediately not the lost friend, nor the original music as it had upon first hearing, but the earlier movements in which they were introduced. Thus, this final movement signifies principally the act of remembering and memorializing itself. With the tension that characterized the other three movements gone, absence is stabilized at the close. As in *On the Transmigration of Souls*, Corigliano’s symphony reaches a sense of peace as it hands control to the voices of the dead. In this way, the final movement of both serves as a musical distillation of the physical memorial. The Ground Zero memorial, for instance, contains a sunken pool and waterfalls, transforming the effect of falling and holes from anxiety into healing by giving them permanence and purpose.

The role of minimalism in these physical and musical memorials not only mirrors the process of trauma, but also acknowledges directly the absence left by these traumatic events. Architecture critic Michael Kimmelman’s describes the role of minimalism in contemporary memorials as something of a “blank slate” for viewers to put their own meaning into.<sup>48</sup> Though

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “Out of Minimalism, Monuments to Memory,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/13/arts/art-architecture-out-of-minimalism-monuments-to-memory.html>.

not quite the “calculated retreats” of Paul Attinello’s critique, Kimmelman’s assessment is nevertheless passive, suggesting an absence of meaning inherent in the work makes room for our own meaning. Recall that one listener felt *On the Transmigration of Souls* was “too busy” and never afforded her the tranquility she expected in something labeled as a “memory piece.” Yet, just as Anna Chave and others have rejected the passivity and aloofness of minimalism, I view the role of minimalism in creating a powerful sense of absence is indeed active and meaningful.

To consider minimalism a “blank slate” is to suggest that it remains inscrutable, offering nothing of its own except a space for the individual to reflect. In this sense, minimalism might seem the very antithesis of collage, whose meanings can go in many conflicting directions. Indeed, not only is this emotionless distancing at the heart of Michael Fried’s critique in “Art and Objecthood,” but Fried then contrasts minimalism with the meaningful collage sculptures of Anthony Caro, whose use of juxtapositions, Fried argues, defeats objecthood.<sup>49</sup> Upon closer reflection, however, the effects of minimalism and collage are somewhat similar within memorials: both have been implicated in the aesthetics of traumatic dissociation and both resist closure.<sup>50</sup> The relative silence of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial on the politics of the war came to be seen as one of the design’s great triumphs, though the decision was not uncontroversial, nor was it apolitical. The Memorial’s denial of traditional patriotic signification and anti-heroics—a horizontal, stark, black gash on the Mall, with names undifferentiated by rank or action—made enough people uncomfortable to merit the addition of a statue of soldiers in action and a flag. Minimalism, then, may be better viewed as not the absence of signification,

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<sup>49</sup> Fried, 161.

<sup>50</sup> Erika Doss argues that minimalism in memorial design goes beyond theatricality and “manipulates normal understandings of space and time in order to evoke trauma’s dissociative affects of fear and anxiety.” See Doss, 40. Others have suggested the opposite, including Robert Fink, who has argued that repetition can regulate mood and promote feelings of safety and security, and Paul Attinello who has criticized the use of minimalism in AIDS music as “calculated retreats from the terrors of death.” See Fink, 204; and Paul Attinello, “Fever/Fragile/Fatigue”, 19.

but a strong signification of absence. Furthermore, the presentness of minimalism in these memorials, its stasis and size, reinforces that absence as permanent, like the repetition of “missing” in *On the Transmigration of Souls*, or the frequent construction of emptiness (e.g. pits, pools, recesses) in memorials.

## Collage as Identity

When memorials paradoxically render absence permanent through minimalism, collage provides a way for survivors to restore presence. The key part of Kimmelman's analysis is not that minimalism is a blank slate, but that when mourners confront its emptiness, they have a need to put something in and to get something out. Thus, confronted with the emptiness of the Vietnam Wall, or the fence around Ground Zero or the Oklahoma City memorial, survivors leave a collage of posters, photographs, teddy bears, cards, and other artifacts. And while these metonyms still convey absence, as discussed in the previous section, they also assert a human presence that serves to efface minimalism's abstract emptiness, to cover up the absences that are difficult look at and thereby render the absence itself absent.<sup>51</sup>

These messy images—the collage of missing persons' posters; the spontaneous amassing of objects into makeshift memorials at Union Square, the Vietnam Wall, or the fence at Oklahoma City; the AIDS Quilt—are powerful. They simultaneously make their private thoughts public and transform the public memorial into a private site, humanizing and deeply personalizing the memorial. Official memorials are no less messy of course, fraught with tense debates over the identities and politics of representation, yet they ultimately present a starkly different veneer, one of manicured simplicity and unity (even as they contain multiple forms of memorialization), asserting commonality and a belief that tragedy binds us together more

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<sup>51</sup> Viewed this way, minimalism serves as the canvas for these collages, which also resonates with Krauss's theorization of collage and absence. Krauss notes the paradox of absence at play between collage and canvas, finding signification of absence not just in the aforementioned collaged elements but in the picture plane as well, which she characterizes as "an index of a material presence now rendered literally invisible." See Krauss, 19.

strongly. The process of memorialization inevitably treads between public and private, between the individual and the collective, and between national and other identities, asking us to weigh the value of each.

By following in the footsteps of Cleve Jones and the AIDS Quilt, Corigliano entered into a contentious debate about representation of a politicized disease. For much of the 1980s, the disease had been largely ignored or denied by mainstream America and by politicians, marginalized along with the gay population it ravaged. The Quilt was positioned to play an instrumental part in bringing public attention and funding toward the treatment of the disease. Efforts to raise a specifically national awareness were part of the Quilt from the start. An advertisement for the Quilt consciously placed the word “American” in every paragraph.<sup>52</sup> By design, author Judith Dupré argues, the quilt tapped into “the popular perception of quilts... that they are as American as apple pie and, because of the patchwork method of their manufacture, symbolic of the country’s ‘melting pot.’”<sup>53</sup> Yet this patchwork method also works against their symbolism as a national memorial. Indeed, while the large-scale displays in Washington D.C. may have garnered more attention, media scholar Marita Sturken notes that the quilt was most often displayed in civic centers, churches, schools, and community centers—places that stressed the local roots and connections over, or at least simultaneous with, the national connotations.<sup>54</sup> The result is the opposite of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where individual identity is doubly lost to the collective national and the anonymous—a loss that allowed the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to become, according to political scientist Benedict Anderson, the most “arresting

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<sup>52</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 216.

<sup>53</sup> Judith Dupré, *Monuments: America’s History in Art and Memory* (New York: Random House, 2007), 162.

<sup>54</sup> Sturken, 193.

[emblem] of the modern culture of nationalism... saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings.”<sup>55</sup>

The individuals memorialized in the Quilt are not unknown; they are remembered on deeply familiar, personal, and local terms, which are at odds with a dominant, single national identity.

And with good reason. As Sturken notes, “The implied patriotism and connotations of family heritage implicit in the quilt form threaten to rescript those memorialized in the AIDS Quilt into a narrative of Americana in a country that has systematically marked them as outsiders.”<sup>56</sup> The Quilt, because of its striving for acceptance by the mainstream, quickly exposed a deep schism among the gay community “between speaking defiantly from the margins of society and demanding inclusion within the mainstream.”<sup>57</sup> Because the Quilt sought to portray AIDS as a larger problem than one just afflicting the gay community—and thus, for some, subtly implying that the disease was worth attention by the mainstream solely because it affected the mainstream as well, doing little to alleviate the hurt and alienation felt throughout the 1980s as the epidemic spread—the project was accused of “degaying” the Quilt in order to pass as American.

Yet it should be noted that the unusual form the Quilt takes as memorial avoids “passing” too easily. Just as architecture critic Michael Sorkin suggests that Maya Lin’s status as an Asian-American woman led to her to create an anti-heroic and anti-phallic design that resonated with veterans who were also marginalized within society and national narratives, the Quilt follows suit in subverting the typically heroic, masculine form of memorials.<sup>58</sup> The Quilt adopts the communal and typically feminine practice of quilt-making, itself with a politically-charged history as a means for women to trace family heritage, mourn the dead, or voice political beliefs

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<sup>55</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 9. Italics in the original.

<sup>56</sup> Sturken, 215.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 185

<sup>58</sup> Michael Sorkin, “What Happens When a Woman Designs a War Monument?,” *Vogue*, May 1983, 122.



in a society where they typically remained voiceless.<sup>59</sup> The result is flat and soft, the opposite of the upright stone monuments usually offered up. It suggests comfort and pain, bodies at rest both in a coffin and in a bed, the latter connoting sexual intimacy and sexual transmission of the disease. It is impermanent and mutable yet iconic, cozy and intimate yet enormous, its panels invitingly tactile and familiar yet cryptically unknowable.

In 1989, as Corigliano was writing his symphony, the Quilt made its third appearance in Washington DC and second national tour, cemented as a national icon. Corigliano's symphony bears evidence of the history of debate, straddling many of the lines that the Quilt did as well. The symphony takes a fairly conservative structure: four movements, the first balancing an aggressive theme against a more lyrical one, a scherzo dance movement, and a slow movement based on the baroque structure of a chaconne, deviating only in its final movement. As a genre, the symphony has been positioned as a particularly masculine expression, and its traditional stature and epic quality befits it as a traditional monument.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, its being composed on commission from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for that Orchestra's centennial makes a public statement—indeed, co-opts the spotlight from the Orchestra and shines it on the victims of AIDS consigned to the shadows—and frames that statement within an established institution, just as the display of the Quilt on the National Mall and White House lawn had. Furthermore, Corigliano's own position as eschewing the mantle of a “gay composer” aligns him with the Quilt's aims to appeal to a broader, more mainstream audience.<sup>61</sup> Unlike other remembrances, Corigliano's symphony avoids kitsch and camp, preferring to play it “straight.”

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<sup>59</sup> See Patricia Mainardi, “Quits: The Great American Art,” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 331–46.

<sup>60</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 171.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen McClatchie, “John Corigliano” in *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed. George E. Haggerty (New York: Garland, 2000), 336.

But Corigliano's work does make subtle efforts to identify with the gay community and makes a public forum out of Corigliano's personal experiences. The introspective final movement turns away from the masculine heroics associated with climax and *telos* and offers instead a softer, private moment of reflective and reflexive restatement of previous material.<sup>62</sup> The material in the symphony frequently stresses intimacy and the body as well. The tango in the first movement brings to mind a sensual, sexualized dance for two lovers in close proximity. The second movement, which conveys the bodily decay from AIDS, opens with a police whistle that does not simply forecast the danger ahead but also evokes the suffering of gay men and women at the hands of the police, the continued illegality of homosexual acts and the subsequent shame of AIDS. The third movement's cello duet is easily suggestive of a gay male relationship in what we might call its "homosectionality." All three of these moments also directly convey loss: the first movement's absent piano, the third movement's transition from cello duet to cello solo, and the second movement's graphically physical depiction of the process of dying.

But such elevations of private intimacy have troubled some as a turning away from public, as not outing itself loudly and proudly enough. Paul Attinello notes this is a central debate about AIDS-related music within the gay community and hypothesizes that music about AIDS may be more suited to private feelings rather than public politics, yet for gay couples especially the choice to remain private nevertheless is given heightened scrutiny and carries political undertones of shame, secrecy, or silence, regardless of the actual motives.<sup>63</sup> The symphony, with its rage and remembrance sections, does not choose either but instead directly recognizes this schism between a call to public action and a private moment of grief. The Quilt

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<sup>62</sup> See chapter five of Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Paul Attinello, "Closeness and Distance: Songs About AIDS" in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Routledge, 2006), 223.

accomplishes its own deft balance between the two through the very political act of naming. In an era of secrecy and shame, the act of naming was a political move, “coming out” as both gay and as a victim of AIDS. But as literary scholar Peter Hawkins deftly explores the politics of naming, he notes the versatility of the act: to name could take the form of a public, legal name or a private nickname, and so the Quilt by naming carefully straddles the act of public naming with a more private act.

Corigliano’s symphony names in a more complex fashion. When composing, Corigliano crafted a multifaceted tribute, with some remembered through personal musical associations, while others were given textual elegies for him to set. He does, in fact, name those friends with textual elegies in the score, but for the audience, no names are given. Perhaps Corigliano found the community of musicians to be a safer space for outing, especially given the insider status within that very community of Corigliano and many of the friends he memorialized in the score. But for the broader audience, the names and text go unknown. No mention of any name (save Giulio, who lends his name to the third movement) is made in the program notes either. Such an act of erasure retains these elegies, elegies written by another friend, as Corigliano’s private act of grief within a very public statement. Others expecting a more outspoken, political stance might read into this decision a complicit acceptance of the silence which surrounded AIDS in the 1980s, a silence which the ACT UP campaign equated with death.

When Corigliano accepted a joint commission by the Seattle Men’s Chorus, the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus, and the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus and wrote a cantata based on the third movement in which he restored Hoffman’s text, however, he suggests a willingness, or perhaps even a need, to name more publicly. That the work was commissioned by three gay choruses might underscore their desire of gay performance groups to name more

publicly and increase awareness of the disease. Alternatively, if the decision was Corigliano's alone, it might signal an evolving comfort with public naming (or a discomfort with silence) or a feeling of safety for Corigliano to name within a designated safe, gay, and artistic community even as this music was disseminated more broadly through performance and recordings. It should also be noted that it was the CD by the National Symphony Orchestra of both symphony and choral work that won the Grammy, not the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's CD of the premiere. The National Symphony Orchestra's recording may have been aided as well by its visual cues on the album cover. The Chicago Symphony's recording has a somewhat cryptic album cover of three selected panels from the Quilt, identifying the composition equally abstractly as "Symphony No. 1." The Washington Symphony's recording showed the iconic full Quilt on display at the Mall, Capitol in the background, which more boldly outed the symphony as about AIDS, and outed the recording as a politicized memorial by calling the album "Of Rage and Remembrance," thereby integrating itself into the national effort to address AIDS.

The memorialization of 9/11 has certainly proven contentious. In designing a single memorial, even the most basic act of naming the dead was difficult because of the multiple causes of death. The memorial would have to include victims from the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, those on the planes, and first responders. Plans to list them randomly drew complaints from those who wished divisions to be preserved.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the memorial would also have to include those who died in the 1993 bombing, as the memorial had been destroyed with the towers. The solution agreed upon was to recognize the disparity of deaths, but to also recognize

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<sup>64</sup> The chronological ordering of the names on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall provoked complaints that it was "unheroic" and "treated the dead like anonymous 'victims of some monstrous traffic accident.'" See Dupré, 151. For an account of the methodology in the 9/11 memorial, see John Matson, "Commemorative Calculus: How an Algorithm Helped Arrange the Names on the 9/11 Memorial," *Scientific American* September 7, 2011. Accessed at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=september-11-memorial>. For a more personal editorial on the choices, see Paula Grant Berry, "9/11 Memorial Honors Those Who Lived and Died Together," *CNN*, September 12, 2011. Accessed at <http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/10/opinion/berry-september-11-memorial/index.html>.

their connections through what designers called “meaningful adjacencies.” Consulting with family and friends of the deceased, the designers aimed to place victims with other victims they knew or had other binding ties with. Doing so turned some of the power of representation over to the public for whom the memorial spoke and thus not only quelled many of their concerns, but also emphasized a stronger network of community among both victims and mourners.

Beyond the official memorial, the rise of the white male firefighter as symbol has ignited tensions over race and gender. Erica Doss has noted that a third of those killed were women, yet their presence in depictions of the event is minimal.<sup>65</sup> A statue to be sculpted from a photograph drew angry reactions when the sculptor initially planned to change the three white firefighters to a white, black, and a Hispanic.<sup>66</sup> Oliver Stone, meanwhile, created controversy in *World Trade Center* by casting a white actor to play Marine Sergeant Thomas, who was black. Since then, Jeffrey Melnick argues, it has been “impossible for an American artist to introduce race into any 9/11 equation without being accused of treason—or at least impertinence.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, some have blamed diversity and multiculturalism as the root of the terrorist attacks and threatening to American identity, or perhaps more pointedly, white male American identity. Debates about multiculturalism have been particularly weighty after 9/11, including the building of Park51 Islamic Community Center in lower Manhattan, and the 2009 Supreme Court case *Ricci v DeStefano*, where white firefighters charged reverse discrimination when a promotion examination’s results were thrown out after few minorities fared well on the exam. When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg charged firefighting to be “a profession in which the legacy of racial

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<sup>65</sup> Doss, 43

<sup>66</sup> Dana Heller, *The Selling of 9/11: How a National Tragedy Became a Commodity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14–5.

<sup>67</sup> Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 95.

discrimination casts an especially long shadow,” it continues what has become a long, if not particularly effective, critique of the post-9/11 firefighter image as hero.

Whereas Corigliano could position himself into an established debate surrounding the memorialization of AIDS, Adams entered into a debate still very much in its early stages. Adams was wary about accepting the commission, but ultimately decided to accept the challenge because he was dismayed that “America, quite possibly the world’s most fertile and creative musical culture during the twentieth century, did not have a single orchestral work that could satisfy the need for collective emotional experience.” Adams cites the use of the Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, the Mahler’s *Resurrection* Symphony, and Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony as great works Americans have turned to in times of tragedy. Are the Enlightenment profundities of Beethoven or the “yearning spiritual quests” of Mahler “no longer possible in our more ironic and painfully self-conscious contemporary climate?” he asks, implying a desire to recapture them.<sup>68</sup> American music, by contrast, has fallen short Adams argues, producing only small statements: Ives’s *The Unanswered Question*, Barber’s *Adagio for Strings*, and Copland’s *Quiet City*. Adams pointedly incorporates the Ives and Copland into *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which provides the most direct evidence of Adams’s conception for a distinctly American response.

At the same time, Adams consciously avoided certain responses, explaining, “I didn’t think the Coplandesque brand of sentiment was correct.”<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere, he elaborates on the sentiments he wished to avoid, including “lockstep, unquestioning patriotism” and what Philip Roth has termed the “kitschification” of 9/11.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Adams seems to have modeled his process much more on avoiding those unwanted forms of Americana rather than on the lacuna of

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<sup>68</sup> Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 262.

<sup>69</sup> Adams, “John Adams Discusses *On the Transmigration of Souls*,” 197.

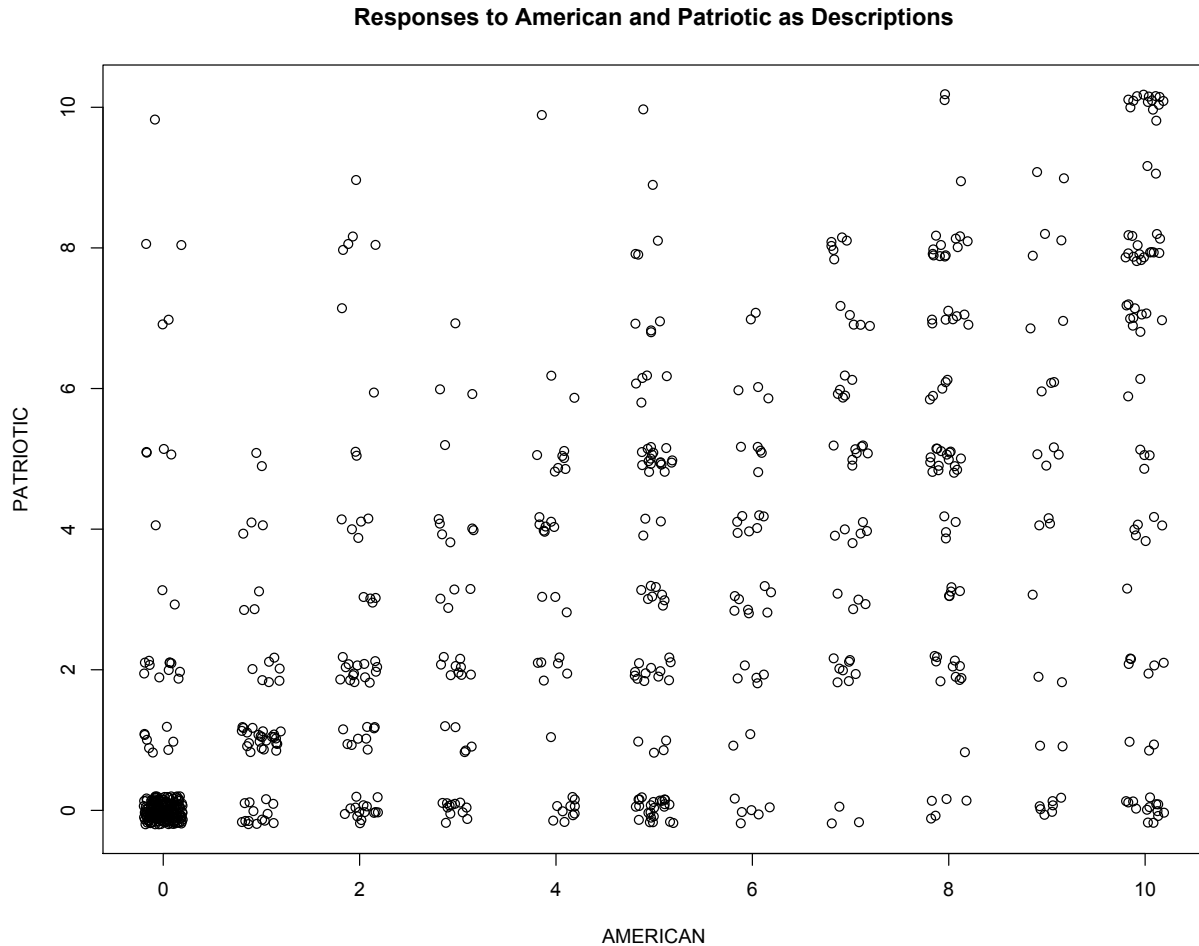
<sup>70</sup> Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 260 and 263.

a major American response, for if anything *On the Transmigration of Souls* subverts a specifically national or collective reading. None of the texts make reference to the United States, patriotism, or even 9/11. Even by selecting *The Unanswered Question*, he is turning to Ives at his most “universal.” Indeed, nearly 30% of audience members gave “American” a rating of zero when surveyed, and nearly 40% rated “patriotic” a zero. Indeed, responses to “American” and “patriotic” were among the highest correlations on the survey (Appendix 4B), suggesting that audiences still conceive of American national identity with something being overtly patriotic.<sup>71</sup> Again, a scatterplot of responses illustrates this well: the most common responses to both adjectives, represented by the darker coordinates on the plot, cluster around the diagonal that runs from rating each zero to rating each ten, demonstrating that audience members often gave “American” and “patriotic” the same or very similar ratings. Furthermore, the scatterplot shows that patriotic is dependent on a perception of Americanness: the region above this diagonal line, rating “patriotic” higher than “American” is virtually absent of responses, whereas the region below the line is relatively denser. That is, when rating both “patriotic” and “American,” it was common for audience members to rate “American” somewhat higher than “patriotic”; indeed, there is a prominent cluster of responses that rated “American” ten and “patriotic” zero. But the inverse—rating the work more “patriotic” than “American”—was very rare (Figure 4.3). Additionally, audience members at concerts where the conductor did not speak about the piece right before playing it and who did not read the program notes commented that they did not know the work was a 9/11 piece until they read my survey or the notes afterwards. Many audience members were, in fact, prompted to think about other tragedies and connect them to the

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<sup>71</sup> The correlation coefficient, “r,” measures how weak or strong two variables are correlated, from -1 to 1 (being exactly inversely correlated and exactly correlated, respectively, meaning when one variable increases, the other variable would decrease or increase the same amount, and would thus appear as a straight diagonal line when plotted. For “American” and “Patriotic,”  $r=0.627374612$ . “Strong correlation” is usually given for r values over .7.

work, including the recent violence in Syria, Hurricane Katrina, AIDS, Rwanda, Los Desaparecidos, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Kent State, or often simply the death of a family member.



**Figure 4.3: Scatterplot of Audience Ratings of American vs. Patriotic for John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls***

Adams also complicated the public, heroic model of the memorial by turning to the intimate. Adams sought an epic scale for the work, but played down its traditional triumphant, teleological, and “masculine” attributes. He retained the climax as central feature, but by surrounding both climaxes with eerily quiet and static music, he saps them of their efficacy.



Furthermore, because these climaxes themselves recall not resilience but the violence against American citizens, he subverts them and turns them into moments of anti-heroic vulnerability.<sup>72</sup> Adams himself stressed the importance of intimacy in performance when he praised both the successful performance in the “intimate” space at the Proms and the recording, of which he wrote: “even though the recording lacks the sense of spaciousness, it’s far more successful because you can hear the voices in a very intimate way as if someone were breathing or whispering into your ear, but you can also hear the orchestra.”<sup>73</sup>

Intimate, personal accounts can create an a national sense when they invite a collective reading as portraying society, and this seems like the most likely approach Adams took to creating a distinctly American response. Indeed, the “Portraits in Grief” series, which Adams took as an inspiration and textual source, and the AIDS Quilt have been received in such a way. And yet, the collage-like text fragments stymie any single attempt to create a national collective. The specificity of the names are coupled with more anonymous, intimate relationships: wife, brother, uncle, daughter, lover, neighbor. In short, then, the act of naming in Adams’s work strives to be both public and private at the same time, but when the text gets most personal, it loses the name, the specificity. In other words, we can form neither a coherent heroic or iconic single individual nor a firm understanding of the dead as a whole. Similarly, the work is set up so that we may not even experience it collectively. By conceiving of the piece as a “memory space,” Adams invites viewers to privately rather than collectively reflect and experience an admittedly public work. The recordings made only serve to further separate the experience of listening from a communal sense of grief and identity.

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<sup>72</sup> Erika Doss notes that just depicting vulnerability was a divisive act, as evidenced by the removal of one sculpture titled “Tumbling Woman,” whose artist suggested it captured our vulnerability, not to mention depicting a female victim. See Doss, 165.

<sup>73</sup> Adams, “John Adams Discusses *On the Transmigration of Souls*,” 203.

Audiences, too, felt the intimacy, though not universally. Many rated “intimate” a zero, but on the whole, audiences rated “intimate” fairly high, and “monumental” received a similar distribution of ratings (Appendix 4B). Examining the two together, we find a moderate correlation between the two. The scatterplot reveals a dense clustering at the ends of both spectra; that is to say that many rated “intimate” and “monumental” both zero, or rated them both ten, suggesting that the two adjectives are anything but mutually exclusive as some might believe (Figure 4.4).<sup>74</sup> Several also stressed in their comments the intensely interpersonal thoughts they felt in the work. For many, it was a chance to reflect on those who were close to them. Some had friends in New York and recalled the worry they felt, a few knew victims of the attack, but many also projected the emotions onto simply their family and community. One audience member said the work “reminded me of father's passing and last moments with him. Images of hospital and final moments with father.”<sup>75</sup> Here, a memorial to a larger tragedy invites listeners to create their own, private memorials. Others found that smaller communities, like family, held a key to better understanding 9/11. One listener actively sought to connect to the piece through their own family: “As the piece continued, I thought about family, particularly loved ones who have died in the past couple years, perhaps trying to make a connection between my own personal grief and that of the recorded voices (since I knew of no one who died in the terrorist attacks personally).”<sup>76</sup> Another echoed this sentiment with empathy, reflecting, “We tend to think of them as a group of 3000 some lost, we forget that they were individuals. Each one had a family forced to go on.”<sup>77</sup>

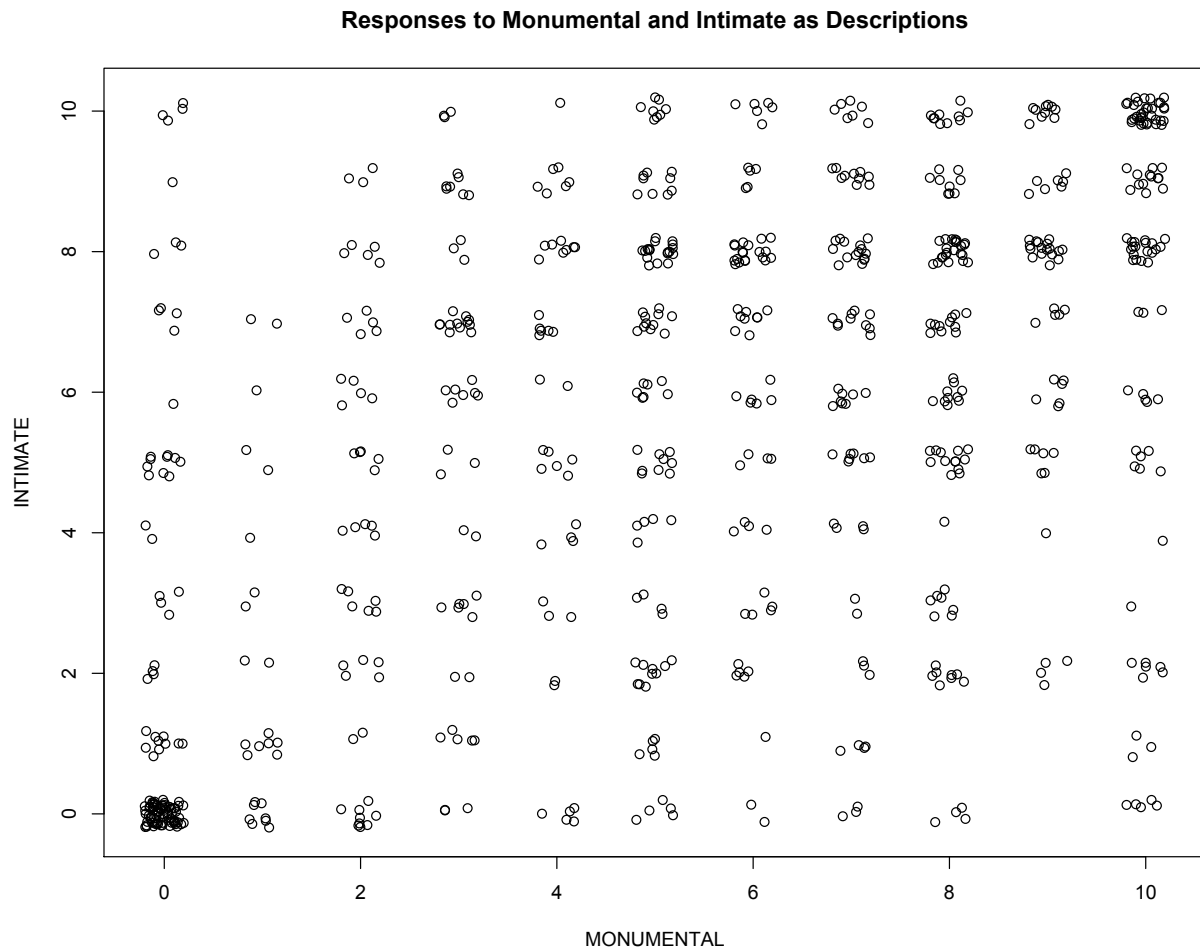
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<sup>74</sup>  $r=0.542359492$ . See footnote 71 for more information on r values.

<sup>75</sup> Survey, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Survey, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> Survey, University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale, Women’s Chorus, and Northern Iowa Symphony Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, October 11, 2011.



**Figure 4.4: Scatterplot of Audience Ratings of Monumental vs. Intimate for John Adams’s *On the Transmigration of Souls***

Such responses also model community performances of the work as a way of connecting with a smaller civic community to feel connected to the active national citizenship such memorials often invoke. Some, as noted above, had to actively try to connect to victims they didn’t know, while others found the connection immediate. “Those were my people on 9/11,” wrote one audience member, while another suggested that the work perfectly captured “our

loss—not just 3,000 lives but also our national innocence.”<sup>78</sup> Their language “my people” and “our loss” is inclusive, invoking a shared ethos, one of the cornerstones of national identity.

Adams recognized the importance of diversity to inclusiveness. In setting out to avoid what he considered clichéd or inappropriate methods of nationalism, Adams also unsettles the dominance of the white male hero within 9/11 narratives. As noted, the work subverts the traditional masculine form of memorials, and is in fact devoid of any sense of heroism. Furthermore, the textual choices promote a more diverse account of the day. The names include 19 women among the 82 and suggest a broad variety of ethnic backgrounds. One audience member remarked, “Persons with Hispanic names were overrepresented. Was this because they were overrepresented in the police, fire, rescue etc. forced? Does it reflect a cultural value of helping others? Or maybe they weren’t overrepresented at all but rather reflected the population of New York City different from Ann Arbor or Detroit.”<sup>79</sup> This comment demonstrates the power of a memorial to effect change in how people think about 9/11. Their first response is one of simple reaction—overrepresentation of Hispanic names, but then prompts further consideration.

Rather than simply condemn or praise it as evidence of an editorial hand pushing multiculturalism, the next lines suggest an honest consideration of cultural difference that might support the presence of these names, followed by a more accurate assessment of geographic difference and the attendant differences in perspectives on the racial makeup of the U. S. population. The textual quotations set by Adams also support a more inclusive reading of the tragedy by providing perspectives from a variety of intimate relationships, including friends,

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<sup>78</sup> Surveys, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

lovers, family, and neighbors. The memory from the lover, for instance, pointedly leaves out the gender roles, allowing it to speak for same-sex couples as well.

At the same time, comments made by Adams underscore the dominance of this white male heroism trope in the aftermath of 9/11. For instance, in one interview, he says, “It’s really just about loss, and about the mother who lost a son, the wife who lost a husband, the daughter who lost a father.”<sup>80</sup> Here Adams casually, and presumably unintentionally, falls into the standard tropes by positioning only men as the hypothetical victims, balanced by only women as grieving. In addition, the heteronormative nuclear family becomes the sole unit of bonding. More egregious is a remark made while discussing the voices used for the recordings. Adams asked close friends and family members to read the names at first, then found it to be a useful way to make a public work personal to him.<sup>81</sup> Among the friends who read was an Israeli woman, who Adams draws special attention to: “I discovered that many of the people who died were foreign-born...so having a voice with a slight accent in it was very touching, to me.”<sup>82</sup> This comment recognizes an awareness of the diversity among the victims, something that many designers of memorials were ignorant of, knew but purposefully ignored, or acknowledged and risked controversy. But Adams’s essentializing of ethnic diversity into a single token voice with an accent is at best misguided and at worst distasteful, making no strides in addressing the racial questions behind 9/11. In fact, a more pointed observation goes unstated, one that would address the religious and regional tensions between Israel, the United States, and other Middle Eastern nations that shape the political narrative of the attack.

In her work on memorialization, Marita Sturken theorizes cultural memory as “a field of contested meanings in which Americans interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of

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<sup>80</sup> Adams, “John Adams Discusses *On the Transmigration of Souls*,” 201.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 201–2.

the nation, particularly in events of trauma, where both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed.”<sup>83</sup> As these examples of recent memorials to national tragedies attest, their creators grappled with how to represent a nation fractured both from within and from without. More than simply challenging the nation’s resolve in the face of tragedy, recognizing AIDS and 9/11 for what they were challenged the nation’s self-image by forcing them to reconcile that image with marginalized constituents thrust suddenly into the center of the tragedy. And for these marginalized groups, seeking inclusion meant sacrificing difference and the act of memorializing often sought to restore that unity and recapture the white, middle-class mainstream of the United States.

The Quilt accomplished mainstream acceptance of homosexuals living with and dying from AIDS, but it did so in a way that played down queer aspects in order to appeal to Americans. As Peter Hawkins notes, the Quilt asked:

Who constitutes this nation? Or, to put it in other terms, who gets to be remembered, and by whom? From its beginning, the NAMES Project has wanted to draw the circle larger than its first constituency of Castro Street and Fire Island. But while it has undoubtedly succeeded in creating a diverse coalition of men and women, lovers and mothers, its America—the dead, their quilters, and the crowds who come to the displays—remains solidly middle class and mostly white.<sup>84</sup>

This association with white, middle-class America remains troubling as the disease has risen dramatically in recent years both among African-American women and globally, especially in Africa.

The Quilt has taken on a symbol of American diversity, even as its placement has gotten further and further mainstream and away from an evolving disease. As Simon Watney suggests, “To have Liberace alongside Baby Doe, to have Michel Foucault alongside five gay New York

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<sup>83</sup> Sturken, 2–3.

<sup>84</sup> Hawkins, 778.

cops. In many ways it's a more accurate map of America than any other I've ever seen."<sup>85</sup> And while its importance among gay males should not be overlooked, it nevertheless fails to truly portray the full diversity of AIDS victims, nor of America. The "Portraits of Grief" series in the New York Times was similarly praised, as editor Howell Raines called the series a reminder of the "democracy of death" because it placed obituaries together regardless of class, race, power, gender, or any other attribute—"These lives, bundled together so randomly into a union of loving memory."<sup>86</sup> In death, it would seem, all were equal. Yet, this was precisely the problem, a David Simpson points out:

And yet powerful as they were, read in batches of a few at a time, the collective impression of these snapshots was and is troubling. They were clearly being put to work in the cause of a patriotic momentum that Raines's words make very clear. None here cheated on her spouse or abused his children, or was indifferent to community activities. One tends of course to speak only good things of the dead, but even within the expected bonds of memorial decorum, the notices seem formulaic. They seem regimented, even militarized, made to march to the beat of a single drum.

...Reading the profiles in sequence, we find that they all start to sound the same, with only minute variations on the governing themes. The array of difference and creative idiosyncrasy that is often described as the proper core of a liberal democracy is here oddly flattened out.<sup>87</sup>

The instinct to memorialize disguises the fact that the United States is a land of economic, social, and political inequality, and the World Trade Center makes a particularly effective symbol of that inequality, which did not vanish with the towers.

At the core of national representation, then, lies the politics of naming—whom we name and how. To name just a few, as both Corigliano and Adams do, raises the question of how to select and how to read those selections. Corigliano's solution was to select and to name in a private manner. As with the Quilt and Corigliano's cantata adaptation "Of Rage and

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Doss, 113.

<sup>86</sup> Howell Raines, Foreword to *Portraits: 9/11/01: The Collected "Portraits of Grief" From The New York Times* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), vii.

<sup>87</sup> David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 23 and 36.

Remembrance,” with its moment for singers to intone the names of people they wish to remember, these memorials stress local and personal connections in naming over national ambitions; the nation is understood as a metonymic extension or collection of the local and personal.

*On the Transmigration of Souls* attempts more clearly to be a national work, written by a composer with less of a personal connection to the dead than Corigliano had. Adams’s selection of names is mostly random selections of alphabetical listings, with no demarcations of other status or identity, suggesting an equality of all dead, as the Vietnam wall or the “Portraits of Grief” series do. For many audience members, the names were an emotional and humanizing touch, but as with other memorials, the names were also political. Several audience members asked about whether Adams had permission to use the names; one found it “verging on ‘stealing’ voices à la [Steve Reich’s] *Different Trains*.”<sup>88</sup> Because Adams did not include all the names, questions of representation and inclusion came to the forefront for many listeners. One “was distracted wondering just why these names were chosen,” while others reacted more strongly, condemning the choice as “disrespectful—all names or none!” or “unfair to the other people who died—and there were too many to name in one piece—to repeat the names of certain people. Also, since they were repeated, Adams seemed to be using their names for the sound and rhythm rather than for the meaning.”<sup>89</sup>

Selecting names randomly could prove potent, signaling the randomness of the event and the lives lost. However, such a sentiment offers little comfort, which many demand from a memorial, opens the door for manipulation of representation (as the comment about Hispanic names being “overrepresented” alludes to), and risks trivializing or dehumanizing the deaths.

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<sup>88</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Surveys, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010; Survey, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011.



Selecting all the names avoids many of these problems, yet as David Simpson noted above, this method also runs the risk of dehumanizing in its own way, flattening all into a unity that is superficial. To that end, the system of “meaningful adjacencies” employed in the official memorial seems like an effective solution.<sup>90</sup> Neither leveling all names into one, nor using only strict divisions, the system was based on suggestions made by families, to group colleagues and friends together, rendering the process of memorialization more intimate, personal, and democratic, similar to the methods used in the fence at Oklahoma City, the Quilt, and Corigliano’s cantata, thereby harnessing the power of collage to bind as well as individualize.

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<sup>90</sup> See note 61 of this chapter.

## Collage as Community

Collage not only breaks apart the unity of official memorials by democratizing and personalizing the process, but also conversely provides a model for binding those individuals together to create a national collective identity, allowing us to overcome difference rather than overlook it. The best memorials, such as Union Square after 9/11, the AIDS Quilt, or the fence at the Oklahoma City memorial make room for participation of individuals and act as sites for people to come together. By engaging with official memorial sites as individuals, communities create their own meaningful adjacencies through collective active participation. This transforms national identity from a top-down process of essentialized or dictated unity or multiculturalism toward a bottom-up process of recognizing the diversity and connection through these meaningful adjacencies.

Memorials provide exceptionally rich moments for realizing this collective identity. As Judith Butler articulates in *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*, a collection of essays meditating on 9/11:

Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility.<sup>91</sup>

Butler's words easily elide with collage. Theories of collage suggest that the act of juxtaposition unlocks new meanings within both elements. In other words, the act of collaging not only draws

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<sup>91</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 22.

attention to the points of difference between both elements, but can also highlight points of similarity, and in doing so forms a new bond between two disparate entities. Others have conceived of collage as a tension continually at play between the parts and the whole, but suggest that each is inseparable from the other and is equally important in the overall effect.<sup>92</sup> Musical memorials are intensely personal, yet there is ample evidence that they also create broader, complex communities in various ways—indeed, many audience members at *On the Transmigration of Souls* felt a connection with the broader community, and one found the work’s message to be “We all need each other, community is an essential part of living together. ‘No man is an island.’ We are all part of the WHOLE. People can and do help each other.”<sup>93</sup>

What I posit is that collage provides a model for this very ethical form of remembering tragedies within a collective national framework. This challenge is difficult, considering the practically ingrained embrace of unity at all costs. For instance, the NAACP asked after 9/11 “for people to put aside differences and for people to rally around things we have together such as family and faith,” and yet race and faith quickly needed to be attended to as points of difference after 9/11.<sup>94</sup> Collage emphasizes the trauma, absence, and violence of tragedies without exploiting them. It offers a way to envision, or re-envision, the whole without the illusions that deny the cracks. It suggests that our similarities and our differences, both unlocked through collage, enrich us while emphasizing that none of us are whole by ourselves. It recognizes the faults and fault lines within American society, allowing us to celebrate difference without justifying inequality. And it has the ability to decentralize and democratize the process of memorialization, forcing all those affected to recognize the individualized modes of grief,

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<sup>92</sup> For example, see Donald B. Kuspit, “Collage: The Organizing Principle of Art in the Age of the Relativity of Art” and Wendy Holmes, “Decoding Collage: Signs and Surfaces” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 39–58 and 193–212.

<sup>93</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Melnick, 100.

giving equal voice without melting difference away into a single vision as happened in “Portraits of Grief.”

Acknowledging that physical memorials encourage active participation, I wonder how the concert hall could serve as a similarly open site of memorialization, allowing dialogue and individual participation surrounding the performance of the work. What powerful ideas of citizenship and collective identity, of memorials and music might emerge if these audience members were to share their perspectives with one another, creating new meaningful adjacencies throughout the concert hall? The reactions raised within my surveys suggest an interest in, sometimes even a need for, a space for discussion within a community. Many felt disappointed that the work did not capture the heroism and bravery displayed on that day, whereas others were relieved it avoided jingoistic patriotism—the musical line between the two not always being discernible. For several audience members, the memorial and my survey served as a way of airing these contentious political views about war and patriotism in a post-9/11 United States:

[I] experienced profound sadness, sorrow—our country’s reaction to 9/11—with great fear we responded and recent history shows the results. How differently it all might have been if we had responded with great love.

[I] thought it would be trying to inspire patriotism in me. I was so glad that I felt it did not manipulate me in that way. I got so tired of how 9/11 events were eventually used to promote hyper-patriotism and justify wars.

I was disturbed late in the piece when I heard the chorus sing, almost chant-like, "Lies!" Later, I realized they were singing "Love" and "Light", but that is not what it sounded like at the time. Given the anger and backlash the Muslim community felt, this deeply troubled me and I honestly felt repulsion and offended....What a transition then when the MSO played the national anthem, which felt like a cleansing act.

This has none of the hope of the Brahms. If there is no God, then Adams had it right. Otherwise, Brahms did.

A graphic documentation that will inspire future jihadists....

Little more than a soundtrack to events and terrible destruction. It was literal, lacked a

hopeful resolution and reflected a bias of guilt, not grief or healing. Who paid for this self-indulgent sound poem? Probably my taxes?

Garbage, awful, disgrace to the USA. This might be the most misguided piece of music I've ever heard. ...Please compile your results from this study and try to have this work removed from the pages of history.<sup>95</sup>

This last comment's suggestion that the work should be removed from the pages of history not only demonstrates the power of memorials to elicit strong emotion, but warns us of the danger of memorials that do not challenge us to listen to different opinions and in turn voice our own. It is those memorials that seek to merely, blandly unite that require us to ask quite pointedly what—and who—has been removed from the history books in order to do so. Indeed, the concept of removal, of silencing, has been a potent danger within the responses to AIDS and 9/11. Judith Butler iterates this fear regarding the media coverage of the war:

They do not show violence, but there is a violence in the frame in what is shown. That latter violence is the mechanism through which certain lives and deaths either remain unrepresentable or become represented in ways that effects their capture (once again) by the war effort. The first is an effacement through occlusion; the second is an effacement through representation itself.<sup>96</sup>

Again, Butler recalls the language of collage—specifically, the work of Rosalind Krauss on absence, effacing through the act of fragmenting what is being collaged. If official memorials, and the tireless efforts of their designers to find consensus, efface the many and provocative questions raised by traumatic events, then collage undoes this. As noted above, audience members used *On the Transmigration of Souls* as a site to remember victims of other tragedies—tragedies that have not always merited such public or national memorialization. One audience member directly addressed this issue, writing that the work “prompted me to wonder what kinds of tragic events merit and/or receive commemoration, especially in musical works of this caliber

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<sup>95</sup> Surveys, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010; Madison Symphony Orchestra, Madison, WI, September 16–18, 2011; Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Butler, 147.

and stature.”<sup>97</sup> By embracing collage and multiple perspectives, memorials can become more encompassing spaces than perhaps intended. And though any single memorial should provoke a broad range of associations and feelings, any single tragedy cannot be addressed by a single memorial. The AIDS Quilt was offset by more confrontational forms of memorials through ACT UP and other organizations, and by more commercial forms as well. 9/11 has been memorialized in numerous works of music and in many physical sites of remembrance to reflect the diverse set of demands for the memorialization of the event. Even in the case of the concerts of *On the Transmigration of Souls* I attended, each of the works it has been paired with—Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 and Symphony No. 9, Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Richard Strauss’s *Tod und Verklärung*, and others—serves in this context as another memorial akin to the multiple sites within physical memorial spaces, for some more effective, for others less, but further underscoring the need for collage rather than unity within the act of memorialization.

Because collages resist any easy, single reading, their messages hold up, sometimes even require, multiple visits. Fitting, I believe, because most tragedies are not immediately understood; they require time and repeated contemplation, as both Corigliano and Adams suggest by ending their works similarly to how they began them. One performer put this very elegantly in recounting her and her husband’s different responses to *On the Transmigration of Souls*:

Through our intensive rehearsals, I found the Adams so challenging technically that I wasn’t really able to realize its emotional freight until very late in the arc of preparation and performance. However, by the penultimate night of our three concerts in Denver, I had a breakthrough. From the “Light” sequence on, I was suddenly overwhelmed with a vivid mental image: that of the Towers, gleaming, blazing, falling in billows of white smoke and ash. . . . In contrast, my husband heard the piece for the first time that weekend, and his response sharpened my impression that the work is almost impenetrable on first exposure. As it ended, he was mostly unmoved. What he’d heard was a cacophony of sound from which few words of meaning emerged, and no memorable tonality remained

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<sup>97</sup> Survey, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011.

after the last chord had died out. Therefore, I'm convinced that, except perhaps for the rare individual, the piece best repays the repeat listener (or performer). Many of my choral cohort reacted as I did, and some only began to get the emotional payoff late in the final performance.<sup>98</sup>

Typically, classical music achieves a status of permanence and timelessness. Memorial works, which must balance this with a very timely and specific placement, run the risk of lapsing into oblivion or becoming outdated. While Adams's and Corigliano's works have been performed with some frequency, their timelessness—and whether that timelessness will imply a decoupling of the work from the very charged and political responses they earn—remains to be seen.

Surveys reveal a divided public on the question of how “timeless” is *On the Transmigration of Souls* (Appendix 4B). The use of a children's choir suggests to me an interest on Adams's part in engaging a new generation. Audience members most often drew hope or conjured up a sense of innocence upon hearing their voices, but some were prompted to wonder what it meant to them to sing about something they barely remember. Another audience member reflected on her experience overhearing children in the audience: “Two young girls attended the concert—ages 7 and 9! Sat behind us with their grandpa. They asked many questions during the first few minutes. How does one teach children of disasters such as 9/11? Is this piece appropriate for children? No easy answers!”<sup>99</sup>

No easy answers, indeed. There are no easy answers to the question of how and why we memorialize, it follows too that there is no easy way to understand the memorials we encounter either; our collective demands on them are too complex. By focusing on collage as an active principle in contemporary memorialization, we can better understand the difficulty and inadequacy of forming any single message or perspective. There is certainly no shortage of examples of collage memorials: tribute albums or benefit concerts or collaborative compositions

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<sup>98</sup> Survey, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Survey, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union, Detroit, MI, February 24–26, 2012.

like *Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* to engage multiple voices in a single commemoration, or the multi-source musical and textual compilations that constitute Richard Wernick's *Kaddish-Requiem*, Arthur Bliss's *Morning Heroes*, Steven Stucky's *August 4, 1964*, or perhaps most iconic of all, Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*.

Yet rarely have scholars engaged these works as polysemic collages. Mervyn Cooke's brief monograph *Britten: War Requiem* largely considers contrast on a local level as part of Britten's text-setting, tracing instead continuities with the past and compositionally unifying elements throughout the composition.<sup>100</sup> Eric Saylor's treatment of Bliss's *Morning Heroes* follows a similar path, cursorily mentioning the diverse texts before calling attention to the juxtapositions of contrasting material in the final movement and ultimately emphasizing the movement's statement of a "rhetorical balance."<sup>101</sup> Both Cooke and Saylor provide informed and valuable analyses from the viewpoint of the composer, yet we must remember that the process of memorializing extends far beyond any single reading, or any single work.

James Herbert's work on the *War Requiem* offers one model. Herbert details an inescapable and mutually-necessary tension between faith and skepticism and contextualizes Britten's *War Requiem* alongside Coventry cathedral, whose consecration it commemorated. Both the *War Requiem* and the cathedral navigate between past and post-war present, and Herbert delivers a nuanced examination of how juxtapositions—in fact, collage, even if he does not name it as such—both within and between each shade the religious meanings found within:

Yet the *War Requiem* abjures the clarity of the cathedral's stringent polemic, for the musical composition allows for a reciprocity of inflection between the two juxtaposed sides; either can turn on the other. The fact that this requiem was composed for this cathedral on this occasion constitutes on its own an intriguing and knotty inversion of poles. When the chaos of modern warfare plays itself off against the (perhaps no longer)

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<sup>100</sup> Mervyn Cooke, *Britten: War Requiem* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

<sup>101</sup> Eric Saylor, "It's Not Lambkins Frisking At All": English Pastoral Music and the Great War," *The Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2008), 52.



eternal verities of the church and does so within a setting dedicated to the proposition that the modern church can overcome the destructiveness of past wars, then neither the modern nor the ancient, neither the comfortably whole nor the perspicuously fragmented, can unambiguously assume the mantle of moral authority.<sup>102</sup>

Herbert concludes that there are many interpretations, leaving us powerless to adjudicate between them.<sup>103</sup> The richness of Herbert's comparison lies in its messiness, the way it opens up questions he cannot answer, which strikes me as far more in line with the process of memorialization than more tightly argued analyses suggest.

This approach of eschewing a single reading may be most obviously suited to overtly contradictory works like the *War Requiem* or *On the Transmigration of Souls*, but is not limited to these. Luke Howard's work tracing the shifting reception history of less collage-like memorial works like Henryk Górecki's Symphony No. 3 and Barber's Adagio for Strings uncovers a surprisingly complex history of public attitudes toward both the works in question and memorials in general. Howard describes Górecki's symphony as "an audible Rorschach test [where] people heard in Górecki's symphony the musical allusions they wanted to hear."<sup>104</sup> Expectations have indeed provided much fodder for my own inquiry, and ought to take more central a role in analyses of public memorials alongside authorial intentions, for music can be malleable in its meaning and authorial control remains far from absolute in public works.

Furthermore, by focusing on musical memorials, this argument is well-poised to make the case that memorials should be understood as a process, a continually unfixed object where meaning is constructed simultaneously by a diverse public. Much has been written about physical memorials as iconographic or architectural objects; far less attention has been devoted

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<sup>102</sup> James D. Herbert, "Bad Faith at Coventry: Spence's Cathedral and Britten's *War Requiem*," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 550–1.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 555

<sup>104</sup> Luke B. Howard, "Motherhood, *Billboard*, and the Holocaust: Perceptions and Receptions of Górecki's Symphony No. 3," *The Musical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 148. For Howard's work on Barber's Adagio, see Luke Howard, "The Popular Reception of Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*," *American Music* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 50–80.

to memorials as space that viewers move through, interact with, and change through the leaving of artifacts. Environmental changes, such as time of day, season, or weather impact the visual experience of memorials like the Vietnam wall, as might the presence of flags, wreaths, flowers and other official or unofficial ceremonial objects. Musical memorials too have often been treated as objects—scores—that remain fixed in time. Both Herbert’s and Howard’s work undo this treatment by considering memorialization and meaning-making as processes that change over time. With more space, my discussion might expand to consider the nuances of concert halls as acoustic and aesthetic settings, community make-up, or the contextualization of the piece including programming, pre-concert lectures, or advertisements shape the meaning of these musical memorials.

While pondering how memorials are encountered and understood in different ways, I came across one audience member’s reaction to *On the Transmigration of Souls* that crystallized some of my own broader concerns:

During the break my girlfriend and I sussed it up pretty quickly: we were surprised with how literal the piece was, and this was a bad thing. All the choices were made for us. This had a lot to do with the soundbytes and the literal (read: too obvious and lacking poetics) nature of the choral lyrics. Everyone should have the opportunity to remember the events of 9/11 in their own way, and Adams didn't allow the listener to do that. It's expected that the composer needs to lead the listener into an experience, but once led into that space, and wrestling with that content, the listener should have more agency to interpret the music (or dance, or poetry, or sculpture, etc.) as suits him/her. The Transmigration piece was far too literal, far too obvious, far too directed. That actually offends me as an audience member. Offends me because I want to participate. That doesn't mean I need to pick up a flute and blow, but rather that I want to play a role in my own cognitive and affective experience of the work. There was something about this piece that I felt didn't permit that. The work was too narrow. I had hoped for something that offered more psychological spaciousness for me to explore.<sup>105</sup>

Both the Adams and the Corigliano, and many other musical memorials, are quite literal in that they either set text or follow a textual program; it is not surprising that listeners easily

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<sup>105</sup> Survey, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011.

constructed a reading. After all, collage does not negate narrative readings but rather multiplies them.

What struck me about this note was not that one listener walked away feeling somewhat manipulated and forced by the music (in fact, several others felt similarly) but that his dissatisfaction echoed so well my own dissatisfaction with the scholarship on musical memorials that focuses too happily on a single literal reading rather than on the multiplicity of potential readings. Like the tragedies they commemorate, memorials are both collective and intensely personal. A community of scholars and performers can do a great service by opening up memorials, including performances of these works, as moments of dialogue, by seeking out the questions and tensions rather than the usual task of offering answers in the form of program notes or lectures. That so many audience members had so much to say and wanted to participate in the process of memorializing 9/11 seems to me the perfect complement to the unruly, polyvocal collages deployed by the composers, and a model for artistic-civic engagement. Hearing the collages of both the memorial and the community fulfills the “ethical responsibility” of memorializing, a process begun by the composer but only realized by a community gathered together to reflect, remember, and respond.

**Appendix 4A: Survey on John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*  
and Data Collected from Performances in Six Cities**

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this performance of John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*. My name is Dan Blim and I am a graduate student at the University of Michigan, researching how audiences respond to this work. I am not affiliated with the DSO.

1) On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely), how well do the following words describe your impression of the piece?

SOMBER	_____	MONUMENTAL	_____	AMERICAN	_____
INTIMATE	_____	TASTELESS	_____	SPIRITUAL	_____
PATRIOTIC	_____	DISTURBING	_____	UPLIFTING	_____
CATHARTIC	_____	TIMELESS	_____	EMOTIONAL	_____

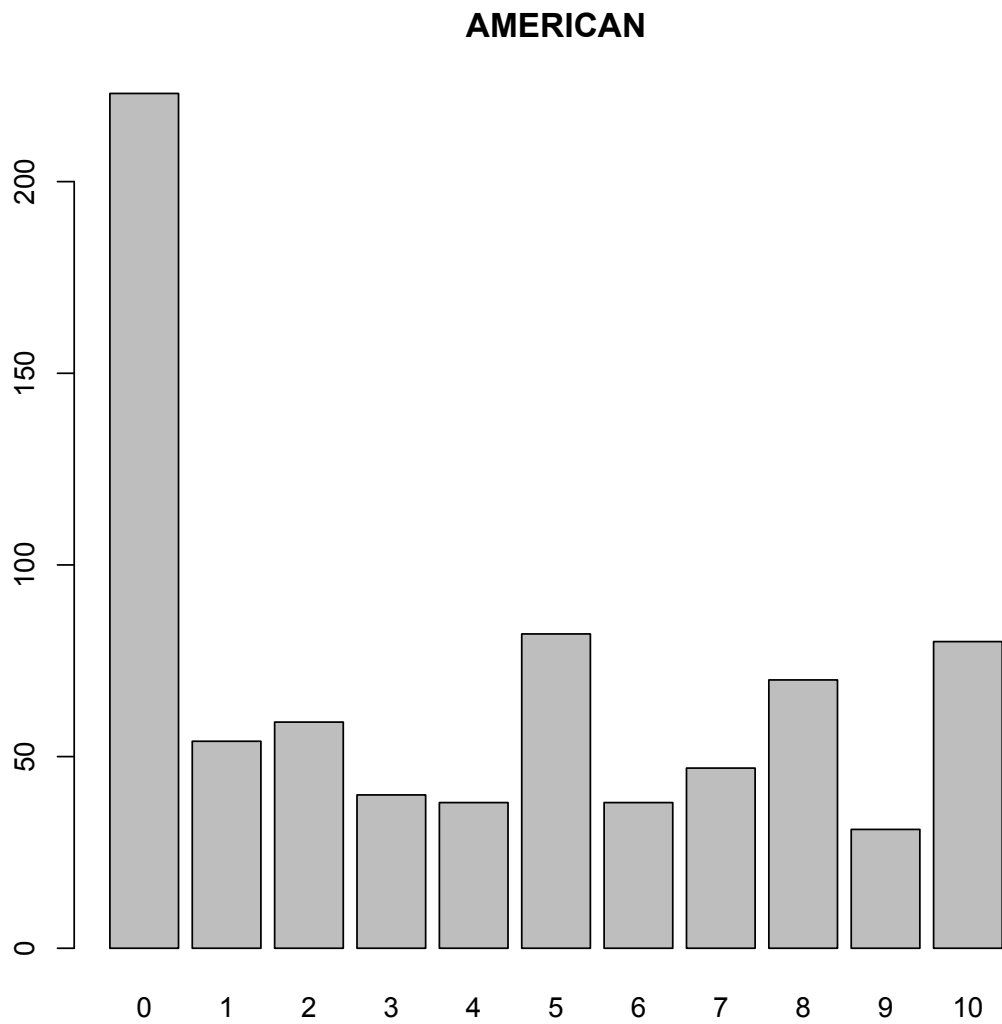
2) What other words, images, or memories came to mind while listening?

3) What message, if any, did the piece deliver to you?

4) What message, if any, did you expect the piece to deliver to you?

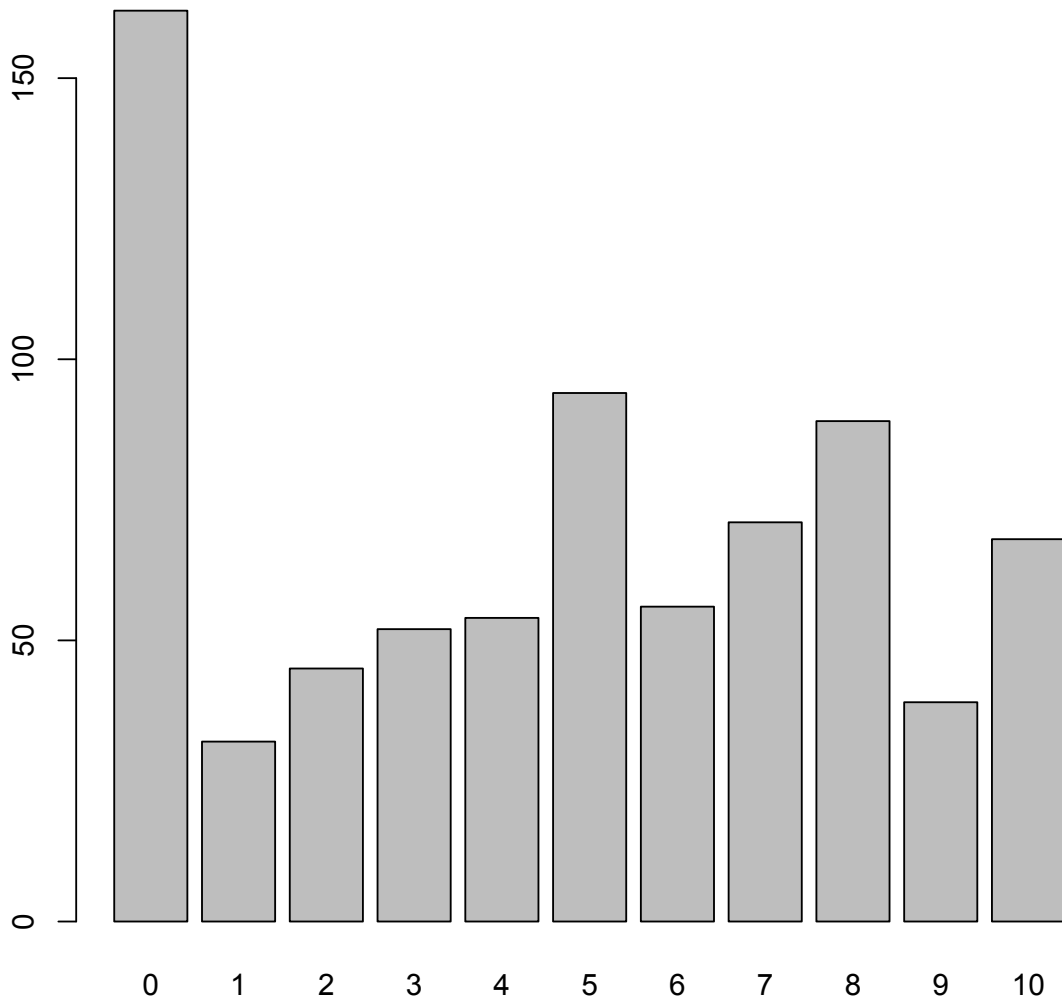
5) If you have any other thoughts, please share them below.

**Appendix 4B: Audiences Ratings of Adjectives Describing John Adams’s *On the Transmigration of Souls***



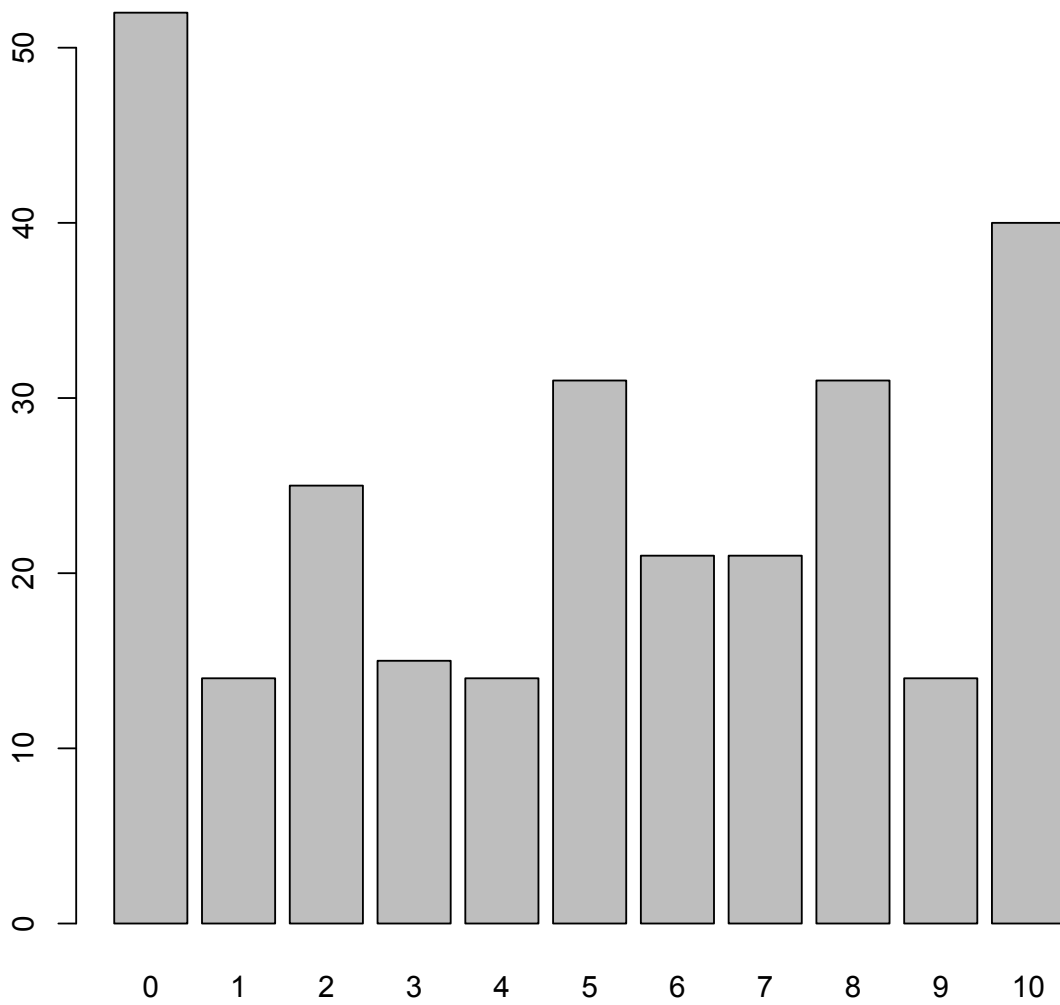
**Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “American”**

## CATHARTIC



Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Cathartic”

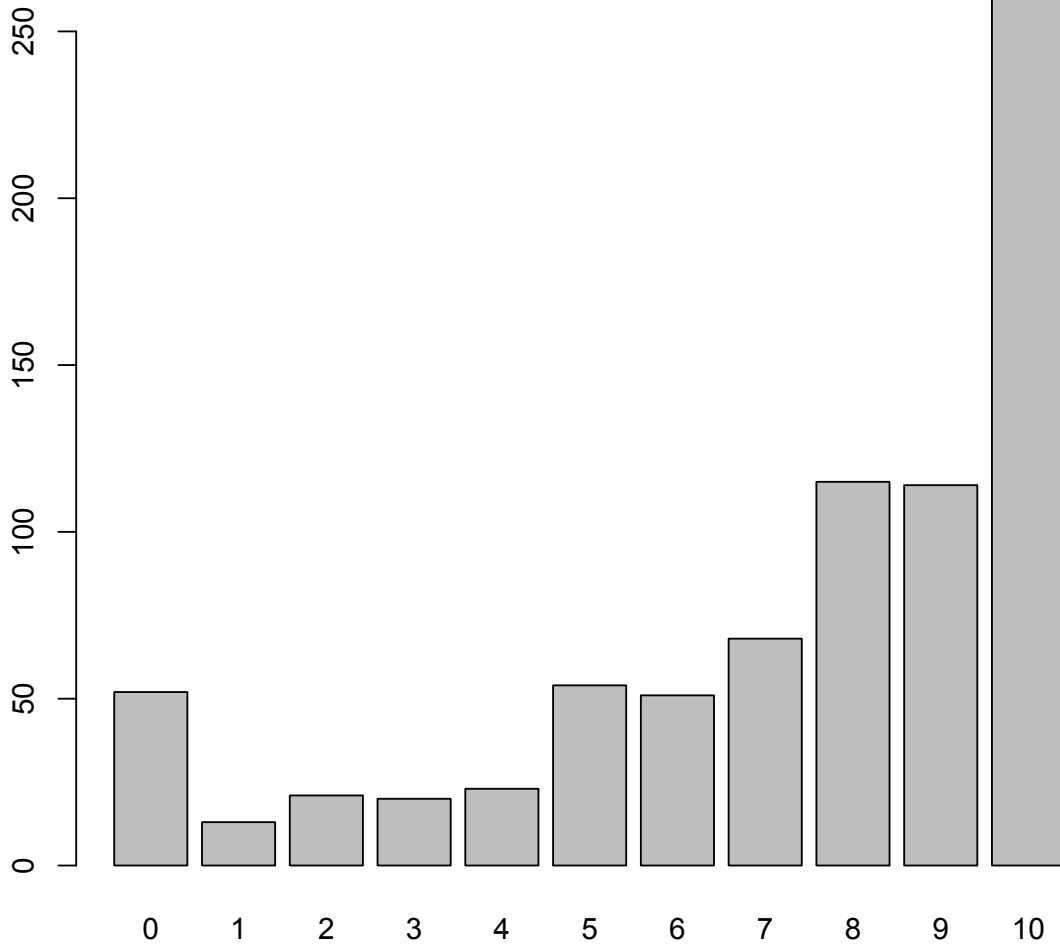
## DISTURBING



### Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Disturbing”

(note: “Disturbing” was not included in Surveys of Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Denver, CO, May 28–30, 2010 or of Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and Harvard Glee Club, Cambridge, MA, April 29–30, 2011)

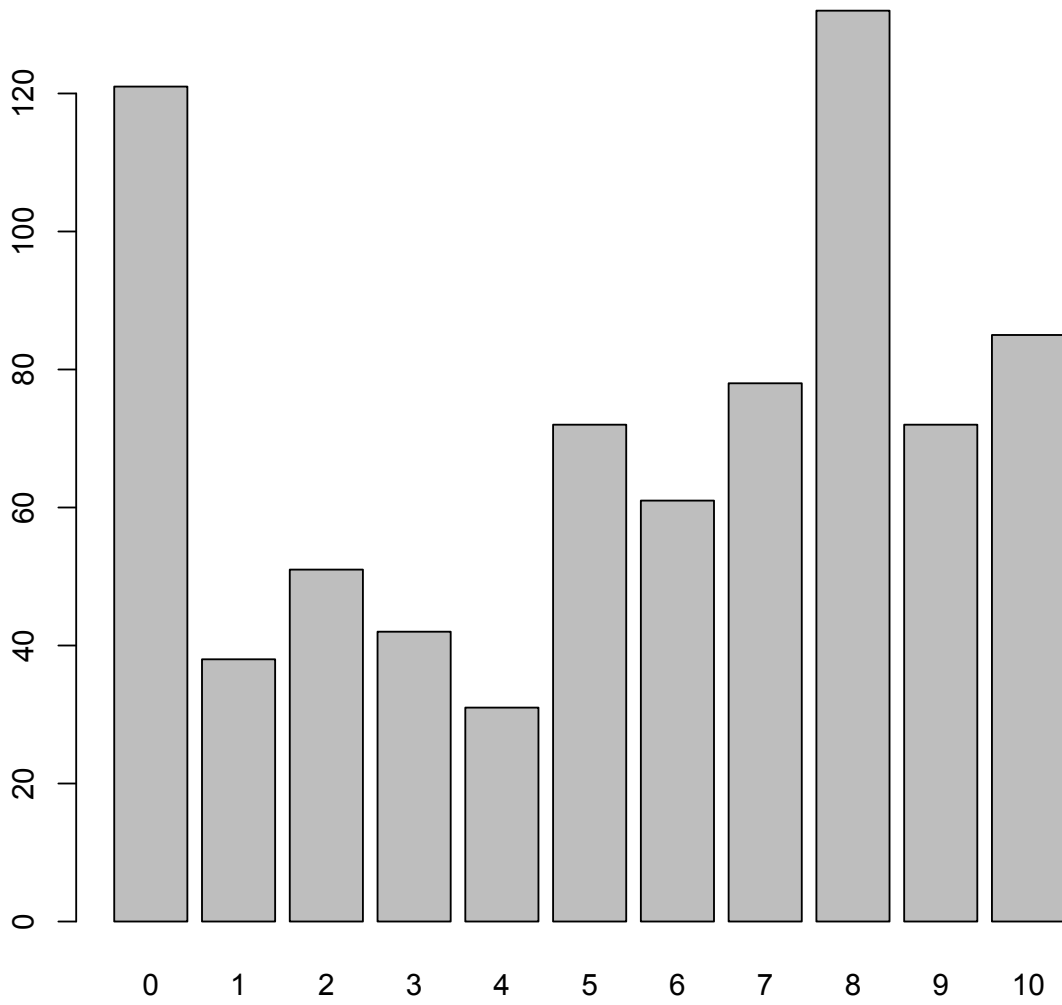
## EMOTIONAL



**Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Emotional”**

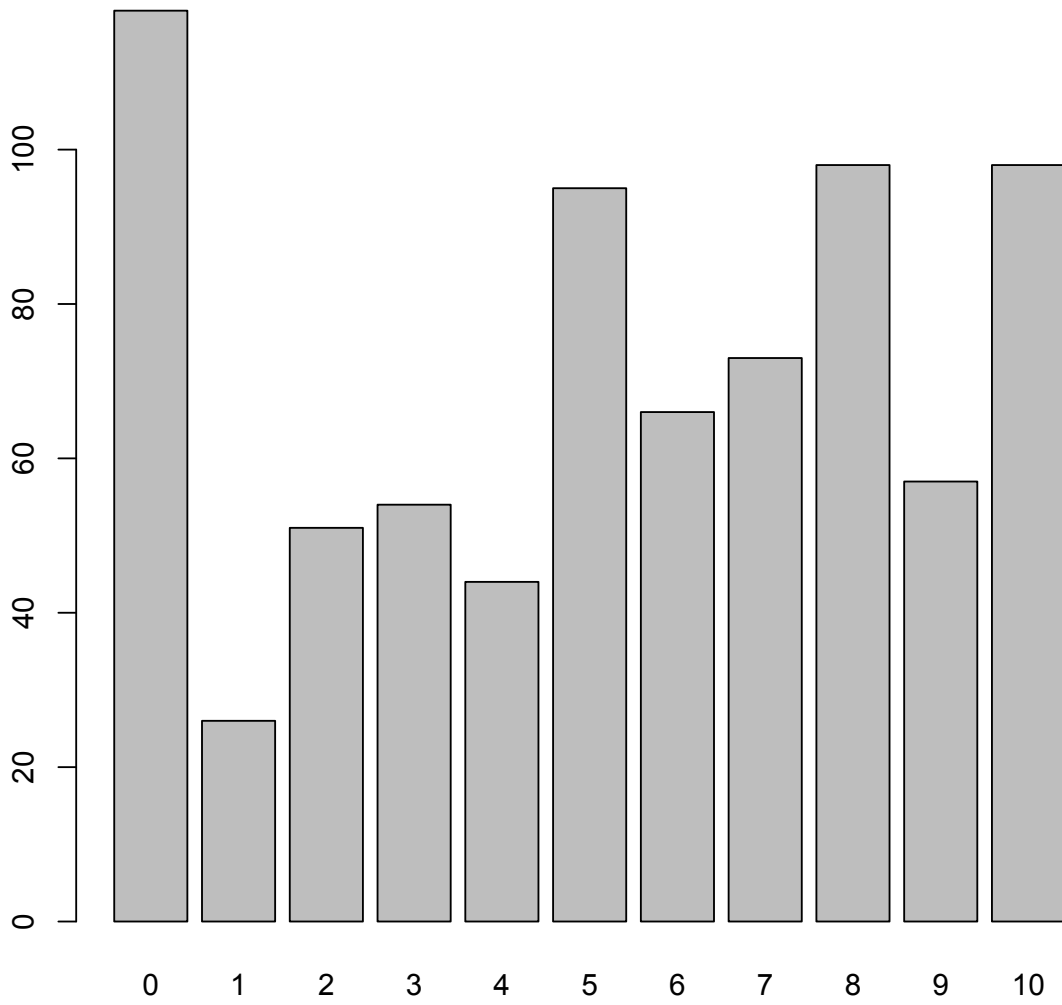


## INTIMATE



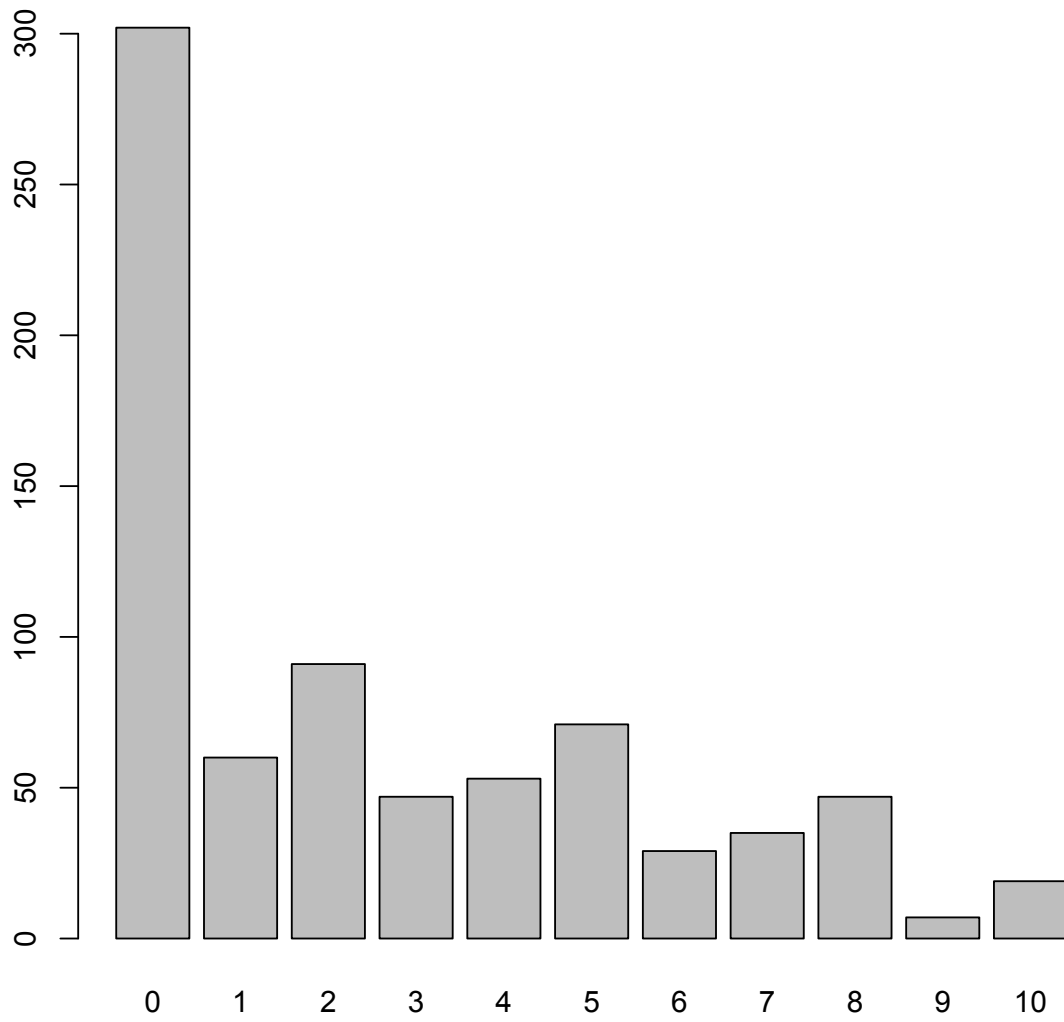
Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Intimate”

## MONUMENTAL



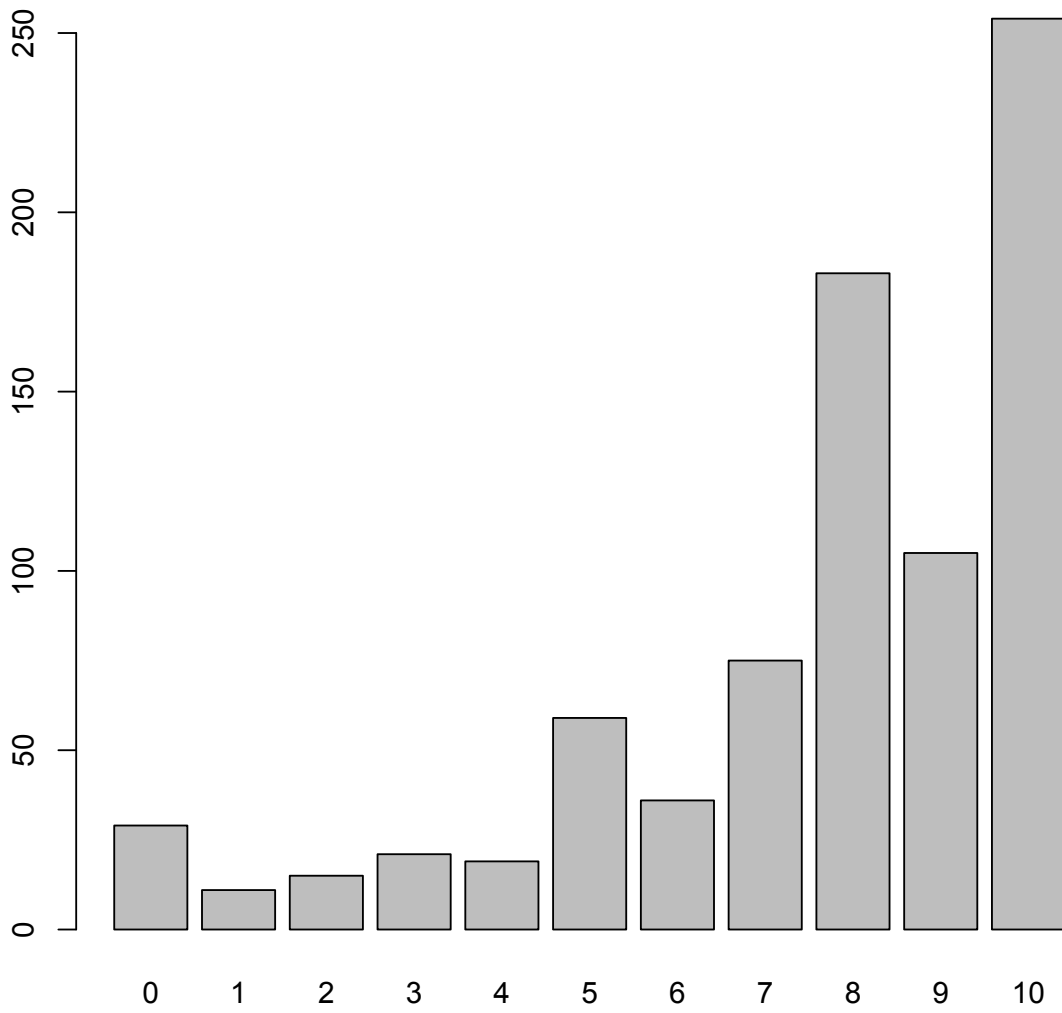
Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Monumental”

## PATRIOTIC



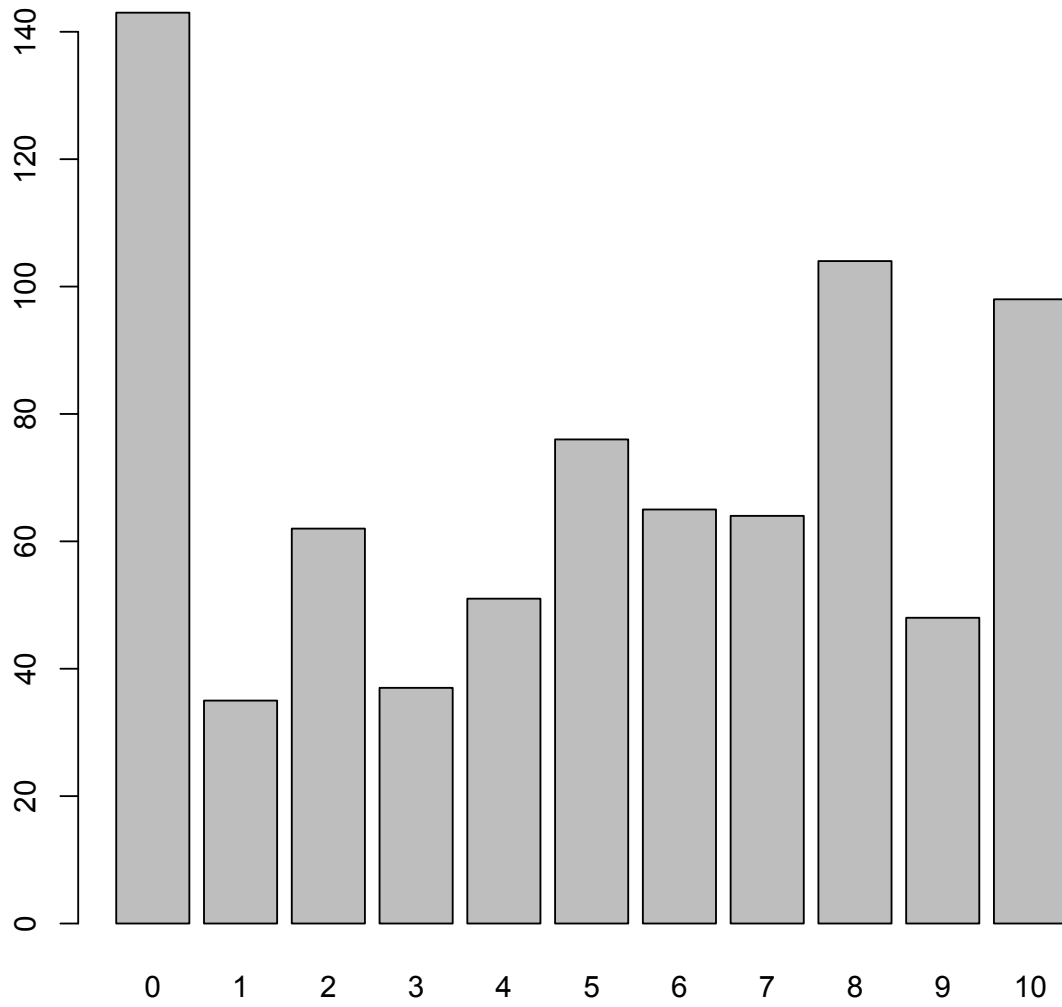
Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Patriotic”

## SOMBER



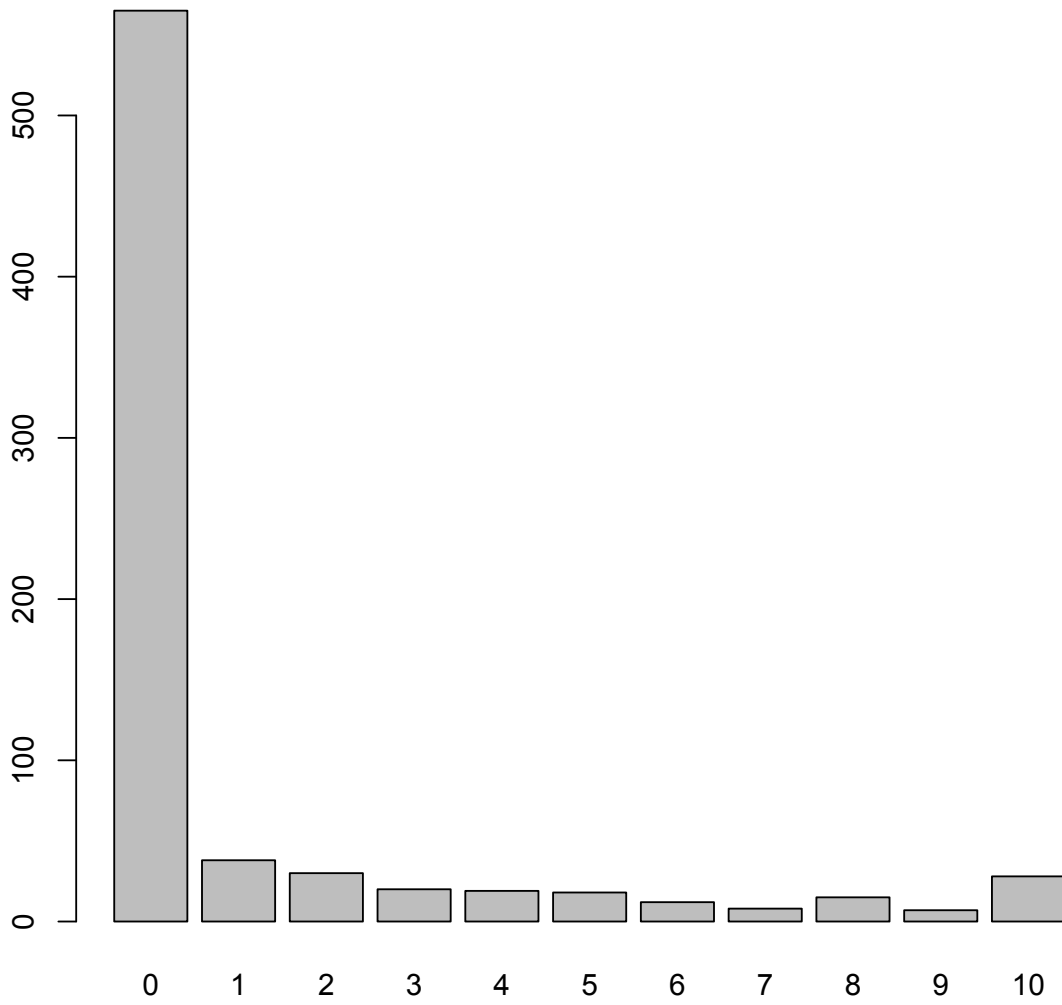
**Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Somber”**

## SPIRITUAL



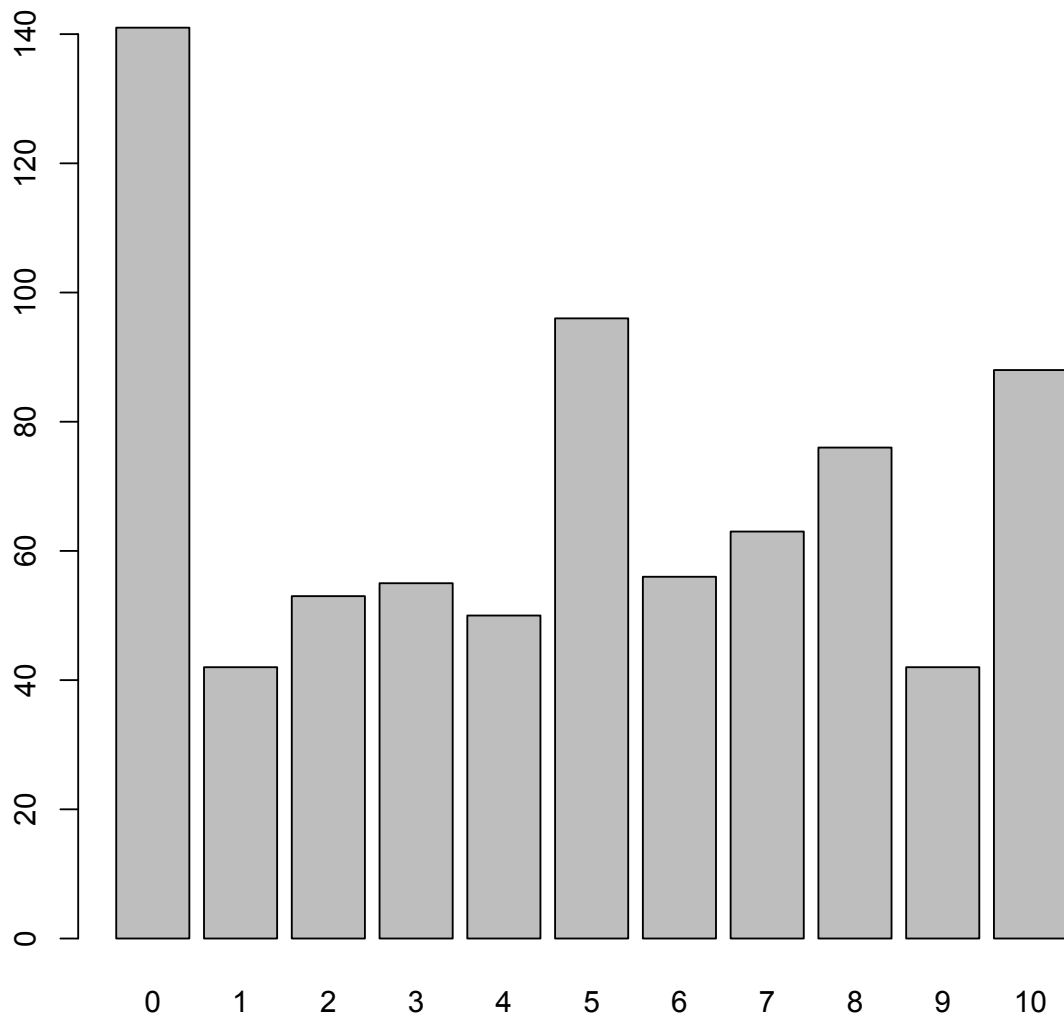
**Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Spiritual”**

## TASTELESS



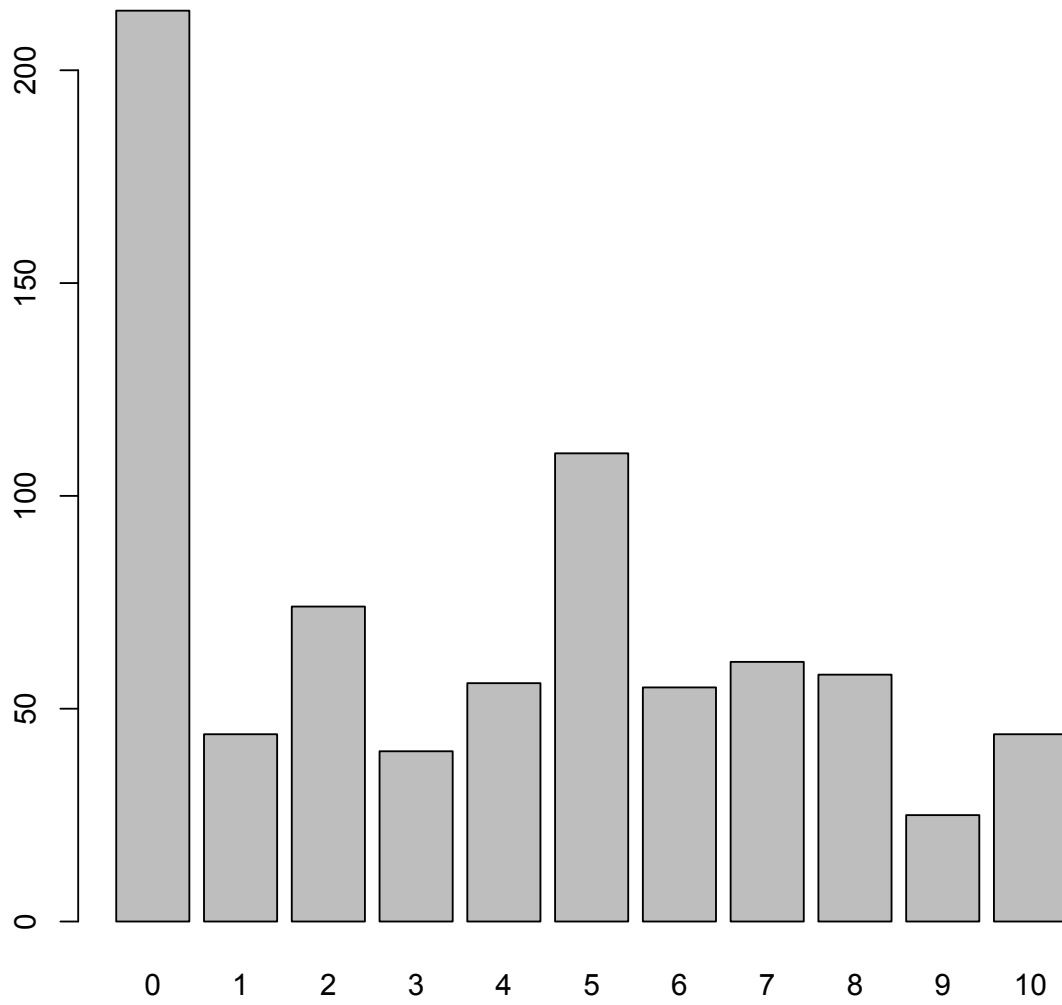
Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Tasteless”

## TIMELESS



Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Timeless”

## UPLIFTING



**Survey Responses to Rating *On the Transmigration of Souls* as “Uplifting”**



**Correlation Values Between Paired  
Adjective Ratings on Survey Responses  
for *On the Transmigration of Souls***

	AMERICAN	CATHARTIC	DISTURBING	EMOTIONAL	INTIMATE	MONUMENTAL	PATRIOTIC	SOMBER	SPIRITUAL	TASTELESS	TIMELESS
AMERICAN	0.417887739										
CATHARTIC	0.003461424	0.043954491									
DISTURBING	0.426529258	0.567079363	0.060375354								
EMOTIONAL	0.391390242	0.517493348	-0.03519537	0.606466692							
INTIMATE	0.481010808	0.62107184	0.056820679	0.657566963	0.5423359492						
MONUMENTAL	0.627374612	0.394500558	-0.00919931	0.334486705	0.39431147	0.370262581					
PATRIOTIC	0.18511033	0.324601025	0.185522767	0.428336084	0.439321121	0.375229103	0.167468137				
SOMBER	0.467742517	0.540288489	-0.02890278	0.578974435	0.544320606	0.585954857	0.427210333	0.31968201			
SPIRITUAL	-0.26187191	-0.35322109	0.070735251	-0.496642837	-0.45098013	-0.47475678	-0.20490018	-0.36381979	-0.3834139		
TASTELESS	0.458060496	0.61681148	-0.01295906	0.550370132	0.534991233	0.6622914009	0.423610959	0.264212967	0.594194645	-0.39819469	
TIMELESS	0.439677584	0.60374611	-0.20822626	0.474213143	0.45631175	0.551765617	0.431906619	0.236853506	0.648159188	-0.3745194	0.647378754
UPLIFTING											

## Chapter Five

### **The Electoral Collage: Mapping Barack Obama's Mediated Identities in the 2008 Election**

#### **“A Collage of Stories”**

On the night of his historic election to the office of President of the United States, Barack Obama addressed the nation:

If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer. ...It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled. Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

All at once, Obama articulates a message of unity and inclusiveness by singling out the various identity politics that characterize and complicate an engagement with American electoral politics. Pundits and scholars similarly dissected the election along demographic lines. Obama triumphed by not only gaining an overwhelming majority of African Americans who turned out to the polls in record numbers, but also a solid majority of Hispanic- and Asian-American voters. Obama also turned out record numbers of first-time and young voters. He even exceeded his Democratic presidential predecessors in the support he garnered among women, despite his defeating Hillary Clinton, a well-respected former First Lady in the primary, and John McCain's

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of Barack Obama's victory speech accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/04/us/politics/04text-obama.html>.

selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate, only the second female politician to be placed on a mainstream party ticket. Yet upon his election, many pundits focused most centrally on race, hailing the moment as ushering in a new era of a “post-racial” America.

The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States was a momentous occasion, to be sure, but what the election of an African-American man as president meant is still the subject of endless debate. The moment was certainly an emotional vindication for African Americans after decades of struggling for civil rights. But whereas the efforts against racism in the 1960s had united blacks against very visible forms of racial discrimination and oppression, Obama’s victory emerged at a time when black racial identities had shifted. During the primary, older African Americans largely supported Hillary Clinton. Matt Bai explains, “Black leaders who rose to political power in the years after the civil rights marches came almost entirely from the pulpit and the movement, and they have always defined leadership, in broad terms, as speaking *for* black Americans. They saw their job, principally, as confronting an inherently racist white establishment.”<sup>2</sup> Obama, by contrast, did not intend to speak for the black community against the white, but sought to speak to both, and by setting his sights on the Senate and the Presidency, rather than on the urban mayoral or Congressional representative positions that African Americans had been more successful in, Obama was no longer representing a predominantly black constituency.

Indeed, African-American communities debated Obama’s ability to represent them culturally. First, Obama was not simply African-American but biracial and raised by his white relatives, a fact that he often stressed in the campaign as a way of bridging the racial divide through his own history. Obama had no ancestral connection to slavery, but was the son of a

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<sup>2</sup> Matt Bai, “Is Obama the End of Black Politics?” *The New York Times Magazine* August 6, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10politics-t.html>.

black African immigrant father and a white Midwestern mother, spinning a tale of the American dream made possible rather than denied, another trope that spoke broadly to an audience of many races who had also immigrated here. These narratives of biraciality and immigration likely spoke more to Hispanic and Asian Americans, whose “group boundaries appear to be fading more rapidly than for blacks, signaling that today’s new nonwhites are *not* strongly assimilating as racialized minorities” and that “experiences with multiraciality among Latinos and Asians are closer to those of whites than blacks.”<sup>3</sup> Obama’s childhood was spent in Indonesia and Hawaii, removed from the battles against Jim Crow and urban poverty many blacks of the older generation saw as crucial to their racial identity. Obama’s invocation of his Pacific childhood again was often used to connect him to Asian-American voters. As Jonathan Y. Okamura has explained, Obama’s adoption of a Hawaiian persona also aligned him with Hawaii’s status as a model for multiculturalism. Yet even within this model, African Americans were not customarily afforded “local” status. Okamura conjectures that Obama, as a child, found Hawaii “offered little to him in finding and establishing his identity as an African American, hence his journey as a young man in pursuit of his blackness to the continental United States.”<sup>4</sup>

Given the diasporic nature of Obama’s heritage, spanning three continents and two oceans, and his ability to adopt, at various times, white, black, and Asian identities, defining his identity proves a tricky task. Gwen Brown’s description of Obama as “a collage of many different stories” affords a helpful model because collage allows us to acknowledge how each “Obama,” articulated through each story, existed somewhat independently and simultaneously among the voting populace, as well as how the relationships between these stories shifted

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean, “Reinventing the Color Line: Immigration and America’s New Racial/Ethnic Divide,” *Social Forces* 86, no. 2 (2007), 579.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Y. Okamura, “Barack Obama as the post-racial candidate for a post-racial America: perspectives from Asian America and Hawai‘i,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 45, no. 1–2 (2011), 152.

strategically to create the semblance of a single candidate.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the campaign, these different stories of Obama were rearticulated in various contexts to various audiences, accumulating contradictions and provoking debates. Furthermore, collage helps understand how Obama's identity was not simply constructed by his many stories, but by the way these stories came into contact with the stories of other candidates. Obama's youth stood out even more collaged against the age of John McCain, while Obama's maleness would hardly have been noteworthy in a political campaign had his story not been placed against Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin.

Yet here we see how collage's intricacies are at play. Viewed one way, Obama's victory over Clinton affirms that race carries a more powerful narrative among voters. But the invocation of generations in the gender debate resonates perfectly with debates on race, struggling with that same issue. Matt Bai contrasts older black politicians who had to speak "*for* black Americans" with those like Obama: "Comfortable inside the establishment, bred at universities rather than seminaries, they are just as likely to see themselves as ambassadors *to* the black community as they are to see themselves as spokesmen for it, which often means extolling middle-class values in urban neighborhoods, as Obama did on Father's Day."<sup>6</sup> With the growing economic success of African Americans and the emergence of a black middle class in recent decades, class differences challenge racial commonality. Political strategist Donna Brazile, when interviewed by satirical news host Stephen Colbert about her loyalties in the election, responded, "Look, I'm a woman, so I like Hillary. I'm black, I like Obama. But I'm also grumpy, so I like John McCain."<sup>7</sup> As the identities of voters shift along multiple lines, framing Obama's victory solely

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<sup>5</sup> Gwen Brown "A More Perfect Union: Barack Obama's Failed Apologia and Successful Use of Identity Politics," in Robert E. Denton Jr., *Studies of Identity in the 2008 Presidential Campaign*, 57.

<sup>6</sup> Bai.

<sup>7</sup> *The Colbert Report*, Comedy Central, Aired April 30, 2008.

in terms of race becomes more complex. Obama's success may not be proof of moving beyond racism, but does accurately reflect a moment of new racial identities, where the category of blackness is no longer unified or easily defined in the United States.

This realization has complicated efforts to combat subtler forms of racism that still remain in the age of Obama. Orlando Patterson notes that “accounts of what constitutes post-black identity turn out to be nothing more than the shared experience of living with, and overcoming, lingering old-fashioned racism, of learning to ignore the white gaze, along with the added burden of disregarding the censoring black one.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, Obama's “blackness” carried numerous paradoxical consequences. He was heralded as post-racial among some, seen as too black for some fearful white voters, held as a model of blackness among hopeful African Americans, questioned by other African Americans as not black enough. Obama's blackness did not vanish as a post-racial candidate might suggest; on the contrary, it raised the scrutiny of race throughout the whole campaign and remained in effect after he took office. Ta-Nehisi Coates argues persuasively that Obama simply could not help but inject race into any political discussion:

Before the president spoke, George Zimmerman was arguably the most reviled man in America. After the president spoke, Zimmerman became the patron saint of those who believe that an apt history of racism begins with Tawana Brawley and ends with the Duke lacrosse team. The irony of Barack Obama is this: he has become the most successful black politician in American history by avoiding the radioactive racial issues of yesteryear, by being “clean” (as Joe Biden once labeled him)—and yet his indelible blackness irradiates everything he touches. ... The president's inability to speak candidly on race cannot be bracketed off from his inability to speak candidly on everything. Race is not simply a portion of the Obama story. It is the lens through which many Americans view all his politics.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Orlando Patterson, “The Post-Black Condition” *The New York Times* September 22, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/books/review/whos-afraid-of-post-blackness-by-toure-book-review.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Fear of a Black President,” *The Atlantic*, August 22, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/>.

Pollster Cornell Belcher summarizes this contradiction grimly, “The thing is, a *black man* can’t be president in America, given the racial aversion and history that’s still out there. . . . However, an extraordinary, gifted, and talented young man who happens to be black can be president.”<sup>10</sup>

Belcher’s comment suggests that Obama’s race had to be seen as secondary in order for him to succeed. For white voters, the election of Obama seemed to confirm that race did not matter from the standpoint of racism. To be sure, there was certainly evidence of overt racism among whites in this election, from the hysterical “birther” movement and agitation that Obama was secretly a Muslim terrorist to polls during the primary that showed one in ten voters for Hillary Clinton in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio admitted that race played a factor; in West Virginia, that number rose to one in four.<sup>11</sup> But after Obama’s victory, these attributes were readily dismissed as a losing fringe minority. Nevertheless, as Shelby Steele observed:

There is an inherent contradiction in all this. When whites—especially today’s younger generation—proudly support Obama for his post-racialism, they unwittingly embrace race as their primary motivation. They think and act racially, not post-racially. The point is that a post-racial society is a bargainer’s ploy: It seduces whites with a vision of their racial innocence precisely to coerce them into acting out of a racial motivation.<sup>12</sup>

Steele elsewhere likens this act of “bargaining” to a “mask,” a metaphor whose suggestion of simultaneous layers of identity recalls Brown’s metaphor of a “collage of stories,” or more accurately, a collage of identities.<sup>13</sup> That Obama’s election raised such powerful contradictions about race today speaks to the power of collage to do so, to refuse easy assimilation between the various competing images of Obama.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Grunwald, “For Obama, Race Remains Elephant in the Room,” September 15, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1841109,00.html>

<sup>12</sup> Shelby Steele, “Obama’s Post-Racial Promise,” *The Los Angeles Times*, <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinionla/la-oe-steele5-2008nov05,0,6049031.story>.

<sup>13</sup> The conception of masks as a form of collage is asserted compellingly by Glenn Watkins in chapters 11–13 of his book *Pyramids at the Louvre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

This chapter examines not only how Obama constructed a “collage of stories” through music, but how Americans, musicians and amateurs, in turn re-constructed Obama to reflect their own visions of him, visions which situate his identity as a potent symbol by which Americans could also articulate their own identities. Collage speaks to the diversity within American national identity, and specifically to the difficult task of navigating a shifting landscape of differences, racial and otherwise, when reinscribing a collective, singular identity “America.” Collage, through its flexibility as a form, also speaks to the range of opinions about this diversity, trying to pin down exactly what Obama’s election meant especially on the subject of race. Doing so, I also stress the sheer multitude of ways in which collage has become part of the daily cultural landscape, which people have become quite accustomed to: YouTube mashups, iPod playlists, hip hop sampling, and star-studded concerts.



## Collage and Campaign Advertising

The act of collage is central to the modern campaign advertisement. Such a development is fitting, for Pablo Picasso's invention of collage drew heavily on the newspaper and its political reporting, as Patricia Leighton has argued.<sup>14</sup> More broadly speaking, collage has held a sustained relationship with commercial products and advertisements. The first collage produced by Picasso affixed a synthetic paper image of chair caning to his canvas, Robert Rauschenberg adapted the commercial practice of silkscreening to create his collages, and contemporary artist Barbara Kruger creates collages by appropriating advertising images and texts to critique material culture and media images. Others have suggested that Joseph Cornell's collages are the byproduct of American commercial culture; Robert Stam writes that Cornell "turned the flotsam of daily life—broken dolls, paper cutouts, wine glasses, medicine bottles—into luminous, childlike collages," something Joan and John Digby echo in their claim that the United States' commercial "economy has made it a watershed of collage" by the sheer volume of its material detritus.<sup>15</sup>

While collage has long made use of commercial culture, commercials have become more collage-like in the modern television and internet era. Today, collage is *de rigueur* for commercial culture, present both in media, including music videos and film trailers, and in consumer practices, including channel- and web-surfing. Indeed, the proliferation and placements of advertisements both online and in public spaces creates a distracting collage effect

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<sup>14</sup> Patricia Leighton, "Picasso's Collages and the Threat of War, 1912–13" in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 121–70.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Stam, "Beyond Third Cinema: The Aesthetics of Hybridity" in *Rethinking Third Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake and Anthony Guneratne (New York: Routledge, 2003), 35; John and Joan Digby, *The Collage Handbook* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 30.

from their multiple, proximate placements. Political commercials have adapted to this format, shifting from the earlier model of long, direct statements from candidates to advertisements that dovetailed with standard advertising practices, resulting in thirty- or sixty-second spots. To convey their message so succinctly and powerfully, ads use editing and montage to juxtapose and superimpose images, text, and music to create semiotically rich collages. Today, it's not uncommon to see ads that echo visual collages, images of ripped newspaper headlines superimposed on images of the candidate, or ads that employ rapid montage sequences of stirring images and text to build a point.

Advertisements in the 2008 election repeatedly employed collage and montage to connect Obama to Bill Ayers and McCain to President Bush; to connect (or distance) each candidate from the middle class and national symbols, particularly the troops; and to draw policy contrasts between each other. McCain's ad "Compare" provides a fairly textbook example of this last option.<sup>16</sup> A narrator emphasizes short phrases that contrast Obama's policies and priorities ("Spread Your Income," "Pain for Small Business," "Risky") to McCain's ("Keep What's Yours," "Economic Growth," "Proven"). Visually enhancing this, the ad is a montage between images of an angry or dour Obama against a blue background and a smiling McCain against a red background. McCain is positioned always on the left of the screen, looking right, suggesting a forward direction; Obama is positioned on the right, looking left, or backwards-looking (Figure 5.1).<sup>17</sup> But considering this ad as a collage between two images also highlights the scoring practice. A synthesized string ensemble plays a harmonic progression in even, moderato pulses,

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<sup>16</sup> "Compare," uploaded by JohnMcCaindotcom at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kft419nw4zc>, October 27, 2008. This advertisement was created by prominent media consultant Fred Davis and Foxhole Productions, and appears to also have gone by the name "Your Choice." See Chris Mottola, "Advertising" in *Electing the President 2008: The Insiders' View*, ed. Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). 116 and The Living Room Candidate, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008/compare-r>.

<sup>17</sup> The left to right suggests "forward" to most audience members because viewers instinctively read images the same way they would text, which, for readers of English and many other languages, is left to right.

around 110 beats per minute. The music would not normally come across as a collage, yet its odd harmonic progression features the same “collage principle” Nicholas Cook describes in Beethoven, how emotional meaning is created through juxtaposition and rupture.<sup>18</sup> The harmonic motion of the music is carefully matched to sync as closely as possible with the narration and the visual cuts between candidates. Obama’s music is almost exclusively minor chords, matching his images in the ad as unhappy or angry while McCain’s are exclusively major chords, matching his expression. Furthermore, Obama’s chords are the most prominent of Cook’s “collage principle,” as they interrupt the harmonic progression (Figure 5.2). As the narrator describes McCain’s position as “Keep What’s Yours,” the music reaches the dominant, yet Obama’s “Trillions in New Spending” interrupts with a minor iv chord. McCain’s promise to “Freeze Spending [and] Eliminate Waste” returns us to a major IV chord, but only briefly before Obama’s “Pain for Small Business” once again asserts the minor iv. In this moment, hearing the music as not a collage but collage-like helps to understand its role in the broader construction of the advertisement as collage, a juxtaposition of two opposing ideologies. McCain’s harmonies literally progress toward a resolution; Obama’s harmonies, and by subtle implication, his policies, move us backwards and cause discomfort.

Collage in advertisements need not always produce direct contrast; indeed, the ad is commonly used to create associative links between candidates and positive messages through juxtaposition. Both campaigns employed collage to appeal to voters’ emotions and judge the character of each candidate, though McCain’s campaign was widely recognized—and criticized—as doing it more frequently. Obama’s ad “Still” collages together a wealth of signifiers of the past to highlight John McCain’s age: news footage from the beginning of

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Cook, “Uncanny Moments: Juxtaposition and the Collage Principle in Music,” in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 107–34.

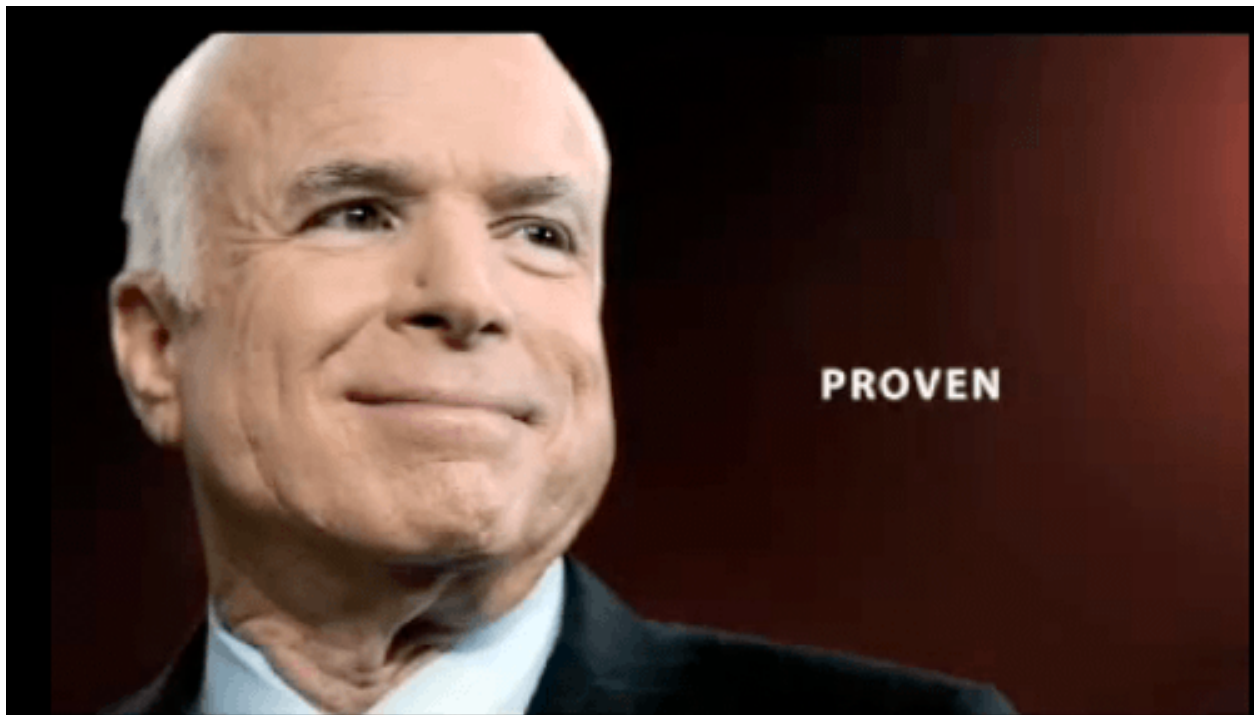
McCain's Congressional career in 1982 is mixed in with a disco ball, a record player, a Rubik's cube, and footage of now comically antiquated models of cell phones and computers, along with an underscoring of smooth, jazzy elevator music of vibraphone, drums, and flute.<sup>19</sup> The images suggest a broad trope of "outdated" and "uncool," linked by association to John McCain, who would have been the oldest newly elected president. This trope overrides the potential readings by any of the images: the Rubik's cube might, in another context, suggest intelligence, while the disco ball might suggest club culture more broadly, but the specific arrangement of these images into this specific collage along with the date 1982, the narration describing how much things have changed, and the musical accompaniment adjusts and shapes the collage's message effectively. As a result, the ad's later critiques of McCain's economic policies are further tied to McCain's concept of being out of touch, his ideas outdated, problematically eliding generational lines with class lines.

John McCain's "Celeb" advertisement targeted Obama as "the biggest celebrity in the world" but questioning his ability to lead as well as his policies on oil and taxes.<sup>20</sup> Through montage, the ad intercuts between crowds, paparazzi flashes, Obama, and images of Britney Spears and Paris Hilton, accompanied by the sound of a crowd cheering "O-ba-ma!" and flashbulbs clicking in the same three beat pattern as the cheer. The ad was one of the most widely discussed of the election, because its juxtaposition of Obama with Spears and Hilton was so effective at grabbing attention within a celebrity-obsessed culture. But unlike Obama's "Still" advertisement, "Celeb" demonstrates how collage can remain an open-ended form with multiple

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<sup>19</sup> "'Still' Ad," uploaded by BarackObamadotcom at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ2I0t\\_Twk0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ2I0t_Twk0), September 11, 2008. The ad is credited to The Obama Media Team. See Jeff Zeleny, "Portraying McCain as a Man of the Past," *The New York Times* September 13, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/13/us/politics/13oadbox.html>.

<sup>20</sup> "Celeb," uploaded by JohnMcCaindotcom at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHXYsw\\_ZDXg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHXYsw_ZDXg), July 30, 2008. The ad was created by Fred Davis and Foxhole Productions, see Robert Farley, "GOP Ad Guru Fred Davis versus the Truth-O-Meter," Politifact.com September 23, 2010, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2010/sep/23/gop-ad-guru-fred-davis-versus-truth-o-meter/> and The Living Room Candidate, <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008/celeb>.



**Figure 5.1: Candidate Images from McCain’s Ad “Compare”**

Image	Text	Music
Blank	Your Choice	C major
Obama	Higher Taxes	A minor, D minor
McCain	Workin' Joes	F major
Obama	Spread Your Income	D minor
McCain	Keep What's Yours	G major
Obama	New Spending	F minor
McCain	Freeze Spending, Eliminate Waste	F major
Obama	Pain for Small Business	F minor, C major
McCain	Economic Growth	C major
Obama	Risky	D minor
McCain	Proven	G major, F major, C major

**Figure 5.2: Musical Harmonic Progression in McCain’s Ad “Compare”**

readings.

Many, of course, read into it the intended surface connection that linked Obama with celebrities, underscoring a distinction between fame and experience, as the ad asks, “Is he ready to lead?” But others found subtler narratives exposed through the collage of images. Some read a critique not just of Obama’s experience, but of the media as being too enamored with Obama and treating him like a celebrity, a charge McCain raised explicitly in contemporaneous ads. Adele Stan critiques the ad’s sexism in selecting Spears and Hilton, likening the ad to a “slutty dumb blonde joke,” and reads the ad as feminizing Obama, whom the McCain camp had said reacted to the ad “like most celebrities...with a mix of fussiness and hysteria.”<sup>21</sup> Bob Herbert, meanwhile,

<sup>21</sup> Adele Stan, “McCain Ad a ‘Dumb Blonde’ Joke,” *The Huffington Post* July 31, 2008, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adele-stan/mccain-ad-a-dumb-blonde-j\\_b\\_116024.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adele-stan/mccain-ad-a-dumb-blonde-j_b_116024.html).

read the ad as masculine and highly sexualized, identifying the ad's inclusion of the Victory Column and the Washington Monument as phallic symbols.<sup>22</sup> Herbert writes:

Now, from the hapless but increasingly venomous McCain campaign, comes the slimy Britney Spears and Paris Hilton ad. The two highly sexualized women (both notorious for displaying themselves to the paparazzi while not wearing underwear) are shown briefly and incongruously at the beginning of a commercial critical of Mr. Obama. The Republican National Committee targeted Harold Ford with a similarly disgusting ad in 2006 when Mr. Ford, then a congressman, was running a strong race for a U.S. Senate seat in Tennessee. The ad, which the committee described as a parody, showed a scantily clad woman whispering, "Harold, call me." Both ads were foul, poisonous and emanated from the upper reaches of the Republican Party. (What a surprise.) Both were designed to exploit the hostility, anxiety and resentment of the many white Americans who are still freakishly hung up on the idea of black men rising above their station and becoming sexually involved with white women.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas interpretations that suggest Obama is a celebrity, the media are paparazzi, or that Obama is feminized require the collage to read as essentially linking the images as congruent, Herbert's reading is more complex, relying on a collage that underscores racial difference and contrast between Obama and both Hilton and Spears.

This is precisely the appeal—and danger—of collage in political ads. Collage provides campaigns an ability to suggest hyperbolic thoughts and emotions, things they could never overtly claim, such as that Obama is as dumb and unqualified to lead as Paris Hilton, or McCain still uses a cell phone from 1982. And by not overtly saying them, they provide a cover, such that when Herbert and others observed racial subtext in advertisements, it was they and Obama who were accused of "playing the race card." Collage creates a complex balance of interpretative power between maker and audience, which can be a great help when the helpful messages are inferred, or a liability when advertisements backfire and unintended readings damage a campaign's credibility. Collage also works simply, blending seamlessly into the cultural

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<sup>22</sup> *Morning Joe*, MSNBC, Aired August 4, 2008

<sup>23</sup> Bob Herbert, "Running While Black," *The New York Times*, August 2, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02herbert.html>.

expectations of collage in media and advertising yet still attracting attention through iconic and memorable images, soundbites, and references. In this way, McCain's use of Paris Hilton and Britney Spears seems apt, but it is not just Obama who has become a celebrity, but the entirety of presidential political campaigning that aspires to their level of cultural visibility. Indeed, as this next section demonstrates, pop culture made significant inroads into the political process as citizens created and distributed their own digital political media.



## **By the People, For the People: Political Mashups in a Digital Democracy**

The 2008 election was notable not just for the candidates' identities, but also because of the prominent role the internet played in shaping the political process, from the official forums including the CNN-YouTube Debates and Hillary Clinton's series of video chats during the primary—including her official announcement of her candidacy—to user-generated material that circulated throughout the campaign alongside (and often incorporating) official campaign material. Candidates understood the possibilities of the internet for distributing media and engaging citizens in the political process, but when politics went online, campaigns ceded their ability to control a candidate's message. Political media does not simply exist online, but does so in close proximity to various fragments of popular culture. In this format, the boundaries between politics and pop culture are easily blurred. Geoffrey Baym calls contemporary society “an age of *discursive integration*—the fundamental blurring of conceptual categories and media discourses that has created the conditions *and the need* for the emergence of comedy as a site of political conversation.”<sup>24</sup> As political campaigns and news media grow more commercially-minded, adopting the soundbites, logos, and jingles of pop cultural advertisement, the blurring of “highbrow” news or politics with “lowbrow” entertainment permits new forms of boundary crossing. Thus, shows such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* function not only as comic entertainment but primary sources of news for many viewers and the site of

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<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Baym, “Serious Comedy: Expanding the Boundaries of Political Discourse,” in *Laughing Matters: Humor and American Politics in the Media Age*, ed. Jody C. Baumgartner and Jonathan S. Morris (New York: Routledge, 2008), 22.

legitimate civic discourse.<sup>25</sup> Candidates responded with a variety of pop-culturally intertextual advertisements, from a parody of the popular television series *The Sopranos* made by Clinton to an ad made by Mike Huckabee that proposed a two word solution for border security: Chuck Norris, playing into Norris's resurgent popularity on the internet after the 2005 meme "Chuck Norris Facts."<sup>26</sup>

Among the candidates, however, it was Obama who harnessed the internet's power most effectively. Early on, Obama's campaign hired Facebook's Chris Hughes, CNN.com's Kate Albright-Hanna, and public relations expert Scott Goldstein to create Triple O, a site devoted to helping citizens watch, create, and share content. Obama's campaign posted 1820 videos to YouTube; Hillary Clinton's posted only 76, and McCain 330. Obama also became the first to place advertisements in video games. This mattered—voter turnout was higher in 2008 than 2004 by about five million, and two million of this new turnout were voters under the age of thirty; two thirds of voters under thirty voted for Obama.<sup>27</sup> But Obama did not craft 1820 videos himself. Along with official campaign ads and recorded speeches or appearances on Sunday morning news programs, his site hosted or reposted videos created by others, whether professionally produced videos like will.i.am's "Yes We Can" or the "Obama Girl" series

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<sup>25</sup> For various explanations of the role satiric or "fake" news has come to play in serious political, civic, and journalistic spheres, see Geoffrey Baym, *From Cronkite to Colbert: The Evolution of Broadcast News* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2010); Jeffrey P. Jones, *Entertaining Politics: Satiric Television and Political Engagement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010); Amarnath Amarasingam, ed., *The Stewart/Colbert Effect: Essays on the Real Impacts of Fake News* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Clinton's use of parody was extremely common; one study found that 96% of humorous campaign ads online used parody, whereas only 17% of those televised did. See Monica Postelnicu and Lynda Lee Kaid, "Air Amusements versus Web Wit: Comparing the Use of Humor in 2004 Political Advertising on Television and the Internet," in Baumgartner and Morris, 123. Huckabee's campaign chairman Chip Saltsman recalled that on television, the ad provoked mostly confusion, but on the internet, the video went viral, gaining 1.5 million views in two days. These suggest campaigns had to navigate how the internet's demographics differed from other media and adjust their approach, including tone and cultural references, accordingly. See *Campaign for President: The Managers Look at 2008* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 102.

<sup>27</sup> John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton, Jr., "Political Campaigns and Communicating with the Electorate in the Twenty-First Century," in *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*, ed. John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton, Jr. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 7.

created by the website CollegeHumor.com, or by unknown individuals creating content on their laptop from their living room or dorm room that had gone viral. Early on, a tremendous synergy emerged between Obama and internet participants: Obama made significant efforts to appeal to and accommodate viral videos, and the majority of people creating viral videos supported Obama.

Perhaps the most visible form that user-generated videos took was the mashup, a form of collage where someone, with the help of publicly available software, edits together audio or video segments from different sources, either sequentially or combined simultaneously, in order to create a single—and if well-crafted, seemingly unedited—video. One of the earliest and most popular of these mashups was Phillip de Vellis’s pro-Obama “Vote Different” advertisement, targeting Hillary Clinton during the primary campaign.<sup>28</sup> The advertisement parodies Apple’s “1984” Super Bowl commercial, one of the most successful, acclaimed, and (at the time) expensive in history, directed by Ridley Scott who was fresh off the dystopian *Blade Runner*. De Vellis replaced the audio and video of the Big Brother-esque leader with clips from Hillary Clinton’s YouTube announcement of her candidacy and her subsequent YouTube livechats, while the woman who races in and destroys the video now sports an iPod and an Obama logo on her white tank top. The ad was viewed online three million times in its first month, five hundred times more than the original Apple ad was seen.<sup>29</sup>

Much of the power of “Vote Different” derives from its use of collage and juxtaposition within the mashup both to promote Obama and to significantly reshape Clinton’s image. In her original videos, Clinton spoke directly to the camera in long takes, suggesting a forthright

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<sup>28</sup> “Vote Different,” uploaded by ParkRidge47 [Phil de Vellis] at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6h3G-IMZxjo>, March 5, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Amber Davisson, “I’m In!: Hillary Clinton’s 2008 Democratic Primary Campaign on You Tube,” *Journal of Visual Literacy* 28, no. 1 (2009), 78.

message of substance. She carefully balanced her image of smart leadership with a casual, domestic, and feminine image suggested by the “living room” setting with flowers and framed photographs as well as by her relaxed posture and pastel-colored suits and jewelry. By contrast, the original Apple ad portrayed a grim, grey dystopia set in a futuristic prison, populated by masses of men who move in unthinking uniformity to the commands of an omnipresent leader shown only on many televisions. De Vellis replaces this leader with Clinton, and through the various processes of collage, drastically changes Clinton’s image. The domestic, familiar side is obliterated as Clinton’s appears in this dystopian prison space, reframed in close-up, which eliminates her living room setting and makes her face loom larger. More importantly, Clinton’s message is distorted through de Vellis’s work. While Clinton’s videos originally involved Clinton discussing specific issues, de Vellis edits together only generic statements from Clinton that weaken her image. Toward the end of the ad, Clinton says, “I don’t want people who already agree with me. I want honest, serious, hardworking, patriotic people who want to be part of a team, the American team.” Yet collage allows the meaning to be recast without much alteration of the original dialogue. The clip airs on a giant screen in front of rows and rows of mindless, zombie-like followers, suggesting this statement is disingenuous, that this “conversation” Clinton wants is nothing more than talk, which de Vellis explains is the specific point of the ad.<sup>30</sup> As she says this, text misrepresents it by appearing simultaneously on the diegetic screen: Be Part Of The Team. Clinton says “who want to be part of *a* team,” suggesting something more open ended, still forming, with the decision resting in the hands of the people; “be part of *the* team” suggests a command to join a singular dictated group that Clinton has already created and is leading. This language echoes the original 1984 ad, which exclaims, “We are one people with

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<sup>30</sup> Phil de Vellis, “I Made the ‘Vote Different’ Ad” *The Huffington Post* March 21, 2007, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-de-vellis-aka-parkridge/i-made-the-vote-different\\_b\\_43989.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-de-vellis-aka-parkridge/i-made-the-vote-different_b_43989.html)

one will, one resolve, one cause”—and yet a hint of irony must be noted, as it would be Obama who would adopt the phrase “We are one” as a cornerstone of his campaign.

Obama does not appear directly in the mashup, but is aligned with the woman in the original Apple advertisement who runs in, smashes the giant television screen, and liberates everyone. De Vellis retains the sharp collage-like contrasts from the original advertisement that single her out from the rest of the citizens of this dystopia: she is dressed in white rather than grey, an individual rather than part of a crowd, a young woman rather than an older man, and running rather than marching, often moving head on toward the camera rather than left to right. In de Vellis’s hands, the only difference is she sports an Obama logo and an iPod. Through her, and through her contrast to Clinton, Obama’s image registers in several key ways. Obama is marked as the fresh, outsider voice who can destroy the political machine of which Clinton is a part. He accomplishes this by empowering the individual people to raise their voice and reassert their control over their democracy: it is not Obama himself, but one of his supporters who effects change in this ad, taking down not Clinton herself, but the whole video system that is indicative of the larger political machine Clinton speaks for and through. The mashup also enacts a subtler coup on behalf of Obama by aligning the female with Obama rather than Clinton, suggesting that white women could and should support Obama despite Clinton’s direct and fairly successful appeal to women voters. The feminist twist of the original, with the young woman overthrowing the old patriarchal order, is eliminated, as Clinton’s role of Big Brother, or rather Big Sister, implies that gender is no longer a barrier to politics, a point I will return to later.

The image of the Obama-supporting woman with her iPod in “Vote Different” serves as a powerful icon in considering the complex relationship between Obama, technology, and the agency of the individual. Her liberation from Clinton’s voice is partly enabled by the iPod, which

affords her the choice to *not* listen to the establishment’s rhetorical monopoly, to run (not march) to the beat of her own playlist. Also key is the manner in which she liberates the masses: smashing a large television screen, symbolic not only of the old political establishment, but of the old media establishment as well. For many, Obama was the ideal Democratic candidate: an outsider with little time in Washington who promised a fresh perspective and greater transparency, and who created a campaign that recognized the power of technology and the power of the people. De Vellis remarked about the ad:

I made the “Vote Different” ad because I wanted to express my feelings about the Democratic primary, and because I wanted to show that an individual citizen can affect the process. . . . This shows that the future of American politics rests in the hands of ordinary citizens. The campaigns had no idea who made it—not the Obama campaign, not the Clinton campaign, nor any other campaign.<sup>31</sup>

Part of this emphasis on his actions as an individual may have been to protect the company he worked for, Blue State Digital, which he resigned from in order to avoid implicating them—a powerful reminder that individual critique does not fully mesh with the corporate culture these mashups operate within and against. Yet his statement may also suggest his resignation fits with an ideological realignment of political action from a corporate model to an individual one.

Given de Vellis’s championing of a decentered, individual-focused model of political action, it is easy to see why Obama appealed to him as a candidate. Obama struck a populist tone in his campaign, ascribing the power of social change to individuals and trading on his past work as a community organizer. The rhetoric is hardly unusual for political campaigns, but Obama quickly proved successful at putting words to action. From the beginning, Obama’s campaign employed a heavily grass-roots approach that ambitiously registered new voters and turned out the vote, and famously used online approaches to fundraising. It worked: Obama raised over five hundred million dollars from three million donors who made a total of 6.5 million donations

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

online, six million of which were donations under \$100. “The average donation was \$80, and the average Obama donor gave more than once,” reported Jose Antonio Vargas.<sup>32</sup> Obama’s success at grass-roots fundraising provided encouraging evidence that Obama could shift electoral politics away from lobbyists, corporations, and special interest groups.

De Vellis may have opted to create a mashup simply because it was popular and eye-catching, in line with other viral YouTube videos, but nevertheless the collage processes in the mashup complement the image of Obama put forth by de Vellis and other supporters. First and foremost, de Vellis’s advocacy for the individual’s power to challenge the establishment through political speech resonates with mashups. Like remixes and hip hop sampling, mashups emerged first as an underground musical practice by DJs and producers. With the internet’s ability to disseminate cultural products widely, freely, and without corporate oversight, mashups gained prominence. Artists like Danger Mouse and Girl Talk have since achieved commercial success and fame, but in doing so they and many others have endured legal battles over their use of commercial recordings. More recently, the technology for creating mashups has become increasingly available to amateurs and enthusiasts, allowing more and more people to create and distribute their own mashups.

The evolution of the mashup from subcultural to mainstream art, and its concomitant increased production by amateurs and commercial professionals alike, has provoked an extensive debate among scholars about its political efficacy vis-à-vis the culture industry. Many scholars continue to view the mashup as a site of cultural resistance through its act of collage, the individual’s appropriation and recontextualization of commercial media, which echoes de Vellis’s aims, even as they disagree to the extent of its power. Many have hailed these

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<sup>32</sup> Jose Antonio Vargas, “Obama Raised Half a Billion Online,” *The Washington Post* November 20, 2008, [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama\\_raised\\_half\\_a\\_billion\\_on.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html).

technological developments as a great democratizing force. John Knoll, a creator of Photoshop, one of the most popular technologies used to create mashups, “believes that the program... has contributed to democracy in two ways: first by allowing desktop publishers to create the same professional-looking color pictures that the big companies were making; and second, by giving people a voice they wouldn’t have had before.”<sup>33</sup> In his theorization of a “culture of configuration,” media scholar Aram Sinnreich asserts that the ability of consumers to reconfigure cultural products for their own use is a potent political tool that disrupts capitalism; for him these technologies “do not simply enhance preexisting practices of cultural production and consumption; they help to *undermine the producer/consumer dichotomy itself*.”<sup>34</sup>

Individuals are not the only ones to benefit from this “culture of configuration,” however. Technology companies, such as Photoshop, have similarly adapted to and profited from this new culture. Indeed, the creators of the 1984 ad de Vellis used for his mashup “wanted the Mac to symbolize the idea of empowerment... as a tool for combating conformity and asserting originality.”<sup>35</sup> Sinnreich takes a negative view of user-adaptable technology, arguing that by designing these technologies, capitalist companies reassert control over the process of user-adaptability.<sup>36</sup> Media theorist Lev Manovich extends Sinnreich’s qualms beyond the economic to the aesthetic, asking, “Given that a significant percentage of user-generated content either follows the templates and conventions set up by the professional entertainment industry or directly reuses professionally produced content, does that mean people’s identities and imaginations are now even more firmly colonized by commercial media than they were in the

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<sup>33</sup> Corrie Pikul, “The Photoshopping of the President” *Salon* July 1, 2004, <http://www.salon.com/2004/07/01/photoshop/>

<sup>34</sup> Aram Sinnreich, *Mashed Up: Music, Technology, and the Rise of Configurable Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 75.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Peter Lee-Wright, *The Documentary Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 296.

<sup>36</sup> Sinnreich, 77.



twentieth century?"<sup>37</sup> Manovich acknowledges that mashups may better resemble Michel DeCerteau's concept of "tactics," where people appropriate and refashion items for their own use, but remains wary of how quickly producers have re-appropriated those, turning the revolutionary act of the tactic into a commodity feature of prescribed customization.<sup>38</sup> In his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Henry Jenkins paints a more harmonious relationship between the individual and the culture industry:

It should be no surprise that much of what the public creates models itself after, exists in dialogue with, reacts to or against, and/or otherwise repurposes materials drawn from commercial culture....Having buried the old folk culture, this commercial culture becomes the common culture. The older American folk culture was built on borrowings from various mother countries; the modern mass media builds upon borrowings from folk culture; the new convergence culture will be built on borrowings from various media conglomerates.<sup>39</sup>

Yet Jenkins understands that this is not an unbridled freedom of equal exchange, recognizing that while "cyberspace displaces some traditional information and cultural gatekeepers, there is also an unprecedented concentration of power within old media." As a result:

The new political culture—just like the new popular culture—reflects the pull and tug of these two media systems: one broadcast and commercial, the other narrowcast and grassroots. Grassroots media channels depend on the shared frame of reference created by the traditional intermediaries....Broadcasting provides the common culture, and the Web offers more localized channels for responding to that culture.<sup>40</sup>

As these debates make clear, assessing the political, economic, and cultural power of mashups is a complex task. This complexity is true more generally for collage, particularly in this historical moment when collage has become so prevalent. As such, universal claims about the intrinsic revolutionary power of collage (including mashups) are less well-suited for analysis

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<sup>37</sup> Lev Manovich, "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production?" *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 321.

<sup>38</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 29–42.

<sup>39</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 135.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

than a recognition that first, collage carries the potential for subversive power through the acts of reappropriating others' material and altering its meanings through altering and editing it (cutting) and juxtaposing and recontextualizing it (pasting); and second, the realized power of any given collage is determined by what has been collaged, by whom, and how. Careful attention must thus be paid to these specific processes and the cultural, political, economic, and other power dynamics invoked through them.

Regarding the first of these two points, scholars have emphasized the power of mashups to offer commentary. Sinnreich observes how the aesthetics of mashups mirror the social agency of interruption:

For many mash-up artists, then, examining, critiquing, and playing with traditional figure/ground relationships is a central element of the process and the aesthetic, and even the *raison d'être* of the style itself. It may be argued, therefore, that the true foreground of a mash-up...[is] the relationship and recontextualization between the constituent elements that identifies a work and makes itself—in other words, *the juxtaposition itself functions as the foreground*.<sup>41</sup>

Intellectual property scholar and activist Kembrew McLeod offers a few specific examples of how mashups like “Smells Like Bootylicious” (which mashes up Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” with Destiny’s Child’s “Bootylicious”) and “Without Eileen” (Eminem’s “Without Me” and Dexy’s Midnight Runners’ “Come On Eileen”) achieve their subversive effects via collage:

By blurring high and low pop culture (Nirvana representing the high and Destiny’s Child, the low), these mashups demolish the elitist pop-cultural hierarchy that rock critics and music collecting snobs perpetuate. ...When you take the bad-boy rhymes of Eminem and force him to rap over “Come On Eileen” by Dexy’s Midnight Runners, you’ve engaged in an act of violence and trickery. The humorless white rapper... makes fun of “boy bands” and other targets in his videos, [but] Eminem doesn’t like it when others satirize him. I can guarantee you the Marshall Mathers is not too happy about having to rap on top of the “gay”—to him—sounding Dexy’s Midnight Runners.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Sinnreich, 163.

<sup>42</sup> Kembrew McLeod, “Confessions of an Intellectual (Property): Danger Mouse, Mickey Mouse, Sonny Bono, and My Long and Winding Path as a Copyright Activist-Academic,” *Popular Music and Society* 28, no. 1 (2005), 84.

Eminem's homophobic persona and Nirvana's self-seriousness are sapped of power here by their respective juxtapositions with music that undermines it—combinations that, sonically speaking, fit together so easily but, culturally speaking, shouldn't.

And yet, collage does not always critique in this manner. The use of collage within the campaign advertisements discussed above, for example, exaggerates rather than subverts the associations conveyed by the images, texts, and sounds they combined, and in doing so shores up rather than undermines political structures. The hit television show *Glee* has featured over two dozen mashups in its first three seasons and made millions from song sales, even cracking the top ten best-selling digital artists of all time in February 2012.<sup>43</sup> *Glee* appropriated the politically revolutionary language of the mashup when the choir teacher Will Schuester introduced the concept by saying, "There's an important lesson to be learned with mash-ups: sometimes things are so different, they don't feel like they go together, but the big difference between them is what makes them great." Yet the show's musical mashups have never challenged boundaries aesthetically or politically, which is unsurprising given their mainstream, commercial position. More pointedly, whereas mashups derive this power by recontextualizing music, several artists have alleged that *Glee* has lifted arrangements and mashups wholesale from them, uncredited, exhibiting the very tangible ways commercial media can neutralize the political power of the mashup while retaining the aesthetics of collage.<sup>44</sup>

Political mashups operate slightly differently. Unlike music or other commercial products, political speech and images are not so clearly copyrighted and more easily taken to be

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<sup>43</sup> Grady Smith, "'Glee' Cast Becomes a Top 10-Selling Digital Artist of All Time," *Entertainment Weekly*, February 28, 2012. <http://music-mix.ew.com/2012/02/28/glee-music-sales-top-10-digital-artist/>

<sup>44</sup> Ryan Gajewski, "Does Glee Have a History of Plagiarizing Arrangements?" January 22, 2013 <http://www.wetpaint.com/glee/articles/does-glee-have-a-history-of-plagiarizing-arrangements>. For a more in-depth reflection on the legal and ethical aspects of this, see Michele Catalano, "Jonathan Coulton Vs. Glee: It's About the Ethics," *Forbes* January 27, 2013 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/micheleatalano/2013/01/27/jonathan-coulton-vs-glee-its-about-the-ethics/>.

public property. Yet the stakes for the political mashup's potential for subversion are heightened, because these mashups can critique politics directly rather than through cultural proxy and can subvert the images of politicians who hold legal power rather than celebrities who hold cultural power. Indeed, concern about political and economic repercussions was strong enough that de Vellis felt the need to resign from his position at Blue State Digital.

The ways in which de Vellis's mashup was and wasn't politically powerful are instructive to consider briefly. The two constituent elements of de Vellis's mashup, an advertisement for Apple and a series of YouTube livechats from Hillary Clinton, seek to adapt their respective establishment models to this new convergence culture of user-control. Like Apple's aims of individual empowerment and creativity, Clinton's videos sought to change the model of politics by giving citizens a voice and direct access to a candidate through these livechats. And just as Sinnreich cautions wariness about technological platforms that control by offering choice, de Vellis views Clinton's apparent openness and dialogue with similar skepticism, implying that while she maintains the image of openness and citizen-led political discussion, Clinton nevertheless controls the medium and the message.<sup>45</sup> De Vellis's mashup subverts Clinton's power by editing and recontextualizing the images, as discussed above, but by supporting Obama, de Vellis works within the electoral system rather than subverting it even as he projects an image of Obama as offering change. The two are not mutually exclusive but coexisting, as Jenkins's concept of a "pull and tug" between two media systems implies; mashups can be indicative of change from within just as well as from without.

Through the juxtaposition of an Apple advertisement aired during the Super Bowl and Clinton's livechats, de Vellis makes visible the relationships between new media, old media,

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<sup>45</sup> Amber Davisson supports this claim, observing that by hosting these videos on her personal site, rather than on YouTube, users could not generate comments or feedback, but merely watch. See Davisson, 75.

corporate capitalism, and the establishment political power that seeks to control and benefit from all three, even if he does not overtly critique them. On the one hand, de Vellis uses the Apple commercial as a largely unedited background into which edited Clinton's videos are collaged, suggesting that while de Vellis is dubious of Clinton, he accepts the Apple commercial readily as a model for critique rather than as a target of critique. But because collage is never entirely closed in its meaning or controlled by its creator, and thus can open up new meanings for readers (as McCain's "Celeb" advertisement did), de Vellis's mashup carries the possibility of further critique to be read. Chuck Tryon, discussing online parody videos, argues that parodies "model the critical skills needed to analyze the arguments and imagery associated with a given campaign [and] serve a pedagogical function, helping viewers to become more attentive and critical readers of cultural texts."<sup>46</sup> De Vellis's mashup and others created throughout the campaign provide such a model and as such might, at least for some viewers, spur further critical examination of the power structures so provocatively depicted within the eye- and ear-catching juxtapositions that characterize these mashups. For instance, the mashup's depiction of an Orwellian future where politicians control the media might prompt viewers to maintain further vigilance about the media's complicity in a post-9/11 world of heightened security and governmental power, and consider whether and how new media can effectively and responsibly redress the failings of old media as watchdogs. While I have already noted the connection between Obama, the internet, and individual agency, the use of an Apple commercial could remind viewers that corporate power is still tied up in the internet, something that might in turn remind viewers that Obama both made use of huge grassroots campaign and fundraising while also accepting contributions from large corporations and, a few months after de Vellis made his mashup, breaking a campaign

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<sup>46</sup> Chuck Tryon, "Pop Politics: Online Parody Videos, Intertextuality, and Political Participation," *Popular Communication*, 6, no. 4 (2008), 210.

pledge by foregoing public financing and its spending limits, going on to reach a record-breaking amount of 621 million dollars.<sup>47</sup>

The internet's potential to break down traditional power dynamics between politicians, the media, and citizens was not only complicated by corporate influence and control, but more broadly by systemic demographic inequality among its participants. It is not a completely equal and democratic arena as many hope or envision; rather, it remains predominantly a space for white male participation, partly hidden behind its anonymity. In her study of the demographics of those who participated in the CNN-YouTube Debate, LaChrystal Ricke found that citizens aged 18–25 accounted for just under 30% of the participants. Those 26–40 accounted for another 30%, and those under 18 and 41–55 each accounted for 15% of the demographic, and those over 55 represented 10% of the total population. Ricke also discovered that men outnumbered women 64% to 28.5%, and Whites accounted for 61%, Black and Hispanic far behind at 13.2% and 11.6% respectively.<sup>48</sup> The most successful internet mashups across the 2008 election supported Obama, aided no doubt by his campaign's effective entry into social media and the technology market. But Obama was also aided by the demographics of the internet, who crafted an image of Obama that aligned him with white, male, and youth culture by acts of collage: appropriating, editing, and juxtaposing images of Obama and his competitors into mashups that affirmed white, male, and young power.

In his race against John McCain, Obama's youth was often juxtaposed with McCain's age, whether through McCain's critique of Obama's lack of experience or through Obama's advertisement "Still," which claimed McCain was out of touch and unable to adapt to a modern

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<sup>47</sup> Leslie Wayne, "Campaign '08: Most Expensive Ever," *The New York Times* October 24, 2008.

<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/campaign-08-most-expensive-ever/>

<sup>48</sup> LaChrystal Ricke, "New Opportunity for Democratic Engagement: The CNN-YouTube Presidential Candidate Debates," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 7, no. 2–3 (2010), 208.

world. Hugh Atkin's mashup "BarackRoll," parodying the internet prank of "RickRolling," asserts an image of Obama as in touch with popular culture.<sup>49</sup> The video opens with the instrumental opening to Astley's pop 1980s hit, as footage of Obama dancing on the talk show Ellen and on the campaign trail loops continuously. As Astley begins the verse, the clips of Obama dancing are interrupted by quickly spliced footage of Obama uttering each word of Astley's lyrics simultaneously as Astley sings them.

The clip itself is a fun trifle, and elides Obama's image with that of pop star, but a second mashup made by Atkin, "John McCain Gets BarackRoll'd," conveys a stronger political message.<sup>50</sup> Here, Atkin opens with McCain's speech at the Republican convention, backed by a video of a flag waving, saying, "I have that record and the scars to prove it. Senator Obama does not." The applause line is swiftly interrupted as the video of the flag is replaced by Atkin's "BarackRoll" mashup. Atkin restructures the footage of the convention through collage, showing McCain standing there uncomfortably, looped and edited together. While "BarackRoll" plays on the screen behind him, and the crowd seemingly erupts into applause, into which Atkin collages the sound of the convention crowd with another crowd cheering "O-ba-ma!" as McCain tries in vain to quiet them. The mashup imagines that Obama has bested McCain, tricked him as it were, precisely at the moment where McCain should have all the power: accepting the Republican nomination. Obama emerges through the associative power of collage as a photogenic, pop culture- and tech-savvy victor, partly due to his singing and dancing in "BarackRoll," but just as

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<sup>49</sup> "BarackRoll," uploaded by Hugh Atkin at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65I0HNvTDH4>, August 9, 2008. "Rickrolling" is a meme that emerged in 2008, where ostensibly someone shares a link to a video you might want to see, but when you click, it is then preempted by the music video for Rick Astley's 1987 hit "Never Gonna Give You Up."

<sup>50</sup> "John McCain Gets BarackRoll'd," uploaded by Hugh Atkin at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_TiQCJXpbKg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TiQCJXpbKg), September 7, 2008.

much through contrast to McCain's wooden posture and his apparent inability to work either technology or a crowd.

As with de Vellis's mashup, it is not Obama himself who holds the power, but rather the individual through technology. Because Atkin's mashup collages footage of the convention not with Obama himself but with another of Atkin's mashups, the video does not simply envision Obama's technological victory over McCain, but more centrally the technological victory of Atkin over McCain and the convention. By extension, this can be read as a power shift away from the political establishment and their controlled media message and toward the ordinary citizen's political agency through the internet. The mashup even lets the audience in on the joke, giving away the surprise in the title, thereby leaving McCain the only one getting pranked here and implicitly siding both the viewer and Obama with the technological prankster.

In her close reading of viral videos in the 2008 campaign, Carol Vernallis interprets Atkin's mashup as aligning Obama with the affluence of the 1980s and offering the same unwavering support Astley affirms by singing "Never gonna give you up/ Never gonna let you down/ Never gonna run around and desert you... Never gonna tell a lie and hurt you."<sup>51</sup> Doing so, Vernallis notes the prominent role of collage: "The rickrolled clips exploited a feature of the mashup: an element—either sound or image—can be taken out of context and stripped bare. Placed alongside foreign material, previously unrevealed meanings come to the fore, but a knowledge linked to the original fragment still also projects forward, perhaps in a purer form—as a kernel of truth, an essence preserved even as it has been recast."<sup>52</sup> Vernallis's description provides an apt reminder that these mashups do not create meaning anew, but rather unlock meanings and narratives that already existed within content shaped by the political race. "John

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<sup>51</sup> Carol Vernallis, "Audiovisual Change: Viral Web Media and the Obama Campaign" *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 4 (Summer 2011), 89.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



McCain Gets BarackRoll'd” is made more effective because of the campaign’s media introducing key issues about the candidates. Atkin continues the work of the Obama campaign, whose ad “Still” projected an ageist image of McCain as not simply out of touch with pop culture, but actively confounded and beaten by it. The mashup also resonates with McCain’s “Celeb” ad, but inverts it both by glorifying Obama’s celebrity as politically useful, seemingly winning over the Republican convention crowd, and by reappropriating the audio from that ad, the “O-ba-ma!” cheer, to negate McCain’s power at the convention. Through appropriation, editing, and juxtaposition, the mashup affirms at least one distinct kernel of truth: that Obama’s youth afforded him a position of power within the electorate.

Several other mashups aligned Obama with pop cultural icons that affirmed his leadership qualities by emphasizing his masculinity. In various mashups, Obama’s head is collaged onto the bodies of Luke Skywalker, Rocky Balboa, and Superman, as clips from those respective movies are mashed up with campaign footage.<sup>53</sup> Like the mashups by de Vellis and Atkin, these mashups highlight the mediated and commercial qualities of the campaign, but go further to suggest Obama as a hero, literally fighting off the evil forces of Clinton and McCain. Images of fighting and the iconic brass-laden music of each film assert Obama as a strong, masculine leader, upending allegations made by some that Obama’s foreign and domestic policies were too soft on antiterrorism measures. While such images might have seemed out of place for a candidate who ran on a record of opposition to war, they paint Obama as willing to fight justly, fairly, and strongly.

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<sup>53</sup> See “Superbarack (Reloaded),” uploaded by Humanitainment at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0usWSw6CR7I>, November 3, 2008; “Barack—The Movie,” uploaded by HollaAtYoDaddy at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4sDIVFIOfk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4sDIVFIOfk), April 22, 2008; “Barack II,” uploaded by BARACKYTWO at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fNgA5xLxao>, August 13, 2008; and “The Empire Strikes Barack,” uploaded by Humanitainment at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8lvc-azCXY>, May 1, 2008.

Obama's constructed image of masculinity is augmented when such displays of virile strength are juxtaposed with the misogynistic mashups that supporters of Obama made targeting Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin. To consider one example, "Palin's Breath" edits together the breaths Sarah Palin took while delivering her response after the shooting in Tucson, Arizona. As in de Vellis's mashup, the visuals are edited to remove the setting (in Palin's original, a living room flanked by American flags) and focus only on the face. But it is the sound that remains the most attention-grabbing and critical: forty-five seconds of breaths, silences, and lip-smacking. As a result, Palin's impassioned affirmation of her values—freedoms protected by a limited government, personal responsibility, and open exchange of ideas within a democratic process—is erased or, again echoing de Vellis, revealed to be nothing but empty rhetoric. Her media performances were widely critiqued as unintelligent and incoherent, characteristics that are pushed to the extreme here, as she stares ahead and only gasps.

But whereas de Vellis's mashup conveyed complex gender roles between an Obama-supporting woman and a Big Brother-esque Clinton, "Palin's Breath" uses the techniques of collage not only to completely silence Palin, but also to do so in an overly sexualized way, as she appears to pant heavily and lick her lips.<sup>54</sup> The casual misogyny of this mashup should be addressed. It was made by three men, Adam Quirk, Aaron Valdez, and Erik Nelson, collectively called Wreck and Salvage and who project a hypermasculine image on their website, comparing themselves to, among other things, "a species of wild hog that eats only finance industry business cards, a half-full bag of spit, [and] a football player who can travel through time."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> "Palin's Breath," uploaded by wreckandsalvage at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9kfcEga0lk>, January 13, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> <http://wreckandsalvage.com/about/>. The "About us" page depicts the three men, two of whom are shirtless, in the forest in front of a pig, and from a low angle such that all three are towering over the camera.

Posted to the internet, the video was consumed by a largely young, male, and anonymous crowd, confirmed by sexual nature of the highest rated comment on its YouTube page.<sup>56</sup>

Obama is rarely if ever alluded to in mashups targeting Clinton and Palin on gendered grounds, perhaps intentionally in order to shield him from criticism, but he cannot be disentangled from the ways in which gender was discussed in the 2008 election. Perhaps the closest Obama comes to being represented in gendered mashups targeting his opponents comes in “Terry Tate: Reading is Fundamental,” a mashup of Palin’s infamous interview with Katie Couric where Couric presses Palin to name the newspapers she reads with NFL linebacker Terry Tate’s series of humorous Super Bowl ads.<sup>57</sup> Watching Tate plow into Palin, through some remarkably deft editing, it is easy to align Obama’s black masculinity with that of Tate, especially given the prevalence of mashups that depict Obama as physically fighting his opponents. Again, the top-rated comments on this page suggest a hidden misogyny to the consumption of this mashup.<sup>58</sup>

The steady presence of gender within mashups and commentary is noteworthy, given how much more absent it was in discussions of the 2008 election. The election took on at times the air of a referendum on racism versus sexism, a “duel of historical guilts” according to Maureen Dowd. Dowd notes that women experienced a generational divide about feminism and feminine solidarity, echoing conclusions others reached about black solidarity.<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Wallace-Wells observes that gender has “become part of the political wallpaper,” as women have more often advanced to positions of higher political office. As a result, he concludes, “This is the

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<sup>56</sup> The top comment, by far, is “I have the weirdest boner right now.”

<sup>57</sup> “Terry Tate: Reading is Fundamental,” uploaded by Jason Mercer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07kO9TtHYzQ>, October 16, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> The top-rated comments are “violence against THIS woman is not funny. It’s hysterical.” and “Not the first time Sarah Palin has been drilled by a big black guy.”

<sup>59</sup> Maureen Dowd, “Duel of Historical Guilts,” *The New York Times* March 5, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/05/opinion/05dowd.html>.

ultimate imbalance between the would-be presidential contenders, and it's both rough on Clinton and helps explain why Obama's public presentation is so much more closely linked to his identity: There's a model for being post-racial, but there's no easy way to be post-gender.”<sup>60</sup> Yet the casual misogyny of some of these mashups and comments reflect the distinct uneasiness of not being post-gender, reminding us that gender still poses significant image problems to navigate for female candidates even as common knowledge seems to suggest and accept that it does not. Kathleen Parker meanwhile suggests that gender views are primarily generational: “The contest between Obama and Clinton isn't about sex and race. It's about age—and the gap is about generations, not gender. ... Trying to convince women under 50 that gender is a barrier to success feels not just stale, but dishonest. And nothing says ‘yesterday’ like a 73-year-old feminist foot soldier who didn't get the memo that she won the war.”<sup>61</sup> Parker’s position offers a connection between the gendered dialogue found in these mashups to the ageist content in other mashups.

Remarkably, in contrast to gender, race rarely played a direct role in the discourse surrounding these mashups. Comments on the YouTube pages almost never display racially derogatory speech, and in fact rarely broach the subject of race at all. This may be partly due to the large predominance of mash-ups being pro-Obama, yet even critics of Obama were careful not to invoke race. What is noteworthy is how easily Obama’s image was adapted to the predominantly white cultural backdrop of internet mashups. The vast majority of the pop cultural elements that were appropriated for mashups spoke to an implicitly white mainstream: a white 80s pop song turned internet meme, white television families and stars like *Family Guy*, *The*

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin Wallace-Wells, “Is America Too Racist for Barack? Too Sexist for Hillary?” *The Washington Post*, November 12, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/10/AR2006111001387.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Kathleen Parker, “Gloria Steinem’s Last Stand,” *Real Clear Politics*, March 5, 2008, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/03/age\\_not\\_race\\_or\\_gender\\_is\\_hold.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/03/age_not_race_or_gender_is_hold.html)

*Sopranos*, and Chuck Norris, and films and television shows like *Star Wars*, *Happy Days*, and *Superman*. Rarely was Obama mashed up with any black pop cultural figures; I found no parodies of Tyler Perry or Bill Cosby, and only a couple mashups of Obama with *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* or Steve Urkel from *Family Matters*, which remained largely under the radar and seemed to offer their creators no clever material to work with. The paucity of black pop cultural references speaks certainly to the unspoken whiteness of the shared pop culture among the unseen whiteness of internet participants. But the fact that Obama was aligned so easily with white icons, from Luke Skywalker and Rocky Balboa to Rick Astley and Richie Cunningham, is a testament to how successfully Obama crafted an identity that crossed over to white voters. Indeed, while Obama could transcend the racial barrier between himself and internet culture, McCain's age and Clinton and Palin's gender proved insurmountable barriers. This may confirm Parker's linking of generation and age as inextricable, but more to the point, bespeak the success of Obama's campaign to craft a "post-racial" collage of images.

## **iHop: Playlists, Sampling, and Collaging Obama's Multiracial Musical Image**

As the Obama-logo-clad woman races in to save everyone in “Vote Different,” she listens to an iPod. What is she listening to? What’s on her iPod? These questions about Obama’s iPod became a source of fascination for the media and were regularly asked during the campaign, but de Vellis’s mashup suggests to us that the iPod itself might be a perfect metaphor for Obama. The iPod was new and cool, “the coolest thing in the world” according to technology journalist Steven Levy.<sup>62</sup> It plugged into the web, just as Obama’s campaign did so successfully. It projected a carefully managed, sleek image, as did Obama. Here we might uncomfortably recall Joe Biden’s poorly chosen description of Obama as “the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy,” while recognizing that Obama’s image as mainstream and his ability to communicate comfortably with voters of many races, to tell a “collage of many stories,” has been widely acknowledged as part of his success.

But most central to the iPod’s success as a metaphor for Obama is its individuality. iPod listeners are in control of their listening practices. Digital music can circulate easily, be found from disparate sources and downloaded to one place in an instant. iPod listeners may choose whether or not to listen to whole albums, whether to segregate music by genre or artist or neither, many opting to either construct playlists of music specifically for an activity (working out, studying, partying), specifically for another person, specifically for a mood, or even cede control to the device itself and randomly shuffle their songs. The iPod reflects a society where old

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<sup>62</sup> Steven Levy, *The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 49.

boundaries are easily ignored. Any given listener's iPod likely contains more than a single genre of music, music from multiple decades, and music that likely reflects a diversity far beyond the demographic targets of any genre, sonic support to Obama's speech at the 2004 Democratic convention:

The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue states: red states for Republicans, blue states for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states. We coach little league in the blue states and, yes, we've got some gay friends in the red states.<sup>63</sup>

Replace "pundits" with music labels, and you have a pretty close approximation of a template that mirrors contemporary listening practices of a new generation.

As a result, the iPod has come to signal a potent force for the individual to assert authority within their world. The iPod has been criticized for both treating music as a background object that the listener no longer really listens to, what Adorno calls "regressive listening," and as disengaging the listener from the world around them by retreating into the music. Yet others have suggested the iPod provides a powerful intersection between music and environment, self and society. In *Music in Everyday Life*, Tia DeNora explores how music often serves as a tool of social power. DeNora writes:

individuals engage in a range of mostly tacit identity work to construct, reinforce and repair the thread of self-identity. ... But the 'projection of biography is by no means the only basis for self-identity. Equally significant is a form of 'introjection,' a presentation of self to self... Music can be used as a device for the reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is, a technology for spinning the apparently continuous tale of who one is."<sup>64</sup>

The iPod is perhaps the most prominent application of DeNora's point, allowing listeners to sonically articulate their multiple identities as they navigate multiple social and private roles. The

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<sup>63</sup> Transcript of Barack Obama's speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/27/politics/campaign/27TEXT-OBAMA.html>

<sup>64</sup> Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 62–3.

iPod empowers the individual. And yet, the listener's construction of identity through music is never entirely private nor entirely public. Songs retain meaning through a complex combination of personal memories and social attributes of genre.

Obama's success at building a grassroots campaign echoes the iPod's empowerment of the individual operating within a powerful social structure. The diversity of his grassroots appeal, noted by his success across a wide demographic, further echoes the iPod's playlist model; just as Obama brought together a variety individual people into a single campaign, iPod listeners bring together a variety of diverse musical genres or sources when constructing their own playlists. Indeed, this last point goes beyond metaphor, as Obama's iPod playlists for the campaign did just that: they became a powerful sonic tool for projecting a complex, public, musical identity that matched the collage of stories he wanted to tell. The concept of collage remains just as strong in Obama's musical strategies as in his rhetorical strategies—stronger, even, as musical selections are shorter than speeches and at any given event could signify a wider range of Obama's political identity, and seldom were any single songs heard or scrutinized outside the context of the larger playlists. Examining the various playlists Obama constructed over the campaign, both actual playlists played at events and hypothetical playlists Obama constructed in interviews, reiterates the role of collage in constructing a successful political identity: the power of each individual element in his playlist to shape and define a broader, unified, and diverse whole.

Whereas campaigns had once used a single song to brand the campaign with a consistent message, the modern day campaign constructs a playlist: a collage of many songs to tell its collage of many stories. The choices candidates make in constructing their playlists are scrutinized by the media now to reveal information about the candidate, their message, and their



audience. Examining the 2008 primary candidates on both sides, musicologist Phil Ford observes, “Musical taste is an intimate personal thing, and an arena political event is about the most un-intimate musical setting imaginable. Either you really do choose music that ‘says something about you’ and expose yourself to particularly cruel mockery, or else your choices remain safely impersonal and you come off as a soulless hack. ...Obama's choices also seem to manage the difficult balancing act of self-revelation (enough to avoid looking like a soulless hack, not enough to be easily mockable) better than the others.”<sup>65</sup>

In the 2008 election, personal identity traits like gender and race became very publicly symbolic; Clinton, Ford noted, chose “ a lot of songs that, in this context, seem to underscore her gender,” while fellow musicologist Robert Fink described Obama’s playlist as “clustered around The Staples Singers track, which is a bona-fide civil rights song from the 1960s, are a playlist of "uplifting" soul songs from the 1960s and early 1970s that give the flavor of that era, when black and white liberals were unified by their love of soul music and their support for integration and civil rights.”<sup>66</sup> Obama’s political persona has remained solidly indebted to African-American singers of the 1960s—recall his reference to Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come” in his election night victory speech in 2008 and to Al Green’s “Let’s Stay Together” at a fundraiser at the Apollo Theater in Harlem in 2012. His playlists at campaign rallies and speeches shifted from instance to instance, but 1960s and 1970s Motown and soul often provided the backbone, connecting his campaign to the messages of racial uplift, social engagement, and political action from the late civil rights era. Other songs, like Bruce Springsteen’s “The Rising” and Brooks and Dunn’s “Only in America” broadened the sonic imagery to include white working class images,

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<sup>65</sup> Phil Ford, “Candidate Tunes,” *Dial M for Musicology*, January 7, 2008, <http://musicology.typepad.com/dialm/2008/01/barack-obama-d.html>

<sup>66</sup> Jason George, “Trail mix: What does BTO tune say about presidential hopefuls?” *Chicago Tribune* December 21, 2007, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-12-21/features/0712190552\\_1\\_candidates-mitt-romney-hillary-clinton](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-12-21/features/0712190552_1_candidates-mitt-romney-hillary-clinton).

while Kanye West's "Touch the Sky" and India.Arie's "There's Hope" spoke to a younger generation through hip hop. Emerging as campaign songs for their prominent use to introduce Obama or follow his speeches were Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)," which conveys a sense of trust, a promise made and fulfilled, and U2's "City of Blinding Lights," an uplifting response to 9/11 that also conveys optimism for the future. Each track in the playlist suggested something particular to the campaign, helping Obama appeal to a diverse audience while articulating core identity traits: energetic, optimistic, populist, in touch with the working class, patriotic, and most visibly of all, his status as a biracial candidate, the son of an African immigrant father and a white Midwestern mother. As Dana Gorzelany-Mostak has argued in her work on the history of campaign music, Obama effectively used Motown and women soul singers to appeal to older African Americans and women voters, key demographics who had been supporting Clinton.<sup>67</sup>

In an interview from July 2008 with *Rolling Stone*, Obama shared his musical tastes with readers, affirming a love for Bob Dylan's political music, especially "Maggie's Farm" (a cover of the depression-era hardship song "Down on Penny's Farm," included on Harry Smith's *Anthology*), praising rock artists The Grateful Dead, The Rolling Stones, and Bruce Springsteen, and crowning Stevie Wonder his "musical hero." "I have pretty eclectic tastes," Obama says. "I grew up in the Seventies, so a lot of Seventies rhythm & blues and pop were staples for me: Stevie Wonder, Earth, Wind and Fire, Elton John, Rolling Stones." When asked what's on his iPod, Obama responds, "When I was in high school, probably my sophomore or junior year, I started getting into jazz. I've got a lot of Coltrane, a lot of Miles Davis, a lot of Charlie Parker.

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<sup>67</sup> Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, "The Hip-Hop Dalai Lama vs. An American Girl: Soundscapes, Ideology, and American Identity in the 2008 Democratic Primary" delivered at the Society for American Music Conference, Ottawa, March 17-21, 2010.

I've got all the artists we've already talked about, but I've got everything from Howlin' Wolf, to Yo-Yo Ma to Sheryl Crow to Jay-Z.”<sup>68</sup>

Throughout the interview, Obama's answers likely ring true for many readers. His musical tastes are grounded in his childhood—even the jazz of earlier decades is grounded in Obama's childhood tastes. And again like contemporary listening habits, Obama's tastes are eclectic, versed in the classics, not esoteric but not too mainstream either. This eclecticism also serves to inscribe Obama's complex racial and political identity: the more “authentic” black sounds of Charlie Parker and Howlin' Wolf balance the crossover appeal of Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder, and Jay-Z. White artists figure prominently too, many of whom are themselves indebted to African-American blues, including The Rolling Stones and The Grateful Dead. Several of these artists have been politically engaged, and while a majority of these artists project an ethos of masculinity and power, Obama also mentions Elton John, Sheryl Crow, and Yo-Yo Ma, each of whom speaks to a different demographic, eliciting possible musical empathy with Obama for the reader. Like a collage, each track on Obama's hypothetical iPod plays off other tracks, doing double duty, projecting a public image that speaks to a diverse crowd and projecting a private image authentically grounded Obama's multiracial 1970s roots and in contemporary listening patterns of eclecticism.

The following month, *Blender* published a list of both Obama's and McCain's top ten favorite songs (Figure 5.3). McCain's musical tastes were almost never mentioned throughout the campaign, which partly explains the larger media curiosity surrounding this bit of pop journalism and the baffled reaction of many, judging from online commentary and blogs discussing the article, when McCain selected ABBA's “Dancing Queen” as his top choice. Obama's list gave readers the expected nods to 70s soul and Motown—Marvin Gaye's political

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<sup>68</sup> Jann S. Wenner, “A Conversation with Barack Obama,” *Rolling Stone* (July 10–24, 2008), accessed online.

masterpiece “What’s Going On” clocked in at #2, and Aretha Franklin’s “Think.” Rock was well represented as well, with The Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen, whom Obama praised in *Rolling Stone*, and U2’s “City of Blinding Lights,” one of his most prominent campaign songs. But there were surprises too. His inclusion of will.i.am’s “Yes We Can,” a musical cover of Obama’s own speech, generally drew complaints that the choice was in poor taste, too narcissistic. Obama’s selection of Springsteen’s moody “I’m on Fire,” a choice that suggests an affinity with Springsteen beyond other frequent campaign choices “Born to Run,” “Born in the U.S.A.,” and “The Rising,” drew praise among fans.<sup>69</sup> The inclusion of Nina Simone’s “Sinnerman” was also a bold pick, one that affirmed Obama’s blackness for readers, as Simone was a powerful musical figure in the civil rights movement. Unlike the soulful pop of Motown, Simone’s “Sinnerman” is more rooted in black history and politics, a ten-minute jam on an old spiritual, passed on through the Greenwich Village folk scene, and transplanted into a mix of gospel and jazz traditions here that conveys black musical expression with call and response, shouts, claps, improvisation, layered grooves, and percussive breaks.

Perhaps most surprising is that Stevie Wonder, Obama’s musical hero, did not occupy the top slot—in fact, he doesn’t even make the top ten. Instead, Obama gave the top slot to The Fugees “Ready or Not,” a song which I can find no evidence of Obama even mentioning before this list, suggesting a calculated choice was made to reveal this now. “Ready or Not” connected Obama to a new generation of listeners, as mashup artist Girl Talk’s commentary that accompanies the article confirms as he says, “If there’s a candidate with Fugees’ “Ready or Not” on his list, I have to vote for him.”<sup>70</sup> The song is a popular classic from a respected group,

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<sup>69</sup> Strange Famous Forum: Barack Obama and the Fugees, <http://www.strangefamousrecords.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=712897&sid=95dd1cdceff9e507d1d5c0cab95adb15>

<sup>70</sup> “White House DJ Battle,” *Blender* September 2008, 19.

	Obama	McCain
1	"Ready or Not," The Fugees	"Dancing Queen," ABBA
2	"What's Going On," Marvin Gaye	"Blue Bayou," Roy Orbison
3	"I'm on Fire," Bruce Springsteen	"Take a Chance on Me," ABBA
4	"Gimme Shelter," Rolling Stones	"If We Make it through December," Merle Haggard
5	"Sinnerman," Nina Simone	"As Time Goes By," Dooley Wilson
6	"Touch the Sky," Kanye West	"Good Vibrations," The Beach Boys
7	"You'd Be So Easy To Love," Frank Sinatra	"What a Wonderful World," Louis Armstrong
8	"Think," Aretha Franklin	"I've Got You Under My Skin," Frank Sinatra
9	"City of Blinding Lights," U2	"Sweet Caroline," Neil Diamond
10	"Yes We Can," will.i.am	"Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," The Platters

**Figure 5.3: Obama's and McCain's Top Ten Songs in *Blender***

suggesting Obama is rooted in hip hop's history, and the song is also rooted in the 1970s soul sounds of the Delfonics' original "Ready Or Not Here I Come (Can't Hide From Love)," a direct extension from the soul and Motown sounds that filled Obama's campaign playlist. Like Obama, The Fugees offered political positive messages, eschewing sexism and violence and addressing social needs, including immigration and urban poverty. And their complex black identity as Haitian Americans, their fusion of hip hop, soul, and reggae, speaks to Obama's own diasporic history as a mixed race son of a Kenyan man and a white woman from Kansas, growing up in Indonesia and Hawaii. In his revealing exploration of the diverse roots within popular music genres, George Lipsitz articulates the complexity of The Fugees identity as "at the intersection of experiences as raced subjects in the United States and as refugees and exiles from Haiti" but also

wealthy and famous, increasingly removing them from the subjects they speak for. Moreover, Lipsitz continues:

three individuals cannot represent the full range of experiences in Black communities or reconcile the contradictions of those experiences. Many of the lyrics in *The Score* and *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* deploy pro-Black sentiments to craft clever alliance between Black people who live in the suburbs and come from professional backgrounds and the poorest of the poor from the inner city. . . . This strategy has important positive effects. It discourages educated and successful Blacks from abandoning those in the inner city while offering pro-Black unity to the ghetto poor. . . . Yet this unity suppresses real antagonisms and differences based on class tensions within Black communities.<sup>71</sup>

These same questions could well be posed about Obama, whose strategic alignment with The Fugees here seems to offer needed reinforcement to his approach to racial politics and policy.

Obama's embrace of hip hop was a stark change from when Bill Clinton, who held great support from African Americans, famously repudiated hip hop artist Sister Souljah in 1992 following her controversial remarks about violence, and when the Black Congressional Caucus held hearings two years later to investigate links between hip hop and violence and misogyny in African-American communities. The embrace was less controversial for Obama, now that hip hop had more fully entered the commercial mainstream, but nevertheless carried political risk. Obama had to distance himself from rapper Ludacris after his song "Politics" for its offensive lyrical treatment of Hillary Clinton, Jesse Jackson, John McCain and George Bush, and similarly asked Jay-Z to skip the line "you got it, fuck Bush" when performing his song "Blue Magic" at a campaign rally (Jay-Z obliged, but the crowd said it anyway).<sup>72</sup> Frequently asked about hip hop (including the *Rolling Stone* interview), Obama was on record as repeatedly praising the artistry and business acumen of its artists and for its political engagement. In an interview with Jeff Johnson for BET, Obama tempers his love for "the art of hip hop" with concerns about "the

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<sup>71</sup> George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 42.

<sup>72</sup> Dewey M. Clayton, *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 150.

message of hip hop” including misogyny, materialism, and the use of the n-word, before suggesting an ideal vision for hip hop’s ability to effect positive change:

the potential for them to deliver a message of extraordinary power that gets people thinking...the way they can communicate a complex message in a very short space is remarkable, and a lot of these kids aren’t going to be reading the *New York Times*. ...But what I always say is that hip hop is not just a mirror of what is, it should also be a reflection of what can be.<sup>73</sup>

Snoop Dogg praised Obama for having “the right conversation” about hip hop. “With these three words,” H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman explain, “Snoop concisely captured Barack’s ability to styleshift in linguistic terms...as well as his ability to navigate treacherous racially and politically charged terrain by reaching multiple constituencies at once.”<sup>74</sup> The “right conversation” was not just about hip hop, though, but about race more broadly. The twin reports by *Rolling Stone* and *Blender* suggest Obama’s ability to continually and subtly reconstruct his image musically to reflect not just his own multi-racial background, but to establish a musical empathy with diverse coalitions of voters/readers. Thus Obama highlights rock and more “serious” genres like jazz and classical on his iPod for the established magazine *Rolling Stone*, then embraces hip hop for the younger audiences of the online magazine *Blender*. In each, Obama constructs a collage of musical signifiers that cross genre and demographic boundaries to convince readers that he is both just like them and can reach across the musical aisle, as it were.

The collage approach of playlists works here because Obama is not concocting a single position on hip hop, or race in general, but modulating it to suggest a position more like a collage of multiple perspectives, conveyed to different audiences at different times. This is not to suggest that Obama’s position was hypocritical; indeed, his positions on race and hip hop are not only coherent but frequently demonstrate a nuance beyond most political attention as well. But his

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<sup>73</sup> *What’s In It For Us?: Barack Obama and the Black Vote*, BET, Aired January 21, 2008.

<sup>74</sup> H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman, *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama Language, and Race in the U.S.* (New York: Oxford, 2012), 131.

ability to shift his focus to highlight certain aspects more or less in each discussion is reminiscent of the multiple readings a collage offers depending on the viewer's perspective. Obama moves elements between foreground and background, establishing whatever links are necessary between elements to convey his message in a conducive manner to each audience member.

As demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, however, it is not just the candidates who construct their own public image. Just as user-generated mashups appropriated political imagery to reconfigure the candidates to express their views, musicians and citizens similarly created their own public musical discourse around Obama, and more specifically around blackness and race today. This is a vast topic, and comprises a wide range of media, from mainstream to underground, from individual songs and remixes to digitally-distributed mix tapes and proposed playlists that narrated the election cycle. But here I want to focus on the hip hop community, which emerged anew as a potent political arena in the 2008 election.

Hip hop had made earlier forays into electoral politics but it was not until the candidacy of Obama that political efforts in hip hop gained traction, as a "Hip Hop Caucus" organized concerts to raise money and to register voters, and more importantly, increase turnout on Election Day. Like Obama, hip hop artists also had to negotiate a tricky landscape in engaging electoral politics, maneuvering between their usual roles as street-smart, outsider commentators on politics and their new roles as political supporters, as sociologist Travis Gosa has observed. Artists who had cynically claimed black politicians had sold out and renounced the whole political system as a joke turned around and encouraging citizens to vote, and some even registering themselves and voting for the first time, all while mindfully maintaining their street cred.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Travis L. Gosa, "Not Another Remix: How Obama Became the First Hip-Hop President" *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 22, no. 4 (December 2010), 404.



Hip hop had for decades been politically engaged, but always operating outside of and against the political mainstream. “Message rap” emerged in the late 1980s and 1990, most notably in the music of Public Enemy, who used dense collages to “[wrestle] with the messy contradictions of truth.”<sup>76</sup> Tricia Rose, an influential and foundational scholar of hip hop, suggests a connection between the musical ruptures and layers and the social goals of hip hop:

These effects at the level of style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena. Let us imagine these hip hop principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate them, layer, embellish, and transform them. However, be also prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact, *plan* on social rupture. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways that will prepare you for a future in which survival will demand a sudden shift in ground tactics.<sup>77</sup>

More recently, musicologist Anne Danielsen suggests collage is more than just a metaphor for urban experience but sonically contributes a “documentary sound” of the inner city, lending Public Enemy an authenticity from which to speak. Danielsen is most persuasive when tying this “documentary sound” to their parodic use of mass media news coverage.<sup>78</sup> Sampling, hip hop’s principal act of collage, is at the heart of its ability to signify to audiences.

Following Obama’s victories in the primary and general elections, dozens of hip hop artists released new songs or remixed old songs in support of Obama, unleashing what Travis Gosa calls “a new wave of explicitly political rap.”<sup>79</sup> This new wave differed from message rap in both sound, being far less dense or challenging, and content, as this wave of political rap endorsed electoral politics as the solution rather than indicted it as a problem. Obama Hop, to use Gosa’s term, operated within both the commercial and political mainstream. But several of the

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<sup>76</sup> Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 260.

<sup>77</sup> Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 39.

<sup>78</sup> Anne Danielsen, “The Musicalization of ‘Reality’: Reality Rap and Rap Reality of Public Enemy’s *Fear of a Black Planet*” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 4 (2008), 405–21.

<sup>79</sup> Gosa, 390

songs and mix tapes that circulated did mirror Public Enemy's work in one crucial way: many grounded their work by sampling Obama himself, or sometimes other politicians or news coverage. Doing so, Obama Hop continues its aesthetic of engaging in real life and layering through sampling, while reducing the rupture aspects to signal improvement. These songs go even further than hip hop that merely celebrates Obama by directly constructing the idea of Obama and making Obama essentially a co-collaborator of the music's message. Examining three of these, will.i.am's "Yes We Can," Nas' "Black President," and Steinski's "None Shall Be Afraid," we can gain a more nuanced understanding of how hip hop communities not just embraced Obama as one of their own, but did so in subtly different ways that further elucidate the discourse of race in the United States, and in doing so used collage to navigate the contradictions of race they faced. These three examples highlight blackness specifically, and often in relationship to whiteness. This is, of course, only a small piece of an incredibly complex discussion of racial and post-racial identities, and more work is yet to be done on how other racial identities factor in; my discussion is limited, for the sake of space, to briefly exploring only the most prominent racial categories in Obama's election.<sup>80</sup>

The most popular hip hop sampling of Obama was probably will.i.am's "Yes We Can," which circulated on the internet and was viewed tens of millions of times during the election season and was performed live to open the Democratic National Convention.<sup>81</sup> The song does not just sample Obama, but rather layers Obama's speech, given to inspire his supporters after he lost the New Hampshire Primary, with a musical accompaniment, as a number of celebrities sing Obama's words simultaneously with him. Carol Vernallis has analyzed the video in depth,

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<sup>80</sup> Jin's "Open Letter to Obama" and Joell Ortiz's "Letter to Obama" are two prominent examples of hip hop songs from an Asian-American and a Puerto Rican perspective respectively, though intriguingly neither song addresses the question of race.

<sup>81</sup> "Yes We Can," uploaded by WeCan08 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcx-mYY>, February 2, 2008.

calling attention to how the video uses collage to highlight diversity. Visually, we see a variety of performers, men and women, of different races, dressed in clothes and accessories “spanning a sweep of twentieth-century dress” with multiple “associations with class, role, and social situation.”<sup>82</sup> Aurally, the participants speak in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Hebrew, and American Sign Language) and sing in multiple styles:

We hear many kinds of vocal address, both spoken and sung; these possess different cultural and stylistic resonances, including blues, folk, R&B, country, and pop. “Yes We Can” showcases a range of vocal performance: breathy and full; in registers from low to high; plain and ornamented, syllabic and melismatic settings of the words, or ad-libbed vocalizations; appearing as overlapping, separate, or in unison.<sup>83</sup>

Yet, as Vernallis notes, the collage also blurs lines by visually linking the many participants and uniting all into a single sweeping narrative musical trajectory that grows in energy and hope. She suggests that “we might consider one of the questions Obama's speech raises—what is the relation between the individual and the collective?” Of course, it is collage that keep the individual elements in play as part of and distinct from a single collective.

“Yes We Can” cedes unparalleled authority to Obama’s speech, with only minimal editing on the part of will.i.am.<sup>84</sup> This appearance of Obama and will.i.am as collaborators, co-authors even, suggests will.i.am found a strong affinity with Obama’s message of unity, but I would argue will.i.am’s affinity for Obama runs deeper than just the excerpt chosen. The video’s diversity, constructed through collage, echoes will.i.am’s group The Black Eyed Peas, perhaps the most prominently interracial musical act today, and who have embraced crossover appeal with white pop audiences like Obama. George Lipsitz admits that The Black Eyed Peas’ concerted efforts of pop crossover were calculated, which tempted many hip hop fans to dismiss

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<sup>82</sup> Vernallis, 83.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>84</sup> The section from “We know the battle ahead will be long” to “there has never been anything false about hope” appears earlier in the speech, but added here it gives a stronger narrative arc.

them, but insists “it was a calculation consistent with, rather than contrary to, the spirit, tradition, and aesthetic concerns of hip hop.”<sup>85</sup> Here, Lipsitz is discussing The Black Eyed Peas’ decisions to commercialize their anti-war song “Where’s the Love” in order to get the message out through mainstream commercial channels. For “Yes We Can,” Vernallis has noted the musical accompaniment’s primary communication of authenticity relies on the white genre of singer-songwriter, which, paired with the low budget and digital distribution, heightens the indie feeling of the work and offsets the fact that the video is essentially a cavalcade of stars.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, the prominence of speech, seemingly unedited, nods to spoken word performance, furthering a feel of authenticity. Ultimately, will.i.am’s approach to collaging a speech with a musical cover, and the visual collage that highlight the diversity of Obama’s support bespeak will.i.am’s understanding of Obama as aligned with his own effort to bridge a racial gap and enter the mainstream by adopting white discourse into his African-American public identity. By distributing the track on YouTube, will.i.am was perhaps targeting a new generation who many characterized throughout the election as less fractured by race because they had not lived through the tensions of the civil rights movements.<sup>87</sup>

With “Black President,” Nas was one of the most visible hip hop participants in the 2008 movement of Obama Hop. His track record of commercial and critical success and respect commanded within the hip hop industry—the hip hop magazine *The Source* ranked Nas the second greatest lyricist of all time, behind the highly influential Rakim—confirmed this.<sup>88</sup> Prior to “Black President,” included on Nas’s untitled album released in the summer of 2008, Nas

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<sup>85</sup> Lipsitz, 267.

<sup>86</sup> Vernallis, 88.

<sup>87</sup> The belief that a new generation is post-racial has been critiqued in a recent study. See Dominique Apollon, “Don’t Call Them ‘Post-Racial’: Millennials’ Attitudes on Race, Racism, and Key Systems in our Society.” *Applied Research Center* (June 2011).

<sup>88</sup> “Inside the Source Top 50 MCs List” *Launch Magazine* July 8, 2012, <http://thelaunchmagazine.com/?p=1085>.

made waves in the hip hop industry with his previous album's provocative title: *Hip Hop Is Dead*. Nas explained the choice of title to MTV:

When I say 'hip-hop is dead,' basically America is dead," he clarified. "There is no political voice. Music is dead. B2K is not New Edition. Chris Brown is great, I love Chris Brown, we need that, but Bobby Brown sticks in my heart. Our way of thinking is dead, our commerce is dead. Everything in this society has been done. It's like a slingshot, where you throw the mutha----a back and it starts losing speed and is about to fall down. That's where we are as a country. I don't wanna lose nobody with this, but what I mean by 'hip-hop is dead' is we're at a vulnerable state," he continued. "If we don't change, we gonna disappear like Rome. Let's break it down to a smaller situation. Hip-hop is Rome for the 'hood. I think hip-hop could help rebuild America, once hip-hoppers own hip-hop.... We are our own politicians, our own government, we have something to say. We're warriors. Soldiers."<sup>89</sup>

Nas's statement suggests that Nas was looking for a political jolt of relevance to galvanize hip hop, and he appears to have found that in Obama. Nas vocally criticized black leaders like Jesse Jackson for their criticisms of Obama as an old, inflexible mindset of interracial conflict.

Whereas "Yes We Can" envisioned a uniting pluralist society that fostered the crossover work of both will.i.am and Obama, Nas's "Black President" positioned Obama more squarely as a black American while acknowledging a shift in black identity. "Black President" opens with Obama's victory speech after the Iowa Caucus: "They said this day would never come. They said our sights were set too high. They said this country was too divided, too disillusioned to ever come together around a common purpose. They said..." From here, the chorus shifts from Obama's speech to a sample from Tupac Shakur's "I Wonder If Heaven Got a Ghetto," the first single of his that was released posthumously that juxtaposes two samples: "Although it seems heaven sent/ We ain't ready to have a black president." Immediately after, seemingly in response, a synthesized chorus sings the phrases "Yes we can" and "Change the world,"

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<sup>89</sup> Shaheem Reid, "MTV News Exclusive: Nas Previews *Hip Hop is Dead*... *The N*" October 10, 2006, <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1542740/mtv-news-exclusive-nas-previews-new-lp.jhtml>.

followed by another brief sample of Obama saying “Change the world!”<sup>90</sup> These samples are set to a snappy snare drum riff that evokes a call to patriotic duty, or the image of marching, which itself might evoke the civil rights marches, or in the context of Tupac and Obama, simply the march of time that has led us to a point where Americans are finally ready to have a black president (Example 5.1).



**Example 5.1: Snare Pattern sampled in Nas’s “Black President”**

While will.i.am placed Obama in dialogue with himself, Nas places Obama in dialogue with Tupac, who, after his murder, became one of the most potent mythic figures in hip hop. Michael Eric Dyson, one of the most visible public scholars on hip hop, notes that Tupac’s death “lifted him to the lofty heights of mainstream mythmaking. Tupac is perhaps the first black figure to survive death in the way that only a few white icons have managed.”<sup>91</sup> This is not to suggest that Tupac served as a myth within white communities, but that Tupac attained an iconic status within black communities as equally powerful to that of Elvis or Marilyn Monroe within white communities. By appropriating Tupac’s image to affirm Obama’s placement, and doing so within a clearly defined hip hop song, released on a well-publicized and controversial album that had once been titled “Nigger,” Nas’s construction of Obama was arguably aimed squarely at

<sup>90</sup> This phrase most likely comes from Obama’s common stump speech line “One voice can change a room; and if a voice can change a room, it can change a city; and if it can change a city, it can change a state; and if it can change a state, it can change a nation; and if it can change a nation, it can change the world.” The frequency of this line makes pinning down the exact source of this sample difficult, but also stresses the cultural familiarity the line carried to some.

<sup>91</sup> Michael Eric Dyson, *Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2001), 257.

potential African-American voters, and served to elevate Obama to an iconic status within the black community. By placing the two in an equal exchange, Nas affirms Obama's blackness, a position that was crucial to efforts to increase African-American turnout at the polls. Dyson argues that the myth of Tupac

is itself a metaphor for the existence of anonymous, ordinary people, the people who invest in the legends by which their private lives—their most intimate experiences—are publicly narrated. Anonymous, ordinary individuals project their lives onto the legendary figure, merging with it where they can, fostering an even more intense identification with that figure. By contributing to the creation of a legend... ordinary people are in fact creating themselves.<sup>92</sup>

This holds true for Obama as well, who publicly narrated the achievement of an impossible dream of success generations of African Americans couldn't even dream of happening within their lifetime. Unlike Tupac, though, Obama's iconic status became powerful for Americans of all races, who saw possibility, vindication, or redemption in him at the moment of his election.

"Black President" explores in the verses the complex shifts in racial identity in recent decade and the contradictions and questions they pose (Appendix 5A), contradictions that underpin the collage of Tupac's and Obama's voices. In the first verse, Nas begins by chronicling the social ills still facing many lower class African Americans, including poverty, brutal justice system, drugs, and violence—many of which are explored as well in "I Wonder If Heaven Got a Ghetto." But Nas also acknowledges his own trajectory of economic privilege, contrasting his previous residence in Queensbridge, the largest public housing development in New York, with his current life of luxury. Nas offers his "poetical genius/ to whoever may need it," but suggests that hip hop is no longer enough to enact change—"A President is needed." Nas then juxtaposes institutional white racism ("America, surprise us") with black racism ("You know how these colored and Negroes/ Hate to see one of their own succeedin"). This latter line

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 262.

reinforces the economic divisions within contemporary black society, but does so by mapping this difference onto generational divisions, using antiquated words “colored” and “Negro,” to suggest that the older generation of black politicians have viewed affluent blacks as turning their backs on the community. Nas returns to this critique in the final verse, suggesting Americans must move beyond the 1960s, which is equally marked for Nas by the assassinations of black leaders, by the black leaders’ continuation of hate through vitriolic alienation of whites, specifically rebuking Jesse Jackson and Jeremiah Wright, and by the empty apologies of whites without acknowledging a need for present-day changes. The most potent phrase in this verse, however, is Nas’s “Still, I’m pledging allegiance.” By placing this phrase between the first half of the verse’s emphasis on social problems and the second half’s emphasis on African Americans accumulating economic and political power, Nas’s pledge serves as a lynchpin between two visions of black identity. It suggests he is both pledging allegiance to the United States and implying that he remains a participant within the governmental and capitalist infrastructure rather than a critic outside it, and pledging allegiance to those underserved by that government, promising not to forget them. In Nas’s vision, the two are not antithetical.

The second verse projects the debate about the intersection of racial and economic identities onto anxiety about Obama’s racial identity. Nas begins by wondering what Obama is wondering on election night. His references to assassination attempts, hate crimes, and civil rights place Obama in a long tradition of African-American fears and affirm his blackness, most potently by again recalling the slain image of Tupac and mapping this image onto Obama. “He dies, we die too,” Nas reflects, suggesting Obama signifies the hopes of an entire racial community: that as a nation the United States has advanced far enough to be ready for a black president. But Nas continues by praising Obama not just as a symbol of black hope, but



specifically for his abroad, interracial appeal and message of hope—Obama can be multi-racial, perhaps even post-racial and still be black. But then, Nas suddenly reverses himself and entertains doubts that Obama is, maybe, not black enough: “I’m thinkin’ I can trust this brother/ But will he keep it real?/ Every innocent nigga in jail/ Getting out on appeal/ When he wins, will he really care still? I feel...” The collage of Obama’s identities is never resolved beyond a subjective feeling. Following this verse, the chorus seems more like a dialectical debate still raging. Maybe we (meaning Americans) are still not ready? Maybe we are? The third verse, as noted above, once again affirms that we are ready, and that Obama is the answer, but Nas nevertheless gives serious attention to the struggles over Obama’s identity, allowing for Obama to be, like Tupac, large enough to represent a complex and diverse race.

Finally, I want to suggest that there is something potent about Nas’s choice to sample Obama saying “change the world.” The decision might have been to provide novelty, as will.i.am had pretty much cornered the market on the phrase “yes we can,” which could not possibly be divorced from Obama’s campaign. The phrase “change the world” was less strongly tied to Obama, yet its impact is even stronger than “yes we can,” for by saying “change the world,” Obama emerges out of an invisible, imagined “we” to become an individual. His phrase is not a future-tense affirmation, but a present command that both suggests that the power to change the world lies within the people themselves, but also underscores his position of authority by issuing the command. In other words, Nas asserts a vision of Obama as not only black, but President.<sup>93</sup>

Working outside the commercial mainstream, Steinski (Steven Stein), one of the earliest inventors of the sample-based tape collage, released on his blog a roughly and hastily assembled

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<sup>93</sup> This positioning Obama as President is also made when Nas raps “when he wins,” rather than “if he wins.”

remix of Reverend Lowery's Inaugural Benediction titled "None Shall Be Afraid."<sup>94</sup> Steinski's contribution is an odd selection to consider. First, it does not even sample Obama, although his sampling of the benediction from Obama's inauguration allows Steinski to participate in constructing Obama's image. Second, it was far less popular or visible, but rather a work that traveled through more underground digital channels. Relatedly, it was written as a reflection on Obama's victory, and therefore did not serve the purpose of voter outreach "Yes We Can" and "Black President" served. And third, it was composed by a middle-aged Jewish former advertising executive who DJed on the side and became a key figure within the DJ community through his early experimental work with mashups.

"None Shall Be Afraid" conveys a different form of blackness rather strongly through its collage. Steinski opens with a polyrhythmic percussive groove, layering syncopated riffs of drum and rattle, suggestive of the African and Caribbean drumming that has been cited as a foundational element to African-American music (Example 5.2a). Over this, the echoing voice of Reverend Lowery enters, asking God for his blessing. As Lowery says "But because we know you got the whole world in your hands, we pray for not only our nation but for the community of nations, to restore stability, mend our brokenness, heal our wounds" a cowbell, a second rattle, and a tambourine enter in to provide heterophonically a more even metrical pattern against the drum's syncopation (Example 5.2b). These instruments turn the sound in a collective force, mirroring Lowery's invocation of the "community of nations," an image that further resonates with the transatlantic black music that is invoked here. The steady downbeat also "restores stability" without the impulse to simplify anything, suggesting that a path to restoring stability does not require a denial of difference.

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<sup>94</sup> Steinski posted the track on his website. See Steinski, "A track from the inauguration (with apologies to Rev. Lowery), [http://www.steinski.com/blog/a\\_track\\_from\\_the\\_inauguration\\_with\\_apologies\\_to\\_rev\\_lowery/](http://www.steinski.com/blog/a_track_from_the_inauguration_with_apologies_to_rev_lowery/), January 21, 2009.

a)

Low-pitched Drum

Rattle

b)

Cowbell

Rattle

Tambourine

**Example 5.2: Percussive grooves in Steinski’s “None Shall Be Afraid”**

From here, Steinski adds clapping, another sonic hallmark of black music as well as of community, as Lowery makes overt references to social justice. “Justice shall roll down like water. None shall be afraid” are biblical quotations but more immediately recall Martin Luther King, Jr.’s adoption of them.<sup>95</sup> Lowery envisions a world where racial equality is reality: “Black will not be asked to get back, brown can stick around, the yella will be mella, the red man can get ahead, man, and white will embrace what is right.” Lowery is signifying on blues performer Big Bill Broonzy’s song “Black, Brown, and White” to critique racism, and concludes by suggesting that whites must be the ones to take action to achieve this by embracing equality, before asking for all to say “Amen.” Here Steinski mixes in a rousing gospel call-and-response performance of “Jesus Can Work It Out,” whose lyrics address the same issues of poverty

<sup>95</sup> “Justice shall roll down like water” comes from Amos 5:24, and was used in King’s “I Have A Dream” speech. “None shall be afraid” comes from “Micah 4:4” and was used in King’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

Lowery alludes to in the benediction and the Biblical sacrifices of Abraham and Job to further highlight the hardships people continue to face and the need for faith. The performance is electrifying, capturing the optimistic celebratory energy of the day. Steinski finishes with a repeat of Lowry's call, "Justice shall roll down like water. None shall be afraid" over the solo drum line. The transition from ecstatic gospel community to just the solo drum that opened suggests this vision of harmony and community has not yet been realized, but it is possible, if Americans act together, to achieve.

Steinski's use of overtly black musical tropes—percussion polyrhythmic grooves, clapping, Gospel singing, call and response—creates a moment of celebration for the Inauguration that specifically celebrates blackness. But whose blackness? Obama remains implied but absent. Lowery was a powerful civil rights leader, co-founding the Southern Christian Leadership Coalition with Martin Luther King, Jr. and has remained a prominent activist on a wide range of issues, including the environment, labor, world peace, and poverty. In Lowery, Steinski found a figure that connected to the historically rooted definition of blackness his collage creates, rather than the contemporary discourses on race Nas and will.i.am invoked. Lowery also could make the racially specific statements, given his history and his role here; Obama could not risk something that divisive in his speech. Steinski's collage seems to have at its heart, then, a disjuncture about race. The inauguration is celebrated here as the culmination of a long historical movement of civil rights and social justice, but Obama remains distant. This might be by choice, as Obama rejected the political style that addressed racial different more confrontationally and viewed it more institutionally in favor of an emphasis on individual responsibility and commonality. Or, and I think more likely, it is by demand, that the civil rights victory was not one Obama could fully enjoy because his position as president could not allow it.

In other words, the issue was not that Obama wasn't black enough, but that he was just not allowed to be black enough.

All three artists reflect particular cultural and personal perspectives on race refracted through their own sonic treatment of Obama's voice (or, in the case of Steinski, Obama's proxy voice in Lowery). Although Nas and will.i.am arrive at somewhat different conclusions about hip hop, Obama, the idea of post-racial America, both acknowledge the uniquely modern challenges to a single black identity, owing perhaps to their own disjuncture between their place and the political messages that speak for a subaltern constituency in need of help. Steinski takes a different, more complicated path because Steinski is white, and as a DJ rather than a hip hop artist, is also shielded from the need to have lyrics, which almost always make any politics meaning overt; the meaning of Steinski's collage is much more opaque. What is not opaque, though, is that in its construction, Steinski appropriates an array of black musical signifiers that bespeak an idea of authenticity. Enid Logan has critiqued the idea of post-racial United States as a place where Obama "presented his blackness to white voters as a kind of offering—a source of authenticity, innocence, rebirth, and redemption," and where "the cultural forms of people of color are understood to be artifacts that anyone may consume, appropriate, or claim as their own. Blacks are called to offer their blackness to the wider society, rather than regarding it as part of an oppositional, minority culture."<sup>96</sup> "None Shall Be Afraid" invites the same criticism George Lipsitz leveled against the treatment of Robert Johnson, criticizing how romantic myth obscures the very real impact of economics on black music. Steinski stands apart from Nas and will.i.am precisely because he doesn't grapple with questions of class in black identity and music that form a crisis in modern American black identity but relies on traditional markers from the past.

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<sup>96</sup> Enid Logan, *"At this Defining Moment": Barack Obama's Presidential Candidacy and the New Politics of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 24, 45.

At the same time, Steinski is not employing these myths purely for his own benefit, as those Lipsitz critiques often were. Instead, he remains inscrutably, uncomfortably silent about who, exactly, is celebrating the blackness we hear.

## **To Perform a More Perfect Union: “We Are One”**

On the eve of the Inauguration, Obama celebrated the racial dynamics of the moment in his own way. “We Are One” was held on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the Inaugural weekend, a tradition begun by Jimmy Carter.<sup>97</sup> It featured musical performances interspersed with readings of historical quotations. The line-up was certainly diverse, ranging from the classical music and patriotic anthems that have in the past marked the occasion, to legendary popular performers, to contemporary musical and Hollywood stars (Figure 5.4). Like the iPod playlist, this sort of eclectic line-up is commonplace today, whether at a benefit concert, an outdoor music festival, or at The Grammys. And like the iPod, I suggest that recognizing this concert as a form of performative collage, where songs and artists are juxtaposed and recombined, helps to illuminate how these musical performances and combinations also staged the various issues that the 2008 election engaged.

“We Are One” goes further than the iPod to engage multiple forms of collage. A diverse array of musical numbers was created, but many of these songs were performed collaboratively with two or more performers—often of different races, genders, ages, and/or musical genres—sharing the stage for a single song, heightening both visually and aurally the impact of collage as they sang together. Others offered a more subtle variation on this type of collage, as artists from one background covered older songs, and in doing so enacting the same sorts of musical and extramusical mixing that the collaborative performances more overtly engaged in. Furthermore,

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<sup>97</sup> At Richard Nixon’s 1973 inauguration, the Lincoln Memorial had been the site of anti-war protests. Before Nixon, I have not found any evidence that the Memorial played a role in the Inauguration.

the “We Are One” concert made prominent use of both medleys of spoken texts between the musical performances and video montages during the musical performances, which played on television screens both at the event and for those watching its broadcast at home on HBO, both of which colored (and were colored by) the music that was directly juxtaposed with them, either before, after, or during. The effect was sometimes clear but more often these collages were polysemic, suggesting again Obama’s “collage” of many stories played out on his most public stage yet.

Obama’s image as President was crafted from the beginning. The concert opened with the United States Army Band performing Aaron Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*, a work whose title derives from a speech by Henry Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt’s vice president, embracing the fight against fascism. The solemn music’s emphasis on brass and percussion here projects a militaristic resolve, and as Elizabeth Crist has noted, Copland’s dedication of the *Fanfare* “evoked both the fighting forces and everyday Americans.”<sup>98</sup> Immediately following, the Obamas and the Bidens entered, and the band performed The Star Spangled Banner, sung by Master Sergeant Caleb B. Green, rendered in the more militarily-fashioned and increasingly common duple meter, rather than its original triple meter.<sup>99</sup> Right from the outset, then, Obama was aligned by juxtaposition with two potent and militarily suggestive patriotic symbols.

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<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth B. Crist, “Aaron Copland and the Popular Front,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 56, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 447.

<sup>99</sup> For more on the history of this, see Mark Clague, “Adding a Beat to the Banner: Beyoncé, Whitney, and the Magic of 4/4 Time,” *O Say Can You Hear*, <http://osaycanyouhear.wordpress.com/2013/01/26/adding-a-beat-to-the-banner-the-power-of-44-time/>.



Bishop Gene Robinson	Opening prayer
United States Army Band	<i>Fanfare for the Common Man</i> (Aaron Copland)
Master Sergeant Caleb B. Green III	"The Star Spangled Banner"
Denzel Washington	Readings: Monuments of Washington
Bruce Springsteen and The Joyce Garrett Singers	"The Rising" (Springsteen)
Laura Linney and Martin Luther King III	Readings: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Martin Luther King Jr.
Mary J. Blige	"Lean on Me" (Bill Withers)
Jaime Fox and Steve Carell	Readings: Thomas Jefferson, Thurgood Marshall, and Robert Kennedy
Bettye LaVette and Jon Bon Jovi	"A Change Is Gonna Come" (Sam Cooke)
Tom Hanks and United States Army Band	<i>Lincoln Portrait</i> (Copland)
Marisa Tomei	Readings: Ronald Reagan
James Taylor, John Legend, Jennifer Nettles, and Arnold McCuller	"Shower the People" (Taylor)
Joe Biden	Speech
John Mellencamp and choir	"Pink Houses" (Mellencamp)
Queen Latifah	Readings: Marian Anderson
Josh Groban, Heather Headley, and the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington D. C.	"My Country, 'Tis of Thee"
Kal Penn and George Lopez	Readings: Dwight D. Eisenhower and Barbara Jordan
Herbie Hancock, will.i.am, and Sheryl Crow	"One Love" (Bob Marley) and "Where's the Love?" (The Black Eyed Peas)
Tiger Woods	Readings: The Armed Force
Renée Fleming and United States Naval Academy Glee Club	"You'll Never Walk Alone" (Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein)

**Figure 5.4: Program for “We Are One”**

Jack Black and Rosario Dawson	Readings: Theodore Roosevelt
Garth Brooks and children's chorus	"American Pie" (Don McLean), "Shout" (The Isley Brothers), "We Shall Be Free" (Brooks)
Ashley Judd and Forest Whitaker	Readings: John F. Kennedy and William Faulkner
Stevie Wonder, Usher, and Shakira	"Higher Ground" (Wonder)
Samuel L. Jackson	Readings: Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr.
U2	"Pride (In the Name of Love)" and "City of Blinding Lights" (U2)
Barack Obama	Speech
Pete Seeger, Bruce Springsteen, Tao Rodríguez-Seeger, and children's chorus	"This Land Is Your Land" (Woody Guthrie)
Beyoncé and ensemble	"America the Beautiful"

**Figure 5.4 continued**

Yet “We Are One” also tempered this forceful image elsewhere. Obama had run on a campaign opposing the war in Iraq, and had to be careful not to project an image that was strong but not bellicose. To do so, Obama included a dedication to the Armed Forces, given by Tiger Woods, but placed in the collage next to music that re-scripted its meaning. Preceding the dedication, Stevie Wonder, Sheryl Crow, and will.i.am performed Bob Marley’s “One Love,” with will.i.am contributing a rapped verse from his own group The Black Eyed Peas’ song “Where’s the Love?” This mashup of two pacifist tunes, one directly critiquing the war in Iraq, next to a dedication of the Armed Forces is striking—each element of the collage unsettles the message of the other. At the same time, the collage effect is softened, and The Black Eyed Peas’ critiques smoothed over. will.i.am performs only the first verse, which largely focuses on race-

based hatred. Furthermore, he alters the original lyrics “Overseas we trying to stop terrorism/ But we still got terrorists here livin’/ In the USA, the big CIA/ The Bloods and the Crips and the KKK” to “Overseas we trying to stop terrorism/ But we still got terrorists here livin’/ In the USA, no education/ and we got that racial hate.” Eliminating the critique of the CIA is notable, but given the context within a presidential inauguration, practically unavoidable. Likewise, the verses that critique not just violence of war but its justification, “A war is goin’ on but the reason’s undercover/ The truth is kept secret, it’s swept under the rug,” are absent. The changes here underscore the difficulty of maintaining criticisms under an appearance of unity, as will.i.am cannot even name offenders of hatred but only allude to the existence of “that racial hate.” Collage here, and Obama, strives to unite differing perspectives regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the results are strained here, alternately juxtaposing conflicting messages and editing them to soften the contrast and appear more consistent and unified—much as they would be in the years to come under Obama’s policies.

Following this contradiction, Renée Fleming joins the United States Naval Academy Glee Club to perform Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from *Carousel*, a song which cannot help but reinforce a desire for unity. The song is meant as a tribute both to the troops and to the families of active service members, evidenced by the slide show of images of soldiers and families that accompanied it. The song’s lyrics encourage the listener to endure hardship and remain hopeful in the promise of a bright future. Musically, the song is not constructed in a typical Tin Pan Alley fashion, but through-composed, with a vocal line that continually rise upward over the course of the song, traversing a full octave and a fifth, which complements the lyrical message of uplift and hope. Its political messages were made more explicit on the second time through the song, when the Naval Academy Glee Club sang the

opening phrases, accompanied by a beating timpani that reinforced the sense of steady determination, while images of servicemen (not women) and families shared tearful hugs and kisses as these servicemen said goodbye. The message tells the troops to “hold your head up high/ And don’t be afraid of the dark.” The photograph montage resumes later in the verse when Fleming begins the portion of the song where the harmonic tension is heightened considerably and the cadence delayed, suggesting difficult times, while the vocal line showcases a steely resolve to climb upward and hold fast to its progress, leading up to the song’s climactic finale where Hammerstein placed the title (Example 5.3). Images of families reunited play, beginning with a sign that says “Welcome Home Daddy” and features a photo of the soldier with his wife and infant, then pans up to a much older child holding the sign, revealing the years passed during the war (Figure 5.5).

*F*                      *Fdim7*                      *C/E*                      *Fm6*                      *C/E*  
 Walk on through the wind      Walk on through the rain      tho' your dreams be  
*Em*                      *F*                      *G7/F*                      *C/E*                      *E+*  
 tossed and blown      Walk on, walk on, with  
*F*                      *D7/F#*                      *C/E*      *E+*      *Fmaj7*      *F#b5b7*      *Em/G*      *G7*  
 hope in your heart      and you'll ne - ver      walk a - lone

**Example 5.3: Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “You’ll Never Walk Alone”**



**Figure 5.5: Supporting the Troops in “You’ll Never Walk Alone”**

But collaged alongside the questions raised by “One Love,” “Where’s the Love,” and the dedication of the Armed Forces, there are traces of a more complex battle being fought here. The song’s original meaning was not an active display of bravery in the face of danger, but in the face of hardship. The song is sung in *Carousel* to the main character Julie Jordan by her cousin Nellie, trying to comfort Julie after Julie’s husband, Billy Bigelow, was killed while attempting a robbery to provide money for his wife and daughter-to-be. The song’s evocation of a husband lost (albeit less honorably, but nevertheless driven by a desire to protect his family) and a widow comforted resonates deeply with the emotional photographs of the families hugging their men in uniform. Through the openness of collage, the song manages to support dual readings, one offering a support to the troops and confirmation that their work is hard but justified, supported by the government and citizens at home, and another suggesting Americans support the troops by bringing them home and providing for them and their families domestically as well as abroad through better veteran care.

Many of the collages invoked the various debates over identity politics, most centrally race. Yet “We Are One” also celebrates gay rights—somewhat surprising, given the lack of attention to sexual identity throughout the campaign, eclipsed by race, age, and gender—by including the Washington D.C. Gay Men’s Chorus in a performance of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” headlined by Josh Groban and Heather Headley. The selection of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” was particularly evocative, as it recalled the landmark performance delivered by Marian Anderson on these same steps seventy years earlier. For those whom the connection might have escaped, the performance was preceded by Queen Latifah speaking about that historic concert, accompanied by news footage of it. The song opens with Groban singing the first verse alone, then passing the song onto Headley, who is black, as the rear partition opens up partway through

to reveal the chorus. The simultaneous collage of these two events, passing the song to an African American singer and revealing a gay chorus, elides the two and suggests a passing of the civil rights torch from racial equality to sexual orientation equality. To be sure, the moment is not fully embracing. Not only are the chorus unannounced or otherwise identified in the performance or on the television broadcast, the chorus never actually gets to perform the song itself, providing back up harmonies and singing an altered, truncated phrase that serves as a bridge before Headley and Groban unite for the final verse. This inability to fully own “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” reflects the continuing ambivalence on the part of Obama, whose views on same-sex marriage he said were “evolving.” Furthermore, Obama’s inclusion of the outspoken critic of gay marriage, Rick Warren, in the inauguration met with heavy criticism, only somewhat offset by another controversial choice to open the “We Are One” concert, openly gay Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson. The controversy continued when Robinson was left off the televised broadcast of the concert, a move the Obama campaign apologized for and insisted was unintentional. Inclusion and exclusion appear as equally contentious choices, sure to upset someone. The inclusion of the chorus was nevertheless a highly visible forward step for the movement, and Obama’s use of collage alleviates the controversy by not explicitly naming gay rights as a civil rights issue, but undeniably inferring it when juxtaposing it with the now uncontroversial racial equality in a discreet, semi-public, semi-closeted demonstration of support.

Perhaps unavoidably, the most visible aspect of political negotiation was on the question of race. Whereas the concert’s addressing of the war in Iraq and gay rights remained fairly centralized collages, limited in scope yet still complex, the issue of race was practically ubiquitous throughout the concert. Rather than asserting a single form of collage to engage the

issue of race, “We Are One” employed a variety of models of collage: interracial collaborations between soloists, between soloists and black choruses, and between soloists and interracial choruses; cross-racial covers; and racially homogenous acts, including both covers and performances by original artists—all of these juxtaposed in a large-scale collage. As a result, this collage holds a number of interpretations in play; no clear picture of race in contemporary America emerges strongly, and perhaps rightly so for this transitional moment of American politics.

The selection of participants was noticeably, visibly diverse, perhaps most so in the children’s choir, which envisioned a harmoniously united, multiracial future (Figure 5.6). It was musically diverse as well, including patriotic anthems, classical, folk, country, rock, soul, reggae, and hip hop. The majority of its racial diversity centered on the binary of black and white, as much of the campaign had. “We Are One” featured ten black/white collaborations: four combinations of solo artists, four pairs of speakers (including the pairing of Jack Black with the Afro-Caribbean descended Rosario Dawson), and two white performers backed by black choruses. In addition, there was one black/Latina collaboration, one white/Latino collaboration, and one Asian American/Latino collaboration. In his dissertation on black/white encounters on stage and screen, Todd Decker has observed, “Black and white performers making music together—whatever kind of music in whatever setting—has always been unusual and it remains so.”<sup>100</sup> Obama’s inauguration was striking, then, and its abundance of cross-racial performative collaboration, and set a welcoming tone that could suggest a post-racial musical model.

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<sup>100</sup> Todd Decker, “Black/ White Encounters on the American Musical Stage and Screen” (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 490.





**Figure 5.6: A Multiracial Children’s Chorus joins Bruce Springsteen, Pete Seeger, and Tao Rodriguez-Seeger in “This Land is Your Land”**

By focusing on black and white interactions, “We Are One” is remarkable for its multiple perspectives on and definitions of both blackness and whiteness. Black musical selections predominantly emphasized the 1960s and 1970s Motown and soul that Obama repeatedly used throughout his campaign: Stevie Wonder, Sam Cooke, Bill Withers, and The Isley Brothers. But “We Are One” also included tracks by reggae artist Bob Marley and the hip hop group The Black Eyed Peas, and counted among its performers the less famous veteran soul singer Bettye LaVette, R&B singer and Tony-winning Broadway performer Heather Headley, jazz fusion icon Herbie Hancock, and a few of today’s most prominent R&B and hip hop stars: John Legend, Mary J. Blige, Beyoncé, and Usher. White musical selections most prominently featured the rock music Obama also held interest in: Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Bon Jovi, and U2. But white music also found diverse presentation in classical music and Broadway showtunes, folk

and country performers including Garth Brooks, James Taylor, and Pete Seeger. Taken collectively, both white and black musics represent multiple generations, genres that retain markers of different economic classes, and a geographic diversity from Marley's Jamaica to Springsteen's Jersey to Copland's prairies. Yet it also made clear how porous American boundaries sometimes are: U2's "Pride" and "City of Blinding Lights" offer an Irish rock perspective on civil rights and 9/11; Marley and Headley take trans-Caribbean pathways to American popular music; Copland's western Americana developed from a Brooklyn Jewish, Russian immigrant experience.

The most prominent example of musical porousness in "We Are One" is across the color line. Looking again at the gathered musical selections and performers, there are a number whose work regularly crossed over the color line: Sam Cooke repeatedly performed in a white pop style, Herbie Hancock has collaborated with white rock and pop musicians, and will.i.am likewise performs as part of a multiracial hip hop group, The Black Eyed Peas, that has collaborated with white artists and regularly appears on the pop charts. Racial crossover occurs in both directions; Pete Seeger has a long history of music making with and in support of African Americans, Renée Fleming has collaborated with jazz artists, and Bruce Springsteen's musical style is indebted to both black and Hispanic musicians.<sup>101</sup> And beyond performance style, the eclecticism of contemporary listening habits and digital distribution reflects an even more porous ability of artists to easily reach fans across racial, sexual, economic, and geographic borders.

The fluidity of this musical mobility of style and of fandom appears smooth and easy, and it would seem that "We Are One" aimed to capitalize on this transracial musical harmony to reflect the campaign's emphasis on interracial unity. Yet by reshuffling and reassembling these

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<sup>101</sup> For two examples, see Adam Lifshy, "The Borderlands Poetics of Bruce Springsteen," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 3, no. 2 (May 2009), 221–41; and Joel Dinerstein, "The Soul Roots of Bruce Springsteen's American Dream," *American Music* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 441–76.

various musical elements into an overt performative collage, one that uses several models of interracial music-making, “We Are One” somewhat undoes this perceived fluidity by calling attention to how music is racially, or interracially, marked through the juxtapositions created.

In some interracial collaborations, the differences often rang clear. Combinations of speakers sometimes registered different moods: white comedians Steve Carell and Jack Black remained steadfastly serious, while Jaime Foxx, presenting alongside Carell, offered a shout-out to “Chi Town stand up! 312!” and a cunning impression of Obama himself; George Lopez also joked with the audience, asking, “Who here’s from out of town?” The difference in attitudes suggest an authority of non-white presenters, who appeared more joyous and relaxed, comfortable cracking jokes, while the white presenters observed the moment with a form of solemn reverence. Musical collaborations also registered different approaches of style. Several performances found African-American presenters employing various tropes of African American music in their approach, including improvisation, rhythmic flexibility, and call and response. Sheryl Crow’s performance of Bob Marley’s “One Love” may sound like improvisation, but she hews fairly closely to replicating the improvisations made by Marley on the original. Herbie Hancock and will.i.am, by contrast, freely improvised, Hancock inflecting it with strains of avant-garde jazz, will.i.am by rapping a verse of his “Where’s the Love” over the chords. Heather Headley’s performance of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” pushed expressively against the rhythm in a way Josh Groban’s warm, vibrato-laden performance did not.

The juxtapositions within collage can stress similarities as well, and “We Are One” occasionally provided moments of interracial resonance. James Taylor’s “Shower the People” began with markedly different performance styles, between Taylor’s clear, simple folk tenor and John Legend’s smooth R&B approach. Following Taylor’s simple, unadorned guitar solo, black

R&B singers Arnold McCuller and Legend began to layer improvised R&B lines over the chorus: another moment of difference until white country singer Jennifer Nettles joined in, blending seamlessly, as all three modulated between trading improvised lines and blending with Taylor in his straight repetitions of the chorus. More surprising was the combination of Jon Bon Jovi and Betty LaVette for Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come," a pairing described by one critic as "incongruous."<sup>102</sup> And while Bon Jovi's quieter, smoother vibrato does clash sometimes with LaVette's stretched, strained soul delivery of her line, both shape and ornament their vocal lines in similar but racially distinct ways, LaVette with her blue notes and slides, Bon Jovi with his trills and brief melismas. But Bon Jovi's characteristic higher register proves surprisingly well-matched to LaVette's soulful delivery, straining with the same rough textures. As the song's bridge comes to an end, LaVette builds the energy up to its highest level before Bon Jovi enters with the verse. But Bon Jovi prefaces the verse with a sustained high note that carries over the roughness and metric flexibility of LaVette's performance yet still sounds unmistakably Bon Jovi. The musical energy becomes kinetic as Bon Jovi stomps his foot and throws his hand down—a rock gesture, but another performative resonance with LaVette, who performs with her whole body posture.

Other artists modeled another type of transracial music-making by shifting between white and black modes of singing within their own performances. Beyoncé's rendition of "America the Beautiful" began with a beautifully "traditional" and reverent first verse with only one small vocal embellishment, a graceful three-note melismatic on "thee." but then urging everyone to sing, Beyoncé erupted with an impassioned call, "America! Can you feel it? Stand up! Sing with me!" and launched into a far more R&B-marked version, ornately decorated and giving "thee" a

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<sup>102</sup> Rashod D. Ollison, "Musical messages of hope, faith," *Baltimore Sun* January, 19 2009. [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2009-01-19/news/0901180146\\_1\\_bettye-lavette-choir-bruce-springsteen](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2009-01-19/news/0901180146_1_bettye-lavette-choir-bruce-springsteen)

full upward swooping melisma, rising an octave and a third. Garth Brooks embraced his country persona in “American Pie” and “We Shall Be Free,” yet infused his cover of “Shout” with a playful gospel style, changing his vocal timbre and stretching his phrases, improvising lyrics and adding vocal embellishments. The moment reached its fullest embodiment of transracial performance when Brooks interacted with the multiracial children’s chorus, instructing them to crouch down together and sing “a little bit softer now” (Figure 5.7). Brooks reached up to the stage as a young African-American girl got down on her hands and knees and embraced him, a moment of cross-racial contact physically and musically, where racial synthesis traveled from the African-American Isley Brothers, through Motown’s crossover appeal, to Brooks and Obama’s abilities to connect beyond stereotypes, empowering understanding and building community.

Collage permits a variety of simultaneous, even contradictory interpretations, recognizing the multiple racial and generic differences and similarities encoded in these collaborative performances. By juxtaposing artists within the same song, and then combining these various juxtapositions into a single concert, the complexity of realizing racial and musical harmony is brought into relief: there is no single way to perform blackness or whiteness, much less to perform a multiracial America. Artists were free to alter, not alter, or sometimes alter their performance style, free to unite with or distinguish themselves from their musical colleagues, providing a vibrant, diverse, and constantly changing portrait of American diversity.

As compelling and honest this rich interracial model is, it is worth noting what elements this portrait of America excludes in trying to achieve a racial synthesis or unity Obama’s campaign envisioned. The mashup of “One Love” and “Where’s the Love” provides both the richest example of African-American music making and the most divergent from Obama’s

Motown and soul playlist. Consider the sheer number of politically black signifiers in that one performance: Hancock’s jazzy improvisations touched upon both the modern jazz movement that propelled the civil rights movement and the rock crossover work Hancock controversially engaged in; will.i.am’s rapping was the one brief moment of the politically contentious form of hip hop that Obama often aligned himself with; and all of this over the harmony of Bob Marley’s reggae tune, itself a highly political genre and reflecting as well the Afro-Caribbean roots of black music, while its implication of transnational identity is folded into a national identity in celebration of an African immigrant’s biracial son becoming President.



**Figure 5.7: Garth Brooks Performing “Shout”**

Obama expressed a love for both the jazz of the 1960s and contemporary hip hop throughout the campaign, yet the limited embrace of both in “We Are One” is surprising. Given

the prominence not just of popular music, but of hip hop performers— Mary J. Blige and Usher performed soul and Motown classics, while Jamie Foxx and Queen Latifah appeared as actors rather than musicians and read quotations—it is surprising that there was not more of a hip hop musical presence. Indeed, even the brief nod to hip hop in will.i.am’s performance is subtly but strongly altered to temper its qualities and ease its placement into a concert with a message of unity. Selecting will.i.am to perform a number by his group The Black Eyed Peas, with their interracial makeup and prominent crossover pop appeal, already fits the message of unity. His performance in “We Are One” moves further toward crossover by actually singing the lyrics over the harmonies of “One Love” in even phrases, rather than rapping and pushing against the rhythm as he does in the original song. The aforementioned alteration of his lyrics to eliminate critiques of the war and make accusations of racism softer and vaguer further reveal how “We Are One” capitulates to upholding a fantasy of unity by silencing some of hip hop’s most powerful lyrical and aesthetic qualities that offer needed critique and threaten to expose this fantasy as false. The multiple forms of collage active within “We Are One” open up multiple possibilities of meaning. The mashups between reggae and hip hop songs, and between folk, jazz, and hip hop artists, open up and invite the listener to consider the various similarities and differences, their political critiques, their diasporic dialogues on black experiences. Yet the broader collage of the whole concert and its message of unity are both enriched by their presence and their difference from the other black musical models, while at the same time diminishing that difference through editing the collaged elements to better smooth the seams.

The silencing of black, liberal hip hop is answered by a similar silencing of white, conservative country music. Garth Brooks took the stage with his cowboy hat and guitar, but like jazz and hip hop, country’s musical presence was marginal. Brooks, like Blige and Usher,

covered nostalgic numbers, and in the case of “Shout,” a number that took the performer whose music was most prominently iconic of white identity across the color line. And while Brooks was also afforded a country number, he performed a decidedly atypical one: “We Shall be Free.” Whereas country music has been a prominent musical signifier of the Republican party, “We Shall Be Free” is an overtly liberal song about inclusion, written in response to the 1992 Los Angeles riots over Rodney King’s beating. In the song, Brooks urges racial and religious tolerance, a protection of free speech, an end to poverty and lobbying, and Brooks has since tied the lines “When we’re free to love anyone we choose” to his support of gay rights. Country music suffers the same fate as hip hop, given token inclusion on the terms allowed by a broader concern for unity. “We Shall Be Free” was edited in a manner similar to “Where’s the Love,” as verses touching upon racial discrimination were kept but religious and sexual discrimination were cut—two forms of discrimination that have been particularly politically contentious in the past decade.

One crucial difference between country music and hip hop lies in their placement and presentation within the collage of “We Are One.” Whereas listeners could hear more political allusions to “Where’s the Love” by its being mashed up with the political “One Love” and by its position preceding a tribute to the Armed Forces, “We Shall Be Free,” arguably the most potent political number in the concert, is undermined by its placement in the collage. Throughout “We Are One,” the read quotations were tied into important themes of public service and citizenship that led to evocative musical performances, such as Marian Anderson’s words introducing to the performance of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee.” But before Brooks took the stage, Jack Black and Rosario Dawson spoke of the beauty of the natural vistas. Rather than follow these words with “America the Beautiful” or an environmentally-themed song, however, Black concludes by



saying, “When we drive across America from one beautiful place to the next, if we turn on the radio, this is just what we might hear.” The transition is comparatively abrupt and meaningless—couldn’t any of these songs be on the radio? Furthermore, by preceding “We Shall Be Free” a nostalgic ballad about rock and roll and an early black dance hit, the timely critique Brooks offers is folded into nostalgic numbers heard on a road trip through the beauty of America. Seemingly heard on the Oldies station on this hypothetical, the “We Shall Be Free” seems to suggest that these problems are in the past, disappearing into the rear-view mirror. The original song featured a video that employed a collage of stars calling for tolerance and images of both incredible kindness and devastating suffering—images whose power was made stronger through the sharp contrasts of collage. In “We Are One,” Brooks’s song is visually accompanied by a multiracial youth chorus dressed in red, white, and blue, further suggesting that America’s future is free of these difficult images and lyrics.

“We Shall Be Free” and “Where’s the Love” call attention to how collage can open and alter meanings through both the overt alterations of cutting as well as the process of pasting, framing these rich elements in ways that smooth over differences that would work against the message of unified diversity while benefitting from the visibility of the inclusion of hip hop and country voices to the whole. Interrogating their methods of collage, how and where they are included in the concert, exposes both the careful manicuring of a seemingly easy and comfortable diversity and the limitations that a message of unity place on the construction of a diverse collage meant to speak very publicly for and to an even more diverse nation.

Collage, of course, can also be used to heighten and emphasize difference, a strategy that “We Are One” appears to have consciously avoided. Yet this very strategy had been at the heart of Bill Clinton’s 1993 Inaugural Concert, which was called “An American Reunion.” Clinton’s

concert may have even served as something of a model for Obama's. Both featured a format that collaged together a diverse cast of performers, reading a diverse mixture of quotations from past Americans, and performing a diverse selection of songs. Both concerts open with Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* and close with "America the Beautiful." The two concerts share two other number: Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," and Clinton's concert quotes in a reading the lyrics to Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land."<sup>103</sup> Still other Clinton selections seem resonant with Obama's: "Stand by Me" vs. "Lean on Me"; "We Are The World" vs. "We Shall Be Free"; L. L. Cool J's and will.i.am brief moments of rap; Will Smith's joking about presidential trivia and Jamie Foxx's impersonation of Obama.

Clinton's diverse production was an over-the-top paean to multiculturalism. The concert marked the culmination of a multi-day and multi-site festival, "America's Reunion on the Mall," which lined the National Mall and filled the museums with a national and international panoply of music: Sioux dancing, Japanese drumming, zydeco, Memphis soul, bluegrass, conjunto, and gospel, along with performers whose careers seem to have been nearly as diverse as the entire inaugural event, including Taj Mahal and Linda Ronstadt. "An American Reunion" was designed to be just as diverse in content and scope. Speakers delivered speeches praising the sheer diversity of sounds, foods, and colors of America. Doing so, diversity became essentially a checklist of cultural elements whose only requirement was to be present for celebration. Musically, the concert embodied this by showcasing a variety of musical styles. The most emblematic was an extensive performance of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The performance began with Wes Studi and the all-black Eastern High School choir singing it in a

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<sup>103</sup> Clinton's inauguration's use of Copland's "Simple Gifts" directly parallels the newly-composed take-off on it, "Air and Simple Gifts," written by John Williams and performed at the Inaugural ceremony.

relatively traditional setting, then Studi translated it into Cherokee, then it was turned back into English and into a country music song by Kenny Rogers and Tricia Yearwood, translated again into Spanish and performed in a Mexican/ Caribbean fusion style by Maria Conchita Alonso and Ruben Blades, turned into a R&B number by James Ingram, Bebe and Cece Winans, and Ashford and Simpson, before Ted Danson quoted Franklin Roosevelt on the subject of interdependence, and all the forces join in together with the obligatory key change for one last time through.

By allowing each group to share a distinct interpretation of a popular patriotic song, the concert seemed to confirm that America was not a melting pot but a buffet where each group could serve up its own unique dish of America. Yet the Roosevelt quotation about interdependence hints at the problem with this model: if each performance is made so distinct, how exactly is each group dependent on any other group. “America’s Reunion on the Mall” attempted to adapt the staged national pageantry discussed in the first chapter, but whereas those pageants of nationalism required a shared sense of unity, Clinton’s inaugural festivities required just the opposite. By presenting America as diverse, the Reunion also lent an air of exotic foreignness, inviting Americans to tour the nation’s many cultures. This not only divided up each musical act based on its racial, ethnic, geographic, or other markers, but likewise divided up these markers of American diversity from those who listened. In other words, the American mainstream that gathered to listen could not participate in the definition of America, while those who contributed the quintessential American diversity were excluded from the mainstream culture. If the concert, “An American Reunion,” at least united the various constituents in song, it still insisted upon marking difference as it did so. The various musical and cultural languages are not silenced as they had been in the past, but nor are they speaking in conversation so much

as speaking in turn without listening. And when the artists did join together in unison, as happened in the final verse of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” those markers of difference vanished easily to accommodate the “traditional” mainstream performance style, confirming as it were the inability of multiculturalism to bridge the divide between a diversity that participates in a shared mainstream experience and a diversity that merely embellishes it.

Clinton’s concert can be easily understood as an embodiment of multiculturalism so favored in the 1990s, where each musical influence has its own moment in the spotlight or its own tent along the mall. Yet this model has more recently come under scrutiny, because simply celebrating diversity does not ensure equality and in fact masks both historical and persisting forms of inequality.<sup>104</sup> This problem is quite similar to the paradox of the post-racial ideal Obama’s inauguration strove for. In both, the historical power dynamics of difference are banished in favor of a new model of equality whether equality through equal representation and appreciation or through an elision across boundaries. In both, the new model remains indebted to difference in assuring its success, the ability to celebrate difference or celebrate across it. And in both, the process is adopted in a quasi-official capacity that does little to disrupt the power dynamics at play, going so far as to bring critics of the system into that same system through the celebration of inclusion.

In her critique of multiculturalism, Sherrow Pinder examines the way multiculturalism celebrates difference through “the *performance* of culture; it actually performs the cultural

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<sup>104</sup> For two prominent examples, see Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) and Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*.<sup>104</sup> Political scientist Sherrow O. Pinder, writes, “The very desire to exclude racialized ethnic groups from America’s cultural oneness and to celebrate and recognize America’s cultural manyness as cultural otherness where otherness is correlated with un-Americanness is precisely the quandary of multiculturalism.” See Pinder, *The Politics of Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Americanization, de-Americanization, and Racialized Ethnic Groups* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 97.

expectations” of a given identity, within constructed times and spaces, such as festivals.<sup>105</sup> Multiculturalism’s success rests on a conception of the nation’s strength in being its plurality, which in turn requires each element of the plurality to define itself both through difference beyond its borders and be internally consistent. Complex markers of racial, regional, or other identities become essentialized into a single element, which is in turn showcased as one of many in the nation. The result becomes equally stifling and essentialist for those being asked to represent their culture within a multicultural framework.<sup>106</sup> Timothy Taylor has suggested that artists who face this quandary can refuse to conform to stereotypes, where “authenticity” takes on racist and primitivist tropes, and deploy “strategic inauthenticity” to reassert their own control over their identity as part of a modern global world.<sup>107</sup> In the case of Obama’s inauguration, this process of “strategic inauthenticity” is rendered more difficult. This is partly because of Obama’s own position at the intersection of historical exclusion from power with his own privileged history of education and entrance into the very center of American political power, and also because it is at present unknown who made which performative decisions.

At times, “We Are One” raises questions about inclusion through musical representations. The presentations of country music and hip hop suggest that certain external constraints of unity were placed on their ability to fully signify their perspectives on the United States. The inclusion of Latino/a musics and artists also raises some questions. The inclusion of George Lopez and Shakira, two of the most prominent Latino/a celebrities today points to their inclusion. Their placement in the collage, respectively reading quotations by prominent civil rights activist Barbara Jordan and singing Stevie Wonder’s Motown hit “Higher Ground” with

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<sup>105</sup> Pinder, 126.

<sup>106</sup> Kofi Agawu has made similar critiques of essentialism within musicology. See Chapter 7 of Agawu, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>107</sup> See Chapter five of Timothy Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Wonder and Usher, aligns their issues with civil rights and avoids the multiculturalist trap of requiring them to signify only Latino culture. Yet some scholars have critiqued both Lopez and Shakira as having become too Anglicized in their images. Regarding the former, sociologist John Markert writes:

Unlike *The Cosby Show*, however, which was embraced by African Americans because it celebrated their heritage... TGLS is too Anglicized. To be sure, it celebrates Hispania in its rare portrayal of a Hispanic family, played by an all-Latino cast. But the language is too perfect and the home too antiseptic. There are hardly any Hispanic features in the home.... This was the strongest criticism of the show by the advisory group: most found this atypical of a second-generation Latino household. Even the food... is decidedly non-Hispanic... there is *never* any Hispanic food eaten, despite the set unfolding primarily in the kitchen. Food habits, perhaps more than any other cultural trait, are the most ingrained. ... Non-hispanic viewers hardly noticed these absences.<sup>108</sup>

In her work on transnational media, María Elena Cepeda provides a nuanced account of Shakira's agency in shaping her own but notes that some fans have expressed disappointment at her willingness to conform to mainstream media images: using English, becoming blonder and thinner.<sup>109</sup> In "We Are One," it is worth considering the multiple agencies at work, both Lopez's and Shakira's choices to shape their artistic personae in hybrid identities, and the desire of the concert's organizers to promote an interracial unity. Because each element of a collage serves to signify a broader context from which it is cut, the lack of more Latino/a voices within the collage—and more so the lack of Latino/a musical numbers or quotations—places extra weight on Shakira and Lopez to signify the complexities of Latino/a-American history and identity.

The wealth of examples of black and white performers, musical numbers, and textual quotations provide a productive, organic model for a post-multicultural rendering of diversity.

Black and white musicians alike were able to forge their own identity or to forge multiple

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<sup>108</sup> John Markert, "'The George Lopez Show': The Same Old Hispano?" *Bilingual Review* 28, no. 2 (2007), 156–7.

<sup>109</sup> For more on Shakira's multiple identities and how Shakira and the media have co-negotiated her identity, see María Elena Cepeda, "Shakira as the Idealized, Transnational Citizen: A Case Study of *Colombianidad* in Transition," *Latino Studies* 1, no. 2 (2003), 211–232.

musical identities as Garth Brooks and Beyoncé did, to blend or not blend with other performers. Perhaps model is the wrong term, for what I am describing is in fact a number of models and formats, from interracial collaborations, mashups of multiple songs, transracial covers of songs, and racially homogenous or continuous performances, all placed side by side in a larger collage. Indeed, it is the very nature of collage, its versatility in adopting many forms and its ability to draw attention to difference and similarity simultaneously, that allows collage to represent such a dynamic element as race in American identity. No doubt a broader wealth of selections might have relayed a richer, more realistic and nuanced account of Latino/a identity in the United States, and allowed Latino/a music to serve as another vehicle for cross-racial negotiation. Likewise, the diverse selection of female performers would benefit from the inclusion of quotations of women and men speaking about gender equality, and from the inclusion of songs associated with women authors or performers. Arguments could be extended toward Asian Americans, gay, lesbian, and transgender Americans, and no doubt many others. Yet a collage is just that—never complete, finite, and fragmentary. Elements are always to be cut and pasted, covering up other fragments, and in turn being covered up by still other fragments—excluded, included, and occluded. It is fitting that “We Are One” succeeds closest to home, in the theorization of black/white interraciality, but leaving an imperfect union as other voices struggle to be heard.

To return to the quotation that opened this dissertation, “Collage is... the keeping in play the possibility of the entry of the many into the one,” reaffirms the usefulness of collage to interpret these broad aims. Recent scholars have offered necessary critiques of a notion of unity in American music; Josh Kun, in his book *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*, insists that “when we talk about music in America, and music’s role in shaping American identities and

American meanings, we should be thinking of music in terms of the differences it contains, the differences it makes audible, not the unities or harmonies it can be used to fabricate.”<sup>110</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett likewise challenges narratives of American music that tell “a story that seeks consensus and accomplishment rather than pointed opposition” in *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century*.<sup>111</sup> Collage heeds their calls, but proposes that scholars needn’t choose between consensus and contestation. Instead, as this dissertation has repeatedly asserted, much can be learned from examining the ever-continuing twin trajectories of unity and disunity, of the one and the many, through collage. If “We Are One” and other musics from the 2008 election set their gaze forward, toward a more utopian post-racial, or at least more integrated, future, they did so in full awareness of the struggles that had come before and the progress that has been made, including the election of Obama. The election of Obama may have been a new chapter, but it was not a turning of the page. To invoke another form of collage, the palimpsest, neither the past nor race ever vanishes, becoming a part of an increasingly complex history, written, rewritten, as new words are forged to continually bring forth a new nation. This page is America’s founding document.

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<sup>110</sup> Kun, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Garrett, 8.



## Appendix 5A: Lyrics to Nas's "Black President"

### Intro

Obama:

They said this day would never come. They said our sights were set too high. They said this country was too divided, too disillusioned to ever come together around a common purpose. They said...

### Chorus (x2)

Tupac:

Although it seems heaven sent  
We ain't ready to have a black President (x2)

Synthesized voices:

Yes we can  
Change the world

Obama:

Change the world! They Said...

### Verse 1 (Nas)

They forgot us on the block  
Got us in the box  
Solitary confinement  
How violent are these cops?  
They need an early retirement  
How many rallies will I watch?  
I ain't got it in me to march  
I got a semi to spark  
The game's in a drought  
Public housing, projects  
Cooking up in the Pyrex  
My set, my click  
Either getting money  
Or running from homicide trial  
That's if they ain't died yet  
Trying to be rich  
Still I'm pledging allegiance  
A predicate felon, a ghetto leader  
Lending my poetical genius  
To whoever may need it  
I bled this from Queensbridge

Now living with my feet up  
Never defeated  
So a president's needed  
Y'know these colored folks and Negroes  
Hate to see one of their own succeeding  
America, surprise us  
And let a black man guide us

Chorus x2

Verse 2 (Nas):

What's the black pres. thinkin' on election night?  
Is it how can I protect my life, protect my wife, protect my rights?  
Every other president was nothin' less than white  
Except Thomas Jefferson and mixed Indian blood and Calvin Coolidge  
KKK is like 'what the fuck,' loadin' they guns up loadin' mine too,  
Ready to ride 'cause I'm ridin' with my crew  
He dies - we die too  
But on a positive side,  
I think Obama provides hope  
And challenges minds  
Of all races and colors to erase the hate  
And try and love one another  
So many political snakes  
We in need of a break  
Im thinkin' I can trust this brotha  
But will he keep it way real?  
Every innocent nigga in jail  
Gets out on appeal  
When he wins - will he really care still?  
I feel . . .

Chorus x2

Verse 3 (Nas):

Say a prayer for "do we have to?"  
You ain't right, Jeremiah Wrong pastor  
In love with a slave master  
Sincerely yours, USA's most brave rapper  
Jesse car-jacker  
Uncle Tom-kidnapper  
Ask around Bentley Coupe off the Richter  
Bitch called life, I pimped her  
What? Politics, politricks, Klan shooter

Deacon for defense, progress producer  
Nothin on the stove a survival-booster  
Gotta do what we gotta do  
We ain't got no governors coming through to help  
Anything we need done, we gotta do for self  
New-improved JFK on the way  
It ain't the '60s again  
Niggas ain't hippies again  
We ain't falling for the same traps  
Standing on the balconies  
Where they shot the King at  
McCain got apologies  
Ain't nobody hearing that  
People need honesty

Chorus x2

Outro

Bill Richardson:

It is my distinct honor and privilege to introduce the next President of the United States: Barack Obama. (Applause)

## Epillage

When Picasso produced his first collage by pasting paper onto the canvas, he fundamentally altered the function of painting, replacing illusionistic representation with the material presence of pasted material. As collage now enters the twenty-first century, its vitality is felt more strongly than ever. But whereas Picasso's collages had emphasized materiality, today's collages—and art and culture in general—have adapted to the present by shifting from physical modes of production, distribution, and consumption to digital ones. These changes pose new

“The most popular of all the entertainment media has relied heavily and even fundamentally upon the power of collage.

Indeed, the cinema was a central agent in promoting the comprehensibility of fracture, and in turn conditioned Western society not only to accept it but to demand it”<sup>1</sup>

“Material is important in collage as in no previous art medium, because it is, it does not pretend to be.”<sup>2</sup>

challenges for scholars. The acts of cutting and pasting are often harder to discern in digital collages without the physical ruptures produced by those acts. Moreover, the sources of the various constituent elements are harder to trace in an age of electronic reproduction. But musical collage has always had to contend with these obstacles, suggesting that the efforts to define, theorize, and analyze musical collage are dovetailing more and more with those same efforts in other disciplines.

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 220.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, *Collage: Personalities, Concepts, Techniques* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1967), 146.

Understanding collage is made more difficult and more imperative by its seemingly boundless, ubiquitous nature today. To reiterate the approach I have taken, the process of analyzing collage requires several steps. First, the constituent elements of the collage must be discerned and identified. Those elements should be traced back to their respective sources and fully contextualized to observe their original meanings. From there, we can observe more fully the artistic process of collage: the cutting and alteration of these elements; and their pasting into a newly constructed or newly perceived environment, where old meanings may be erased or

...collage elements are polysemic, but not only that, they are polysemic in peculiar ways...<sup>3</sup>

amplified and new meanings may emerge. By design, this approach does not limit collage to any particular medium, to any particular formal design, or to any aesthetic result—anything might be

In itself, collage has no aesthetic or intellectual character.<sup>4</sup>

considered a collage, but not everything should be considered a collage. It is incumbent upon the scholar, then, to apply a framework of collage judiciously and demonstrate how collage illuminates the selected work in a useful and new manner.

This dissertation has demonstrated the breadth of what might be considered collage: compositions, staged performances, videos and advertisements, memorials, and recordings. The application of collage as a productive analytical framework could even extend to encompass music that is not, strictly speaking, a collage. For example, let us consider the summer 2013 YouTube phenomenon of the “Harlem Shake,” a briefly popular internet video meme where a one person dances alone to Baauer’s 2012 dance hit “Harlem Shake” until the bass drop, at

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<sup>3</sup> Wendy Holmes, “Decoding Collage: Signs and Surfaces” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 204.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Rosenberg, “Collage: Philosophy of Put-Togethers” in Hoffman, 59.

which point the video cuts to a whole crowd of people dancing. The title “Harlem Shake” goes back to a dance form created by Al B as an entertainment at pickup basketball games in Harlem in the 1980s. From there, then dance spread more widely within African-American dance communities. The Philadelphia hip hop group Plastic Little referenced the move in their song “Miller Time” (2003), which is how Baauer came to the title. Four Australian friends subsequently created a low-budget YouTube video, which eventually garnered millions of views and inspired thousands of similar videos. The rapid explosion of its popularity makes a full chronology practically impossible, while the complex trajectory of the “Harlem Shuffle”—from improvised, non-commercial dance in a local community, to a mainstream black cultural reference across hip hop communities in multiple cities, to a white commercial dance hit, to a global system of amateur (and soon after, professional) videos—underscores how cultural histories can be lost, added, and altered through appropriation. That loss is keenly felt, particularly among those who still feel a cultural ownership of the “Harlem Shake.”

Recovering that history is important work; more important still is understanding the

“We take our dance seriously,” said [Elaine] Caesar, 49, who works in Manhattan as a secretary. “Harlemites put their own little twist on it. So their dancing is an art. For people to make a mockery of it, what are you saying to us? Don’t offend us with that nonsense you’re calling the Harlem Shake.”

But Michael Minott, a former D.J. based in New York, sees the Harlem Shake parodies, like the recent waves of Gangnam Style and “Call Me Maybe” videos, as harmless. “It gives people their 30 seconds of fame,” Mr. Minott said. “The question is, is it the Harlem Shake? It’s not the Harlem Shake. The Harlem Shake is a dance that has been around for a long time and will always be around.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kia Gregory, “It’s A Worldwide Dance Craze, but It’s Not the Real Harlem Shake.” *The New York Times* February 28, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/nyregion/behind-harlem-shake-craze-a-dance-thats-over-a-decade-old.html>.

processes by which it had been lost. Viewing the “Harlem Shake” through a framework of collage illuminates the hidden acts of cutting and pasting, and the boundaries, both literal and figurative, created and crossed by those acts. The definition, performance, and ownership of the various iterations of the “Harlem Shake” invoke complex racial, economic, and geographic boundaries. These boundaries may be more easily ignored in a digital age, but they are not erased.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation contends that the formations and fluctuations of such boundaries are crucial not only in understanding each case study individually, but also in understanding something essential to American identity. This project is not simply one of noting the parallels between the collage and American identity (although there are many), but more

“Collage is a demonstration of this process of the **many** becoming the **one**, with the **one** never fully resolved because of the **many** that continue to impinge upon it. Every entity is potentially relevant to every other entity’s existence. This is the relativistic message of collage: the keeping in play of the possibility of the entry of the **many** into the **one**, the fusion of the **many** into the **one**.”<sup>6</sup>

centrally one concerned with the construction of American musical history. In a foundational essay in the field of American musicology, Richard Crawford draws a point of contrast between scholars of American music and their European music counterparts: while the latter benefits from a well-worn tradition, the former forges new paths that inevitably cross many social and musical boundaries. Crawford’s essay suggests a metaphor of collage when describing the totality of American music facing the scholar: “the scholar of American music has no established value-system... his archive is a kind of junkheap—the gems are buried in a rubble of sheet-

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<sup>6</sup> Donald Kuspit, “Collage: The Organizing Principle of Art in the Age of the Relativity of Art” in Hoffman, 42.

music, newspaper clippings, song collections, manuscripts by unknowns.”<sup>7</sup> Crawford goes on to offer analytical advice for scholars of American music—advice that is not unwelcome for

the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them<sup>8</sup>

scholars of musical collage: “the scholar of American music... tries to take each piece of music on its own terms... [and] recognizes the importance of keeping his musical responses open on many levels.”<sup>9</sup>

As scholars have begun to embrace the postnational turn in musicology, histories of American music are well-positioned to address the concerns raised by this approach. In the introduction to their anthology, *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution, and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario*, Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid suggest, “Music is always in constant flux, music is the perennial undocumented immigrant; it has always moved beyond borders without the required paperwork. ...It may be produced under very specific circumstances that grant it particular local significance, but consumed under completely different conditions that in turn help redefine its meaning.”<sup>10</sup> The “Harlem Shake” easily embodies this, but so too do the various case studies that comprise this dissertation, where attention to collage stresses this state of flux, how national identities and national borders are shaped in conjunction with local, transnational, cultural, and economic identities and borders.

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Crawford, *American Studies and American Musicology: A Point of View and a Case in Point* (New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 1975), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 460.

<sup>9</sup> Crawford, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid, *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution, and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 5.



Corona and Madrid write, “To question the ‘roots’ of any music in an attempt to understand the routes we had to walk and that have led us to accept them as national fixed essences should be one of the projects of a postnational music scholarship.”<sup>11</sup> This dissertation may be seen as a response to this charge, with an emphasis on the plural: routes. As the “Harlem Shake” illustrates, the passage of time obscures, rather than creates, a historical narrative, splintering into many perspectives on what the “Harlem Shake” is and means, and leaving behind gaps between iterations. Understanding this process through collage does not ask

“The collage surface, robbed of the framing function reserved for it by easel painting, could serve as a kind of representation for a world not organized around a fixed hierarchy of values.”<sup>12</sup>

“the scholar of American music has no established value-system”<sup>13</sup>

us to fill in the gaps, only to recognize their existence along with the multiplicity of perspectives possible within the collage.

With this in mind, I ask the reader to treat this dissertation as something of a collage—or, more to the point, not to treat this dissertation as offering a single narrative about collage within American music. Placing the chapters side by side opens up several potential narratives of American music. For example:

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Brockelman, *The Frame and the Mirror: On Collage and the Postmodern* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 7.

how technology affects upon the process of collage, allowing for faster and wider dissemination of cultural products...

The New York Times' "Portraits of Grief"

Theodore Baker's Transcriptions of Native American Melodies



Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*

John Dos Passos's Newsreels in *The U. S. A. Trilogy*

...disappearing and reappearing figures in history...

The Hispanic firefighter in the 9/11 sculpture plan

The "vanishing Indian"

"The Lone Star Trail" from volume 3 of the *Anthology*

Junior's mask of blackface

...how economic forces reward or restrict collage...

"We'll be doing mailings to academics at all different levels, American Folk Society members, ethnomusicologists ...In terms of retail, a lot of the folk stores . . . are perfect outlets for it. Places like Best Buy and Borders Books tend to carry a lot of Smithsonian Folkways, and they'll probably have some available. I think collectors will be a large part of this."

—Smithsonian Marketing Director Brenda Dunlap on the Harry Smith *Anthology* reissue

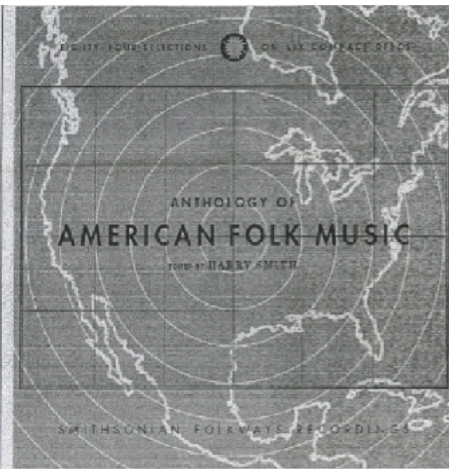
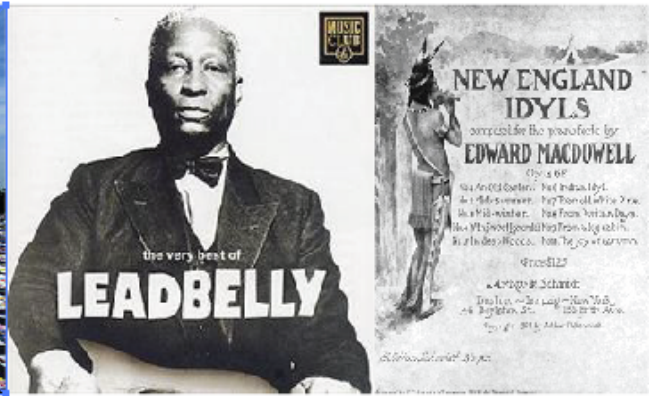
Peggy Porterfield, Patroness who sponsors  
*Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* in *On Your Toes*

Mary Curtis Bok, Patroness of George Antheil

"The average donation [to Obama's campaign] was \$80, and the average Obama donor gave more than once."

—Jose Antonio Vargas, *The New York Times*

...how we define our boundaries, internally and externally...



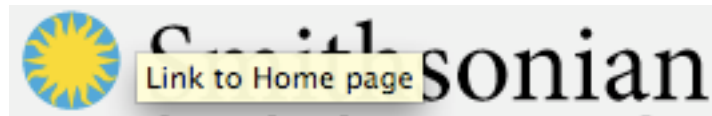
...and how we come to claim ownership of music, and in doing so, claim ownership of America.

This land is your land, this land is my land”  
—Woody Guthrie

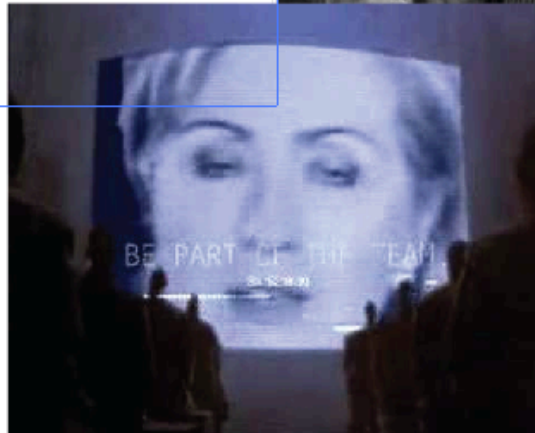
“I, too, sing America  
I am the darker brother”  
—Langston Hughes



“I hear America singing, the varied  
carols I hear...Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else”  
—Walt Whitman



“Cultural property belongs to all and is limited to individual  
ownership only in so far as the copyright of the material is  
subjected to and limited to. ...[R]ecords do not carry this  
copyright.” —Moe Asch



In other words, rather than just construct a history *of* collage in American music, my goal has been to construct a history *through* collage, even history *as* collage. Doing so explores new perspectives on the histories we tell and challenges assumptions we might bring to the past within any single narrative. The delight and confusion that greeted *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* reminds us that present conceptions about genre are no indicator of past assumptions, while the frequency of racial crossings in the 1920s and 1930s South among folk performers reminds us that the past was not unlike the present in all ways. These histories are, of course, incomplete—accessible only through whoever had the means to preserve them. By using collage, I have sought a model that refuses a narrative approach—including counternarratives or other alternate histories that nevertheless seek continuity despite their worthy goals to acknowledge gaps left by earlier histories. For if American music’s archive is in fact a junkpile, where one scholar’s trash

“Memory is not just an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. ...It is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them. ...Genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through.”<sup>14</sup>

is another’s treasure, musicologists cannot hope to rebuild the whole from these parts, only to create new collages from it, and in doing so, rearrange the junkpile in endless new ways for scholars to come.

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Excavation and Memory” in Benjamin, *Select Writings: 1931–1934, Volume 2, Part 2*, ed. Michael William Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 576.

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