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Rubber Souls: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination

A dissertation presented

by

Jack Hamilton

to

The Committee on Higher Degrees in American Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

American Studies

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Professor Werner Sollors
Professor Carol J. Oja

Jack Hamilton

Rubber Souls: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination

Abstract

This dissertation explores the interplay of popular music and racial thought in the 1960s, and asks how, when, and why rock and roll music "became white." By Jimi Hendrix's death in 1970 the idea of a black man playing electric lead guitar was considered literally remarkable in ways it had not been for Chuck Berry only ten years earlier: employing an interdisciplinary combination of archival research, musical analysis, and critical race theory, this project explains how this happened, and in doing so tells two stories simultaneously. The first is of audience and discourse, and the processes through which a music born of interracialism came to understand whiteness as its most basic stakes of authenticity. This is a story of the deeply ideological underpinnings of genre formation, and the ways that the visual imagination of race is strangely and powerfully elided with the audible imagination of sound. The second story is of music's own resistance to such elisions, and examines a transatlantic community of artists including Bob Dylan, Sam Cooke, the Beatles, Aretha Franklin, Dusty Springfield, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and others to fashion an interracial counter-history of Sixties music, one that rejects hermetic ideals of racial authenticity while revealing the pernicious effects of these ideologies on musical discourse. Ultimately, this dissertation provides a new way into the topic of race and popular music—long dominated by essentialist claims of cultural ownership on one hand, and a romantic "colorblindness" on the other—by demonstrating that racial thought is both a producer and product of expressive culture. Rarely has this been truer than in the 1960s, when both popular music and racial ideology underwent explosive transformations that were never entirely separate from each other. Rock and roll music, I argue, did not become white as a

result of the music that people made, but rather as a result of discursive forces that surrounded, celebrated, and too often drowned out the music that people heard.

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this dissertation to him, even if doing so feels redundant, since no small part of everything here is already his.

- Introduction -
Margo Jefferson's Nightmare

In January 1973, *Harper's* magazine published an article by cultural critic and future Pulitzer Prize-winner Margo Jefferson entitled "Ripping Off Black Music." Spanning five pages, the piece was partly a broad historical overview of white appropriations of African American musical forms, from minstrel performer T.D. Rice through the current day, and partly a personal lament over what Jefferson saw as a hopelessly self-repeating cycle. Arguably the article's most striking moment comes in its penultimate paragraph:

> The night Jimi [Hendrix] died I dreamed this was the latest step in a plot being designed to eliminate blacks from rock music so that it may be recorded in history as a creation of whites. Future generations, my dream ran, will be taught that while rock may have had its beginnings among blacks, it had its true flowering among whites. The best black artists will thus be studied as remarkable primitives who unconsciously foreshadowed future developments.[1]

That Jefferson's "dream" came true is so obvious it is practically inarguable. According to anthropologist Maureen Mahon, by the mid-1970s young black musicians who wanted to play "Led Zeppelin and Grand Funk Railroad" reported being ostracized by peers, black and white.[2] In 1985, the Hollywood blockbuster *Back To The Future* featured a climactic sequence in which history is literally altered so that Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" is composed by a time-traveling, Van Halen-obsessed white teenager.[3] In 2011, a New York "Classic Rock" radio station held a listener poll to determine the "Top 1043" songs of all time: of these 1043 songs, twenty-two—roughly two percent—were performed by African American artists, and of those twenty-two, sixteen were performed by Jimi

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[1] Margo Jefferson, "Ripping Off Black Music," *Harpers* January, 1973, 45.
[2] Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004), 14.
[3] *Back to the Future,* DVD, directed by Robert Zemeckis (1985; Los Angeles: Universal Studios, 2011).

Hendrix (the "Jimi" of Jefferson's dream), the lone black performer whose status in rock hagiography remains unimpeachable.[4]

Jefferson's words above were accurate, and their formulation as a "dream" makes it tempting to call them "prophetic," but they weren't: Jefferson's dream had in fact come true well before she wrote her article, before even the night Jimi died. For the brief period of Hendrix's stardom the guitarist's race was a topic of constant fascination, so much so that when he passed away in 1970 one obituarist described him as "a black man in the alien world of rock."[5] The hyper-visibility of Hendrix's race throughout his stardom confirmed a racial imagination of rock music that was quickly rendering blackness invisible, so much so that at the time of his death the idea of a black man playing electric lead guitar was considered literally remarkable—"alien"—in a way that would have been inconceivable for Chuck Berry only a few years earlier.

This dissertation asks when, why, and how this happened, how a genre of music rooted in African American traditions and many of whose earliest stars were black came to be understood as the natural province of whites. Furthermore, it asks how and why it happened during a decade generally understood to be marked by unprecedented levels of interracial aesthetic exchange, musical collaboration, and commercial crossover more broadly. From November of 1963 to January of 1965, *Billboard* magazine took the unprecedented step of dissolving its black music chart, a choice frequently characterized as representing the epitome of the "crossover" era.[6] But this ethos was not confined to a fourteen-month period, nor was it confined to a merely commercial phenomenon. Many of the most iconic

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[4] Q104.3 New York, "Top 1,043 Songs (2011 Edition)." http://www.q1043.com/common/top_songs/2011.html (accessed July 30, 2012).
[5] Ernie Santosuosso, "Epitaph for Jimi Hendrix," *Boston Globe* 19 Sept. 1970, 10.
[6] See David Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963-65), *Musical Quarterly* 78: 4 (Winter 1994), 774-797.

moments of 1960s music are marked by interracial fluidity and aesthetic exchange: a young Bob Dylan's transformation of a 19th century slave song, "No More Auction Block," into the basis for a song that would become one of the most indelible musical works of the American civil rights era; the revolution of Motown Records, in which an African American businessman actually bet *against* the racism of white America and won, and in doing so created the most successful African American business in history; or the unforeseen inundation of groups from England, most notably a quartet from Liverpool called the Beatles and a quintet from London called the Rolling Stones, both of whom were fervent and tireless evangelists for black American music and would soon come to hear their own songs performed frequently by the very musicians they once idolized. And of course there was Aretha Franklin, a black woman from the north who joined up with a band of white southerners in Muscle Shoals, Alabama and transformed R&B music; or Jimi Hendrix himself, a black man from Seattle who'd joined up with a band of white Englishmen in London, and transformed the electric guitar.

If, then, by the time of Hendrix's death, rock and roll music had in fact "become white," recasting itself as an "alien world" to black performers, how did this happen? When did it happen, and why? A fundamental panic surrounding rock and roll's emergence was that its racially indeterminate character would threaten the racial order: the infamous "Help Save The Youth of America: Don't Buy Negro Records" flyers circulated by White Citizens Councils in the American South during the 1950s were not so much about stopping the circulation of black music in general, but rather about stopping the circulation of black music to young whites.[7] And yet by 1970 the music had lost this character of racial disruption, to

[7] See Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Da Capo, 1988), esp. 41-43, as well as Sacha Jenkins, Elliott Wilson, Chairman Jefferson Mao, Gabriel Alvarez and Brent Rollins, *Ego Trip's Big Book of Racism!* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 91.

the point that black involvement was not simply seen as incongruous but actively policed by the music's own discourses. Ultimately, this dissertation asks: If rock and roll music did "become white," what does it even mean to say such a thing? What ideological forces and cultural logics conspire to elide the audible imaginary of music with the visual imaginary of race, an elision that has been one of the most enduringly recurrent and powerful features of American music history?

This dissertation tells two different stories simultaneously. The first is of audience and discourse, and the processes through which a music with interracial roots came to imagine whiteness as its most basic stakes of authenticity. This is a story of the complex wedding of musical and racial ideology, how ideas that listeners and audiences had long held about "black sound" and "white sound" were disrupted and then re-constituted in newly powerful and insidious ways. This story takes place in many locations and through many conduits, but among its most notable features was the rise of a generation of fans and journalists eager to comment upon the sounds they were hearing, and out of this came the rise of a new literary figure: the rock critic. "Written criticism, as much as musical criteria" notes musicologist Guthrie Ramsey, "clearly determines the pedigree of a genre."[8] In America, the "institution" of rock criticism has come to be largely synonymous with *Rolling Stone* magazine, started in San Francisco in 1967, and no doubt the astounding success of the magazine was a seminal happening in Sixties media. But listeners had been writing about the new music coming from Detroit, London, Liverpool, Greenwich Village and elsewhere for nearly as long as they'd been hearing it, in local and national newspapers, in alternative weeklies and august prestige publications, in pioneering books, in tiny, passionate fan magazines. In all of these venues, discussions and debates were held over what this new

[8] Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 121.

music should and shouldn't sound like, be like, and of course *look* like, and it is partly in these conversations, their gathering ideologies and creeping omissions, that we see the beginning stages of Margo Jefferson's nightmare take shape.

The second story is of music and performers, and the ways that artists in this period negotiated and traversed racial divides to degrees unprecedented in the history of popular music. In some sense this is a counter-history to the one above, an attempt to recover the resonances and possibilities in musical compositions, performances and recordings, piecing together previously missed connections in service to reveal what Josh Kun calls "audiotopias," or "an enacted, lived utopia that struggles against the constraints of racialization and nation-building."[9] In telling this story I have endeavored to "hear together" musicians who have long been thought of as separate from one another but who weren't necessarily at the time. For instance, one would never hear the Supremes on a "classic rock" radio station in the 21st century, yet in 1965, when *Time* magazine ran a story entitled "Rock & Roll, Everybody's Turned On," the Supremes were featured on its cover. Similarly, Bob Dylan's credibility as a rock icon is unimpeachable, but in 1964—the year Sam Cooke released "A Change Is Gonna Come," his landmark civil rights anthem inspired by Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind"—no one would have described Dylan as a "rock and roll singing star," as the *Chicago Defender* described Cooke in a report on the singer's death that same year.[10]

Criticism, historiography, and popular discourse generally have accepted a view of popular music in the 1960s as split according to genre and race: on one hand is rock music,

[9] Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 23.
[10] "Rule Sam Cooke's Death 'Justifiable' Homicide," *Chicago Defender* 17 Dec. 1964, 1. Cooke was similarly described as such in mainstream white newspapers such as the *New York Times* ("a rock 'n' roll singer") and *Los Angeles Times* ("rock 'n' roll singer"), while the African American *Los Angeles Sentinel* referred to him as a "rock 'n' roll singing idol." "Shooting of Sam Cooke Held 'Justifiable Homicide'," *New York Times* 17 Dec. 1964, 82; "Mourners Jam Streets to See Sam Cooke Body," *Los Angeles Times* 14 Dec. 1964, 25; Paul C. McGee, "New Shocking Evidence Looms; Push Sam Cooke Investigation," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 24 Dec. 1964, A1.

which is white, on the other soul music, which is black. We expect to hear Creedence Clearwater Revival's 1970 version of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" on classic rock radio stations, not Marvin Gaye's original from 1968, even though Gaye's spent seven weeks atop the pop charts and was clearly more popular in its day among white *and* black listeners. As the above paragraph begins to indicate, these divisions did not happen as naturally as we might think: they took real, ideological work. As Simon Frith argues by way of terms set forth by musicologist Franco Fabbri, popular music genres are a collapsing of sociological and ideological arguments, of indicating the social positions of performers and audiences while also describing the ways these communities position themselves within, and project themselves to, the larger world.[11] As Frith writes, "it is through its generic organization that music offers people, even so-called passive at-home listeners, access to a social world, a part in some sort of social narrative… genre analysis must be, by aesthetic necessity, narrative analysis."[12] "Rock" music became white because of the stories and narratives people told themselves about it, stories that have come to structure the way we hear an entire era.

This dissertation is about those stories, where they succeeded and where they have failed, and how we might begin to hear this music differently. In doing so my project combines musical analysis and discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary method that treats recordings and performances themselves as discursive objects that complement, complicate, and resist the more conventional modes of written and spoken discourse that surround them. Ingrid Monson has recently written of the uses of considering music itself as a form of discourse: "[m]usic is full of ideas that are evaluated by audiences and musicians, that acquire authority and prestige within particular aesthetic landscapes, and that are perceived to 'say

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[11] See Franco Fabbri, "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications," in *Popular Music Perspectives*, eds. David Horn and Philip Tagg (Exeter: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1981), 52-81.
[12] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998) 90.

something' substantive about human experience and feeling."[13] This statement seems particularly true of popular music, where processes of production, circulation, and reception are wide-ranging and fluid, and where the acquisition of authority and perception of what music "says" are often determined by ideological forces that far exceed the practice of musicians themselves.

In American popular music race has long been among the most powerful of these forces, and to best explore this relationship I have embraced the term "racial imagination" as set forth by Radano and Philip Bohlman in their volume *Music and the Racial Imagination*, a concept that accepts a notion of race as profoundly extra-visual but avoids ideas of fixed racial essence and suggestions of race as a "purely" psychological construction. If race is a category that is constantly produced and reproduced by cultural and social forces—as "racial formation" theory has long held—then race must be considered in conjunction with forms of imaginative production, and music is no exception. "Racial imagination," in the words of these authors, "is forever on the loose, subject to reformation within the memories and imaginations of the social as it blurs into other categories constituting difference," thus becoming "a signification saturated with profound cultural meaning and whose discursive instability heightens its affective power."[14]

As the title of this dissertation suggests, the term that I use to describe almost all of the music in these pages is "rock and roll," as it is the best way I know to indicated a music that began as racially unruly and remained so for longer than has been usually acknowledged. As a cultural historian with a musical background I have tried to keep musical analyses legible and lively for non-specialists, while respecting musical recordings and performances

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[13] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 24.
[14] Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, eds. *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 5.

as audible texts and foregrounding their autonomy from the stories we have often told about them. I am skeptical of these stories, and I believe my project's method and its organization reflect and ultimately validate this skepticism. For instance, as my second chapter shows, the most well-worn pairing *qua* dichotomy in rock and roll history, that of the Beatles and Rolling Stones, emerged in this period, but was largely a creation of media.[15] Particularly in the early years of their stardom the contemporary music that the Beatles spoke of most enthusiastically was Motown: when *Melody Maker* asked John Lennon in 1964 to name a current hit he wished he'd written, he responded with Marvin Gaye's "Can I Get a Witness."[16] Thus the third chapter of this dissertation looks at the relationship between the Beatles and Motown throughout the decade, while the Rolling Stones, rhythm-and-blues purists who in early interviews professed disdain at even being labeled a rock and roll band, are considered in the final chapter.

Thrice-Told Stories

The "whitening" of the music formerly known as rock and roll music and currently known as "rock" music—again, an ill-defined distinction in this period, and one whose legitimacy I do not take for granted—has generally been dealt with in one of three ways. The first is by casting the whitening of rock music as yet another iteration of a broadly transhistorical phenomenon of white-on-black cultural theft. In this telling the appropriation of black musical styles by performers as diverse as Elvis Presley to John Lennon to Janis Joplin is seen as ethically and conceptually contiguous to a tradition of white-on-black cultural plunder, originally exemplified in the practice of blackface minstrelsy. In its most reductive iterations, this formulation rests on problematic and inflexible ideas of

[15] For a prominent example of Beatles vs. Stones discourse, see Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot, *The Beatles vs. The Rolling Stones: Sound Opinions on the Great Rock 'n' Roll Rivalry* (Minneapolis: Voyageur, 2010).
[16] Chris Roberts, "John Lennon," *Melody Maker* 4 Apr. 1964, 3.

cultural ownership, essentialist originalism, and racial hermeticism—a belief that there is a clear and definable boundary between "black art" and "white art" in America that fundamentally resists porosity.[17] This belief simply does not hold up under basic empirical scrutiny: as writer and music critic Albert Murray aptly remarked near the end of the period under consideration in these chapters: "The so-called black and so-called white people of the United States resemble nobody else in the world so much as they resemble each other."[18]

Less strident iterations of the cultural theft narrative tend to employ minstrelsy as a sort of explanatory metaphor, as "patient zero" for this timeless epidemic. Since the landmark publication of Eric Lott's *Love and Theft* (1993) there has been an explosion in critical and historical interest in minstrelsy, and the notions of counterfeit and thievery explicitly on display in minstrelsy become rhetorically powerful agents of redress when surveying a twentieth century popular music industry that tended to grossly overcompensate white appropriators over black originators, from Paul Whiteman to Pat Boone to Vanilla Ice.[19] That said, this tendency is still flawed on several fronts. First, its transhistoricism leaves little room for *differences* between appropriations and exclusions, and fails to reckon with the ever-changing character of both racial ideology and cultural production. As Lott and Alexander Saxton before him demonstrated, Northern antebellum blackface minstrelsy

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[17] Probably the most well-known purveyor of this hard-line view is Amiri Baraka, whose landmark 1963 history of African American music, *Blues People*, put forth a purity/dilution dialectic in its view of black music's proximity to white "influence," broadly defined. In his famous essay "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music," Baraka accused the Beatles and Rolling Stones of minstrelsy. Amiri Baraka (as LeRoi Jones), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963; New York: Perennial, 2002), *Black Music* (1967; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 205-206. Somewhat more recently Nelson George embraced a similar stance in his widely-read polemic, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

[18] Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), 22.

[19] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993). John Szwed likened Mick Jagger to a blackface minstrel as early as 1973, as Lott himself discusses (qtd. in Lott, 7). More recently, W.T. Lhamon's *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998) is a long-ranging history of what Lhamon identifies as minstrel performances that enfolds white rock and roll musicians into its survey, and the frequency of minstrel discourse surrounding Bob Dylan is discussed extensively in the first chapter of this dissertation.

enacted and articulated a variety of specific cultural and political concerns different from those enacted by Elvis Presley, to say nothing of Mick Jagger.[20] By abstracting minstrelsy into a soft, ahistorical formation that takes place primarily at the locus of the imagination, we risk underplaying the real violence and inequities enacted by the long historical practice of actual blackface minstrelsy, as well as misunderstanding the diverse array of contexts and intentions that inform white flirtations with black culture throughout American history. What's more, while other African American popular musical forms like jazz, blues, and most recently hip-hop have longstanding histories of white participation (and surely in some cases white appropriation), the "canons" of these musics remain overwhelmingly black, whereas rock music has all but purged its hagiography of black musicians, which seems a crucial difference. When rock ideology purged itself of visible blackness it was not simply foreclosing African American performers but an entire powerful, albeit young, tradition of interracial fluidity.

The second way that the "whitening" of rock and roll music has been discussed has been to place the genesis of separation on black musicians by arguing that, particularly as the later 1960s progressed, black music self-segregated from white music. In this narrative, the trajectory of black popular music is directly linked to, and sometimes conflated with, the trajectory of the civil rights movement, in which discourses of self-determination, identity politics, and in some cases outright separatism became more pronounced. In some senses this is an intriguing argument, seemingly born out by the undeniable rise of black cultural nationalist discourses in popular music in this period, the most iconic example being James Brown's "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)," which went to Number One on the *Billboard* R&B chart in 1968. As my fourth chapter shows, in the late 1960s the arrivals of

[20] Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology," *American Quarterly* 27:1 (March, 1975), 3-28.

Janis Joplin and Aretha Franklin into superstardom helped produce a flurry of debates over musical "soul" which were often themselves echoes of cultural nationalist rhetoric, and in their most extreme form flatly denied the availability of black music to whites.

There are kernels of truth to this, and there have been several excellent histories of 1960s rhythm and blues' relationship to the civil rights movement, which was indeed robust.[21] That said, there are also several flaws in this narrative, most notably that it fails to hold the majority (white) side responsible for the disappearance of black artists from rock music: for all of the late-1960s celebrations of "soul" and black expression on the part of African American writers, the notion that black popular music was and should be considered as inherently separate from white was just as actively proselytized by white writers, and white critics were often too eager to police the boundaries of black musical authenticity. These boundaries had real economic effects on black musicians, and continue to do so: to return to the example mentioned earlier, every time Creedence Clearwater Revival is played on the radio instead of Marvin Gaye, royalties follow. Furthermore, suggestions that Sixties R&B functioned as a musical annex of the civil rights movement tend to conflate performers with audience, claiming musicians as activists when the reality of their political commitments was often hazier. Proud Republican James Brown performed at Richard Nixon's inauguration the same year that he released "Say It Loud;" on the other hand, a performer like Nina Simone, whose political commitments often did explicitly inform her musical output, was massively influential in certain circles but mostly outside the black or white commercial mainstream.

But the third and by far most common way that the "whitening" of rock and roll music has been discussed is simply not at all. Since the end of the 1960s much rock

[21] Chief among these is Brian Ward's outstanding *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). To name just two more, Craig Werner's *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race & The Soul of America* (New York: Plume, 1998) and Mark Anthony Neal's *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997) are also stellar.

discourse has been deeply hesitant to consider race, and especially at the level of fandom, attempts to address the music's racial exclusivity have been met with hostility. When Lester Bangs wrote an infamous article entitled "The White Noise Supremacists" for the *Village Voice* in 1979 about the racism of New York's punk and new wave scenes he was accused of prevarication and betrayal; when Sasha Frere-Jones wrote a similarly controversial piece for the *New Yorker* on the whiteness of "indie rock" in 2007, he was widely criticized in the blogosphere.[22] Both of these works are riddled with imperfections, but the dismissiveness and often outright vitriol with which they were met speak to a deep and longstanding aversion towards discussing rock's relationship to skin color.

Recent years have also seen an upswing in critical debates over what has come to be known as "rockism," an ideology that holds the rock "canon" as the epitome of popular music as art, manifested in knee-jerk tendencies to unfavorably compare all pop music to Dylan, or Springsteen, or Nirvana. The line between "rockism" and "racism" is not a bright one: as Kelefa Sanneh asked in a widely-discussed 2004 *New York Times* article on the subject, "could it really be a coincidence that rockist complaints often pit straight white men against the rest of the world?"[23] Sanneh's article produced its own flurry of commentary, but left undiscussed was the strange history that renders the answer to his question so obvious: the

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[22] Lester Bangs, "The White Noise Supremacists," in *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung,* ed. Greil Marcus (New York: Vintage, 1988), 272-282. For information on the article's reception and Bangs' apostasy from the punk scene, see Jim DeRogatis' *Let It Blurt: The Life & Times of Lester Bangs, America's Greatest Rock Critic* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000), esp. pp. 172-173. Sasha Frere-Jones, "A Paler Shade of White," *New Yorker* 22 Oct. 2007, 176-181. Frere-Jones' piece received a thoughtful response by Carl Wilson in *Slate* and a more hostile one from Boston's alt-weekly *Dig*, which accused Frere-Jones of "masturbatory intellectualism" and (ironically) accused Frere-Jones' former band of being a "minstrel outfit." In 2008 the Experience Music Project's annual Pop Conference held a roundtable devoted to Frere-Jones' article. See Carl Wilson, "The Trouble with Indie Rock," *Slate* 18 Oct. 2007, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2007/10/the_trouble_with_indie_rock.html, and "Paint the Black House White," *Dig* 24 Oct. 2007, available at http://digboston.com/think/2007/10/3983/.

[23] Kelefa Sanneh, "The Rap Against Rockism," *New York Times* 31 Oct. 2004, AR32.

legibility and rhetorical power of "rockism" as a concept depends upon a silent assumption of the whiteness of rock.[24]

In historiography and scholarship this neglect finds subtler ways to conceal itself. The most common among these is a tendency toward hero worship and cults of "genius" that forecloses discussions of race by celebrating individual artistry and intellect: while many black performers of the 1960s have been relegated to book-length histories of black music generally, white artists like Bob Dylan or the Beatles receive their own biographies and insulated treatments of musical output.[25] The notion of white people as representative of individuality while black people are representative of a collective is a longstanding hallmark of racial thought across all areas of culture; one might even argue that the entire history of white privilege rests upon it.

An alternative to this is a nostalgic populism that glorifies rock and roll music for its democratizing, "folk" elements. In these formulations rock music is often folded into a quasi-mythic lineage of American proletarian expression, with class trumping race in a narrative that claims rock and roll music as an inherently and nobly working-class form. Leaving aside that even a quick glimpse at history makes this difficult to corroborate—for each Elvis Presley, son of a Mississippi truck-driver, there is a Buddy Holly, scion of relative affluence in Texas—the "working-class"-ing of rock and roll ironically manifests some of the same anxieties that haunted the Sixties New Left, a movement that often heard the music

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[24] Jody Rosen's 2006 *Slate* article "The Perils of Poptimism" provides an interesting overview of the "Rockist" debates. Jody Rosen, "The Perils of Poptimism," *Slate* 9 May 2006, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2006/05/the_perils_of_poptimism.html

[25] The number of biographies and academic and non-academic studies of Dylan and the Beatles are far too numerous to list, and the copious literature on these artists will be discussed more extensively in later chapters. It is worth noting, however, that recent years have seen Cambridge University Press release a *Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* and a *Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*, while no African American musician from the period has received the same treatment. Kevin J. H. Dettmar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009); Kenneth Womack, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009).

discussed in these pages as soundtrack to its cause, and in which radical political ideology often rested uneasily against the middle-class background of leaders.[26]

In the years since the fantasy of rock music as an ideally proletarian (and hence subtly race-less form) has sometimes haunted left intellectuals' writing on the music, within and outside the academy. An object lesson in this, and one from outside the period of this dissertation, is the case of Bruce Springsteen, a figure whose progressive politics and salt-of-the-earth persona have helped him carve out a niche as rock's "everyman" for a fan base that sprawls to include the liberal editor of *The New Yorker* and the conservative governor of New Jersey. Springsteen's populist heroism is cited in terms of everything from his geographical origins to his class background to his grueling performance style, while his whiteness remains undiscussed.[27]

And yet racial imagination did reveal itself in Springsteen fandom, powerfully if obliquely, upon the 2011 passing of longtime saxophone player Clarence Clemons, the lone black member of Springsteen's E-Street Band. Eulogizing Clemons for *The New Yorker*, David Remnick described him as "a vessel of many great soul, gospel, and R&B players who came before him" and "an absolutely essential, and soulful, ingredient in both the sound of

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[26] The most influential work in the rock and roll as folk expression canon is Greil Marcus' *Mystery Train,* originally published in 1975, which is likely also the most influential book on rock and roll music, period. Marcus' book is a brilliant collection of essays in the classical "myth and symbol" American Studies tradition that enfolds rock and roll into an exceptionalist American narrative that generally treats race as secondary to nation. Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1975). For other class-based analyses of rock music see George Lipsitz*, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) and Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing In Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997). Lipsitz, of course, has written perceptively of race and popular music elsewhere, particularly *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998). For a discussion of class anxieties in the New Left, see Doug Rossinow's *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), esp. pp. 193-207.

[27] Probably the most influential voice in Springsteen discourse is rock critic and biographer Dave Marsh, who published his first biography of Springsteen, *Born to Run: The Bruce Springsteen Story* (New York: Dolphin Books, 1979) in 1979, then published a nearly 700-page "definitive" biography of the singer in 2004. Dave Marsh, *Bruce Springsteen: Two Hearts: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Springsteen and the spirit of the group."[28] In this passage, musical-racial code words like "soulful ingredient" ascribe a sort of black musical magic to the figure of Clemens, a magic in turn transferred to Springsteen by association, through some mystical "spirit of the group." It's a move that subtly dehumanizes Clemons ("a vessel") in order to enfold him into a fantastical rhetorical lineage—there is no gospel saxophone "tradition" to speak of—that in turn becomes confirmation of Springsteen's white heroism. Clemons' presence (or, now, his absence) becomes a way of affirming the centrality of Springsteen's whiteness while foreclosing discussion of racial inequality, rock fandom's equivalent of the "but some of my best friends…" argument.

The underlying conceptual engine that powers all of the various omissions, fallacies and obfuscations described above is "authenticity." Rock ideology, the foundations and emergence of which are largely the subject of this dissertation, is first and foremost an ideology of authenticity. In this I do not simply mean a tacit agreement between performer and audience that what is being performed and expressed is "real," although I do partially mean that.[29] But even more, rock's ideology of authenticity functions as a way of delineating and policing what constitutes "real" rock music, including who is authorized to play that music, and who is authorized to listen to it. In exploring rock authenticity I follow performance theorist Philip Auslander in treating it as both "an ideological concept and as a discursive effect," and one that is also "essentialist, in the sense that rock fans treat

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[28] David Remnick, "Bloodbrother: Clarence Clemons, 1942-2011," *The New Yorker* (online), 19 June 2011, available at http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/06/bloodbrother-clarence-clemons-1942-2011.html.

[29] Philip Auslander has written extensively of this with regards to the Milli Vanilli lip-synching controversy of the late 1980s, which led MTV to create its *Unplugged* series, the suggestion being that the stripped-down environs would preclude trickery and artifice (never mind that, obviously, the show was still thoroughly edited and produced). Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. 63-109. For an interesting collection of authenticity debates across popular music genres, see Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor's *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

authenticity as an essence that is either present or absent in the music itself."[30] Rock authenticity's core legitimacy, in other words, is resolutely unchallenged, its belief in itself unwavering: rock ideology takes the reality of the music's "realness" for granted. In many ways this dissertation tells the story of how this idea of authenticity, one that is unmistakably white, came to understand itself.

Along with these new-yet-old ideologies of white musical authenticity came new-yet-old ideologies of black musical authenticity. Whereas artists like Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and Janis Joplin were lauded for casting off the shackles of white conformity, artists like those at Detroit's Motown Records, whose R&B-to-pop "crossover" formula was the most significant American musical achievement of the decade, were derided for being insufficiently black. In these formulations, cosmopolitan versatility among African American artists was not heard as identity transcendence but rather as racial betrayal, in accusations that were frequently lobbed by white critics. Again, perhaps the most tortuous example of this was Jimi Hendrix, judged by certain white and black critics as an "Uncle Tom" and worse, his blackness rendering him inauthentically "rock" at the same time that his music rendered him inauthentically black.

What these ideologies reconstructed in tandem was a sonic worldview in which black musical authenticity was defined in relation to a set of imagined aesthetic strictures imposed onto a group, while white musical authenticity was defined in relation to a musical worldview in which individuality was paramount. "White musical authenticity" was never defined but rather left pointedly unarticulated, its self-denial only enhancing its power. In rock music the very act of imaginatively engaging with and appropriating the authenticity of black music while keeping black bodies at arm's length became, simply, a new way of being white. The

[30] Auslander 70.

laughed-off response to why we don't speak of "white musical authenticity" is that such a thing is undesirable, but the real reason is that rock ideology rendered that thing so fluid that it is unidentifiable. This is, in a sense, the history of American racial thought writ small, the idea that, in Patricia J Williams' formulation, race is a condition that everyone "has" except white people.[31]

This dissertation is not out to define white musical authenticity, or black musical authenticity: at best I am deeply agnostic towards either's existence. The interracial history of rock and roll that I chart here reveals that racialized notions of musical authenticity are largely imaginary, deeply ideological, and ultimately obfuscating and disingenuous. A shared trait of every artist considered in this dissertation, white or black, male or female, American or British, is that he or she provoked a crisis in ideas about musical and racial authenticity, crises to which the racial imagination of 1960s musical discourse was forced to respond. Rock music's musical-racial ideology of white authenticity took its power precisely from the fact that it denied its own existence, and this began in a period when age-old stories that people had told themselves about race and its relation to sound, performance, and the businesses of sound and performance were forced to a point of rupture. Faced with this rupture, the old stories were not so much abandoned as they were retailored to fit the extraordinary times that had brought them to crisis.

Scholarly Interlocutors and Influences

Aside from Ronald Radano's pathbreaking explorations of the intersections of musical and racial imagination, several recent works of scholarship have had major influences on this project. Karl Hagstrom Miller's study of racial ideologies in the early Southern music recording industries has played a great role in my thinking. Miller writes of

[31] Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 9.

the assumption during the early Twentieth Century that "there existed a firm correlation between racialized music and racialized bodies: black people performed black music and white people performed white music," and argues that what was affirmed by this belief was the idea that musical authenticity, and particularly black musical authenticity, was located primarily, if not entirely, at the level of performance.[32] At their core, racialized ideas of musical authenticity invariably see race before they hear music, and Miller's statement that "the differences *within* African American or white music cultures were more extreme than the differences *between* black and white music cultures" is as true—if not even more true—in the US and UK of the 1960s as it was for the American South of the early 20th century. [33]

I also take inspiration from Josh Kun's work, which has influenced my approached to thinking and writing about musical recordings—and, crucially, the circulation and mediation of musical recordings—as agents in broader cultural processes. Kun writes of what he deems the "audio-racial imagination" and notes that "race and popular music have always been experienced not alongside each other, not as complements, supplements, or corollaries of each other, but through each other."[34] Kun's treatment of recordings and performances as objects of analysis, cultural texts that both exemplify and exceed the limits of space and time, has been a truly invaluable exemplar for my project.

With regards to the specific historical period of my work, two very recent pieces of writing warrant mention. Elijah Wald's *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll,* polemical title aside, is a wide-ranging "alternative history' of 20th century popular music that is primarily concerned with tyrannies of taste-making in popular music historiography. The book's title reflects Wald's claim that the Beatles' mid-1960s turn away from rock and roll as dance

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[32] Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 4.
[33] ibid., 15. Emphasis added.
[34] Kun, 26.

music, and the veneration of that development by critics, destroyed the music by distancing it from its predecessors. "It is a profound irony," writes Wald, "that the attempts to make highbrow art out of jazz in the 1920s… is generally recalled by historians as an embarrassing wrong turn, whereas the attempt to make highbrow art out of rock 'n' roll in the 1960s… is generally viewed as a step forward for the genre, which has been led by white artists ever since."[35] This is a provocative and true statement, but as his title suggests, Wald often disproportionately implicates artists in this: as the third chapter of my dissertation shows, the Beatles' engagement with contemporary black music did not in fact dissipate with *Rubber Soul*, or *Revolver* the following year, a persistence of engagement that has been long obscured by some of the very tendencies Wald rightfully decries in his book.

Last but not least, Eric Weisbard's recent work on radio formatting's role in the creation of genre and identity in post-War America is enormously significant. Weisbard writes of the dominance of the "rock narrative" in popular music history and suggests instead embracing a "pop narrative" in which rock is simply one genre among many on a symbolic radio dial, "where stations playing R&B, rock, and other formats comfortably co-existed in a manner allowing for different majority perspectives to prevail."[36] Weisbard's work is largely concerned with a slightly later period than mine, when the rise of FM broadcasting coincided with the rise of "album-oriented rock" programming, and while I do not deny the significance of radio as a central medium for the dissemination of popular music in this period, I have chosen to focus my attentions more on the discursive and ideological sides of music making and reception. As philosopher Theodore Gracyk argues, rock culture is most fundamentally concerned with recordings themselves, and this project

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[35] Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 235.
[36] Eric Weisbard, "Top 40 Democracy: Pop Music Formats in the Rock Era" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2008).

takes recordings and the discourses around them as its primary objects of analysis rather than the media through which they circulate.[37]

Chapter Structure

In each of my chapters I strive to respect both music and race as lived realities that are also constructed by powerful and tireless imaginative work. If, as Radano suggests, we should pay attention to the "comprehension of black music as a form constituted within and against racial discourses," the same approach must be said of "white music" as well. This project is organized as a series of case studies in the persistence and malleability of these discourses during a single historical moment.[38] My first chapter focuses on connections between Sam Cooke and Bob Dylan in the early 1960s, most centrally evidenced by Cooke's landmark composition "A Change Is Gonna Come," inspired by a twenty-one-year-old Dylan's "Blowin' in The Wind." Cooke and Dylan have since been positioned as foundational figures in soul and rock music, respectively. By analyzing moments of overlap between these artists as well as the ways they were discussed at the time and in years since, I expose the ideological agendas underlying these genre formations while highlighting the interracial aesthetics of two of the decade's most influential musicians, one of whom met his premature demise in late 1964, the other of whom is now regarded as one of the most significant musicians of the twentieth century.

The second chapter travels across the Atlantic to explore the intermingling of musical and racial ideology in England during the long moment before the Beatles touched down at a newly-renamed John F. Kennedy Memorial Airport in 1964. By looking at four British youth cultures that sometimes shared little else than an obsession with African American music—the Teddy Boys, "Trad" Jazz, Skiffle, and British blues—this chapter

[37] Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 13.
[38] Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 4.

reveals the degree to which young Britons' relationship to popular music was filtered through racial fantasies that were distinctly home-grown. While much of this chapter deals with music and musicians who remain relatively unknown in the United States, such as Ken Colyer, Lonnie Donegan, and Alexis Korner, I also explore the impact of their legacies on some of the earliest recordings of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

The Beatles' emergence transformed Sixties popular music on nearly every conceivable level. My third chapter retains focus on them, and explores their creative interactions with Detroit's Motown Records. While this influence is most famously heard in the "covers" of Motown songs that appear on the Beatles' early American and British LPs, this chapter shows that the relationship between the Beatles and Motown was multilayered in its reciprocity and stretched throughout the 1960s, spreading to include the influence of Motown bassist James Jamerson on *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* to Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye's drastic re-imaginings of Beatles compositions at the dawn of the 1970s. In doing so I also aim to redress longstanding misapprehensions of Motown itself, as the label's crossover aspirations caused many commentators to label it inauthentically or insufficiently "black" in comparisons to other R&B music of the period. The interplay between Motown and the Beatles shows the way interracial crossovers heard as cosmopolitanism for white artists have frequently been heard as diluted accommodationism for black artists.

The policing of racial authenticity in popular music gained new energy in the late 1960s. During this period the concept of "soul" became a fixation of popular discourse, and my fourth chapter examines this phenomenon in relation to singers Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin, and Dusty Springfield. Franklin and Joplin were often made to stand as polar extremes in these debates, with Franklin held as the embodiment of soulful authenticity and Joplin a flashpoint in arguments over whether "soul" was a racially exclusive proposition.

British pop star Springfield never became a household name stateside but enjoyed a surprise hit in 1968 with "Son of a Preacher Man," a song originally written for Aretha Franklin and recorded with members of Franklin's band. Through these musical and discursive convergences I show that the discourse of soul was a way to use music to talk about race and vice versa, and that its authenticity fantasies obfuscated the very music it purported to celebrate, often to the material detriment of performers themselves.

My final chapter looks at the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix, two artists whose relationships to race were arguably the most complex of any in this period. Hendrix was an African American lead guitar virtuoso in an increasingly white rock and roll landscape in which white critics and commentators were often explicitly pushing black musicians back to the margins; the Rolling Stones were a white British band obsessed with African American music who continued to perform alongside black musicians to increasingly unusual degrees as the Sixties came to a close. This chapter argues that, in part due to these hardening racial divisions, the late 1960s saw both these artists exploring alternative aesthetics increasingly preoccupied with violence. While creatively invigorating, this trend quickly exceeded the realm of musical practice and became destructive, evidenced by the murder of African American Rolling Stones fan Meredith Hunter at Altamont in December of 1969 and Hendrix's own self-destruction in 1970. These events sounded a metaphorical death rattle for interracialism in rock music as the 1960s drew to a close, as these artists' critiques of white hegemony were instead appropriated and incorporated by rock ideology to confirm its racial exclusivity.

In selecting my subjects for this project there are invariably artists I've had to leave out, and the number of artists who are not thoroughly considered in this dissertation could fill several wings of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Sly and the Family Stone, Curtis

Mayfield, and the Band are just three major artists of this period whom I would happily write a second dissertation about, but didn't make it into this one. Stax Records is only sporadically considered here, partly because the label has already received a masterful history at the hands of Rob Bowman, and partly because the literal interracialism of Stax—embodied in the house band, Booker T. and the MGs—has too often served as both exemplar and final word on interracialism in Sixties music.[39] James Brown is among the most difficult omissions, but Brown too has been written about ably and extensively elsewhere, and never really inhabited the "crossover" ethos that this dissertation probes, in all of its various meanings (Brown, for all his successes, never had a Number One Pop single).[40] Similarly, the Doors, the Grateful Dead, the Who, Cream: all of these artists are worthy of someone else's story, but at present it can't be mine.

The necessity of periodization also must account for omissions. In discussions of race and American music Elvis Presley may well be the most controversial figure of the Twentieth Century, but his moment of greatest relevance predates the period of my project. What's more, Presley's tendency to function as a default straw figure in discussions of race and rock and roll music has encouraged me to look past him: far more has been written about Elvis and race than about the Beatles and race, or even Bob Dylan and race, and the latter two are far more influential to modern conceptions of rock music. On the later end, I do not discuss Led Zeppelin, a band whose first album arrived in America in early 1969 and whose blues fetishism and literal appropriations of black music (evidenced in the band's

[39] Rob Bowman, *Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records* (New York: Schirmer, 1997).
[40] RJ Smith's *The One: The Life and Music of James Brown* (New York: Gotham, 2012) and Anne Danielsen's *Presence and Pleasure: The Funk Grooves of James Brown and Parliament* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2006), are two recent and thorough works on Brown. Guthrie P. Ramsey's *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* and David Brackett's *Interpreting Popular Music* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995) also contain excellent treatments of Brown.

plagiaristic tendencies) are deeply problematic and worthy of discussion.[41] Yet Led Zeppelin's groundbreaking hard rock was both crucially post-Hendrix and crucially post-Rolling Stones, and given the span of the band's influence, seems part of an adjoining but nonetheless separate story.

On a final note: a central motive of this project is to disrupt the stories that we have told ourselves about what is "black music" and what is "white music" and to identify what we are actually talking about when we say these things, particularly with regards to this period, one of the most significant in the history of popular music. Among the principles discussed in this dissertation, Aretha Franklin recently sang at the first inauguration of the first African American President of the United States, Bob Dylan has won so many honors that new ones are being invented on his behalf, and John Lennon has been dead for over thirty years yet still might be more famous than both of them.[42]

But a crucial commonality shared by all the subjects of my project is that absolutely none of them, regardless of skin color, set out to make music that was "white." In this most basic and most important sense it is my firm belief that every piece of music discussed in these pages is black music, first and foremost, before it is anything else. At its most fundamental the story told here is a testament to black music's heterogeneity, its capaciousness, its persistent resistance to confinement and essentialism. Rather than hearing this music as determined by and beholden to a singular "authentic" tradition that preceded it—a notion that is by no means ideologically innocent—I aim to hear it as fluid and resoundingly alive to historical contingency. The ultimate goal of this dissertation is not to

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[41] I have written about Led Zeppelin and race elsewhere. See Jack Hamilton, "Robert Plant's Second Act," *The Atlantic* 1 Nov. 2010, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/11/robert-plants-second-act/65278/

[42] In 2008 the Pulitzer Prize committee awarded Dylan a special citation for "his profound impact on popular music and American culture, marked by lyrical compositions of extraordinary poetic power." "Bob Dylan Receives Pulitzer Prize," *MSNBC* (Associated Press), available online at http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/24000483/ns/today-entertainment/

debunk the idea of black music but to expand its parameters, to a degree that policing where it stops and something else begins, in this period and onward, is profoundly unnecessary.

- Chapter One -
Darkness at the Break of Noon: Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan and the Birth of Sixties Music

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I was born by the river
In a little tent
And just like that river I've been running ever since.

-Sam Cooke, 1964

He not busy being born
Is busy dying.

-Bob Dylan, 1965

In late 1963, Sam Cooke found himself at another crossroads in a lifetime filled with them. In 1933, at the age of two, young Sam Cook had moved with his parents from Clarksville, Mississippi to Chicago; in 1950, at nineteen, he'd left a regional gospel group called the Highway QCs to replace R.H. Harris in the Soul Stirrers, the lead singer of perhaps the most famous gospel group in the country. In 1957, Cook added an "e" to the end of his name and wrote and released a secular single on a small label called Keen Records. Entitled "You Send Me," the record reached the top spot on the *Billboard* Pop Charts, making Sam Cooke the most successful African American gospel-pop crossover artist in American history while expediting his departure from the Soul Stirrers amidst accusations of treachery from the national gospel community. He signed with RCA, the same label as Elvis Presley, and in 1961 Cooke and his associate S.R. Crain founded SAR Records, which would successfully record an impressive roster of gospel and R&B artists, making Cooke the rare African American recording star who was also a powerful record executive.

By 1963 Cooke's attention was drawn increasingly to politics, and the growing network of protests and struggles rooted in his native South. Cooke had long been attuned

to issues of civil rights: he had stopped playing segregated venues in 1959, and in 1960 had penned a scathing anti-segregation editorial for the *New York Journal American*, in which he declared that "I have always detested people, of any color, religion, or nationality, who have lacked courage to stand up and be counted."[1] Still, as 1963 wore on and Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C. that August, Cooke sensed that the stakes were rising. Fueling his urgency was his growing obsession with a song called "Blowin' In The Wind," written by a 21-year-old singer and songwriter named Bob Dylan and released in May 1963 on his second studio album for Columbia Records, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. Peter, Paul and Mary's version of the song, released for Warner Brothers on June 18, 1963, reached number two on the pop charts and sold 320,000 copies in its first eight days, making it the label's fastest-selling single in history.[2]

Cooke's longtime friend and collaborator J.W. Alexander later recalled Cooke expressing wonder at "a white boy writing a song like that;" shortly thereafter Cooke invited Alexander to his house and played him a sketched-out version of a song he'd written, called "A Change Is Gonna Come."[3] A curious mixture of gospel imagery and secular fury—this earliest version of the song referred to a white segregationist as a "motherfucker"—it was unlike anything the singer had yet written, closer to the "protest" or "topical" music of Dylan than the mass-marketed pop that had garnered Cooke his lasting success.[4] Cooke finally recorded the track in late 1963, four days before Christmas, by which it had morphed into a stunning mix of influences, a church-infused vocal set to sophisticated pop chord changes, all nestled against a ravishing backdrop of strings, brass and tympani. At first no

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[1] Qtd. in Peter Guralnick, *Dream Boogie: The Triumph of Sam Cooke* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), 336.
[2] Sales numbers from Robert Shelton's *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 161.
[3] Daniel Wolff, with S.R. Crain, Clifton White, and G. David Tenenbaum, *You Send Me: The Life and Times of Sam Cooke* (New York: William Morrow, 1995), 291.
[4] Guralnick, 541.

one, Cooke included, seemed to know exactly what to do with it, and "A Change Is Gonna Come" was released without fanfare in March of 1964, appearing as the first track on the second side of Cooke's latest RCA album, *Ain't That Good News*.

Sam Cooke would not live to hear "A Change Is Gonna Come" become the most enduring song of his career and a groundbreaking musical moment in the intensifying Civil Rights Movement. On December 11, 1964, he was shot to death under mysterious circumstances in a Los Angeles hotel; three days later, "A Change Is Gonna Come" was released as a posthumous single. Less than four months later Bob Dylan issued a symbolic resignation letter from the folk community with the release of the half-electrified album *Bringing It All Back Home*. This was followed by *Highway 61 Revisited* and its groundbreaking lead single, "Like a Rolling Stone," a six-and-a-half minute opus that reached number two on the *Billboard* charts in the summer of 1965 and shifted Dylan from folk *wunderkind* to full-blown pop icon, a transformation that would have massive ramifications for popular music and Sixties culture more broadly.

This chapter draws connections between these two seemingly disparate musical legends of the 1960s, to "hear them together," in a sense. Sam Cooke and Bob Dylan never met, and aside from the remarkable but not entirely extraordinary influence of "Blowin' In The Wind" on Cooke—it was, after all, a hugely influential song in general—there has been scant discussion of the creative affinities and musical similarities between the two men in this period. Dylan was a lapsing folkie from Minnesota by way of Greenwich Village, Cooke a lapsed gospel superstar who'd become one of the most powerful figures in black popular music when Bob Dylan was a high schooler named Robert Zimmerman, playing Little Richard-inspired piano in assorted garage bands. At one point in his 2004 memoir, *Chronicles, Volume One*, Dylan mentions Cooke and specifically "A Change Is Gonna Come"

but only in passing, a casual allusion that might be a sly return-of-favor but which disappears as quickly as it arrives.[5]

I want to suggest that these figures have functioned in similar imaginative ways for audiences and writers, both in the period outlined here and the years since. The discussions that have surrounded Bob Dylan and Sam Cooke—and, just as significantly, the silences that have surrounded them as well—speak to broader ideologies that have partitioned 1960s rock and roll by disguising racial difference through the language of musical difference. Considering these two artists next to each other is an object lesson in the benefits of resisting a longstanding tendency, conscious or unconscious, to segregate popular music history in this period, and cultural history more broadly. These two artists share far more than has been acknowledged, from their ceaseless assaults on expectations of form and genre, to their controversial defections from the traditionalist musical communities from which they sprang, to their fiercely individualist pursuits of artistic autonomy.

Dylan and Cooke loom as totemic figures in the two primary genre stories of 1960s music, that of "rock" music and that of "soul" music, respectively. A 1968 posthumous compilation of Cooke's RCA material was titled *The Man Who Invented Soul*; thirty-two years later, the same appellation appeared on the first-ever deluxe box set of the singer's material.[6] While clearly a claim burdened with hyperbole, Cooke's unprecedented and massively successful 1958 crossover from gospel stardom to mainstream American pop stardom indeed re-wrote the potentials for African American performers in American popular music and led to an explosion of gospel-trained singers storming the pop charts through the 1960s,

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[5] Writes Dylan, in reference to a turning point in his Greenwich Village days: "Sometimes you know things have to change, are going to change, but you can only feel it—like in that song of Sam Cooke's 'Change Is Gonna Come'—but you don't know it in a purposeful way." Bob Dylan, *Chronicles, Volume One* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 61.

[6] Sam Cooke, *The Man Who Invented Soul*, RCA 4500, 1968, 33rpm. Sam Cooke *The Man Who Invented Soul,* RCA 67911, 2000, CD.

names such as Marvin Gaye, Wilson Pickett, and Aretha Franklin, to whose family's home Cooke was a frequent visitor in the early 1960s.

Similarly to Cooke's gospel-to-pop crossover, Dylan's decision to turn his back on the folk revival and pick up an electric guitar and rhythm section in 1965—first in the studio on *Bringing It All Back Home*, then live at the Newport Folk Festival in June of 1965, then achieving a startling and decisive commercial breakthrough with the release of the single "Like a Rolling Stone" in late July—has been cast by many as a seminal moment in the birth of serious rock music. According to one critic, "Like a Rolling Stone" is widely seen as "the moment when pop (ephemeral, trivial) mutated into rock (enduring, significant)," a suggestion that began to take root almost immediately after the song's release.[7]

Bob Dylan is the single-most written-about and critically-considered popular music figure of the rock and roll era. The opening sentence to the introductory essay in the *Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* states, with confidence: "No other figure from the world of American popular music, of this or any other era, has attracted the volume of critical attention, much of it quite original and perceptive, that Bob Dylan has."[8] His lyrics have been parsed by literary critics and anthologized in collections of American poetry since the mid-1960s, his position in American life figured and refigured by critics and historians, within the academy and without.[9] His memoir, *Chronicles, Vol. 1* was named one of the best books of the year by *The New York Times, The Washington Post* and *The Economist,* among other publications, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2008 the

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[7] Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On* (New York: Canongate, 2008), 78.
[8] Kevin J.H. Dettmar, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*, ed. Kevin J.H. Dettmar (New York, Cambridge UP, 2009), 1.
[9] Among just a few of the more well-known contemporary historians and cultural critics who have recently published book-length works on Dylan are Greil Marcus (*Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at The Crossroads* [New York: PublicAffairs, 2005]), Sean Wilentz (*Bob Dylan in America* [New York: Doubleday, 2010]), and Christopher Ricks (*Dylan's Visions of Sin* [New York: Ecco, 2004]. *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* boasts contributions from Michael Denning, Eric Lott, and Jonathan Lethem, among many others.

Pulitzer Prize committee awarded Dylan a special citation for "his profound impact on popular music and American culture, marked by lyrical compositions of extraordinary poetic power."[10]

Conversely, for all of Sam Cooke's generally agreed-upon significance—the first sentence of the *All Music Guide*'s entry for Sam Cooke declares him "the most important soul singer in history" and "the inventor of soul music"—he is a startlingly under-discussed musical figure.[11] Before Peter Guralnick's magisterial 2007 biography, *Dream Boogie: The Triumph of Sam Cooke*, there was only one biography of the singer in existence: Daniel Wolff's 1995 *You Send Me: The Life & Times of Sam Cooke*, co-written with Cooke's former collaborators and associates S.R. Crain, Clifton White and G. David Tenenbaum. Both are excellent, but primarily biographical; at the time of this writing there are no academic monographs that discuss Cooke in any significant scope, and few articles have addressed the singer either.[12] Cooke is an artist whose brilliance is readily conceded but whose music itself—or at least a substantial part of it—has occasioned reactions ranging from critical disdain to pointed silence. This chapter addresses the paucity of critical and scholarly attention paid to the singer, and argues that it betrays a deep and longstanding ambivalence toward much of Cooke's work and career.

I argue that in many senses the stories that we have told ourselves about Bob Dylan and Sam Cooke mirror the stories that we have told ourselves about the respective genres

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[10] "Bob Dylan Receives Pulitzer Prize," *MSNBC* (Associated Press), available online at http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/24000483/ns/today-entertainment/

[11] Bruce Eder, "Sam Cooke," *All Music Guide,* available online at http://www.allmusic.com/artist/sam-cooke-mn0000238115

[12] A few exceptions would include Christopher Trigg's "A Change Ain't Gonna Come: Sam Cooke and the Protest Song," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79:3 (Summer 2010), 991-1003; Michelle Hartman's "This Sweet / Sweet Music": Jazz, Sam Cooke, and Reading Arab American Literary Identities," *Arab American Literature* 31:4 (Winter, 2006), pp. 145-165; and David Sanjek's "One Size Does Not Fit All: The Precarious Position of the African American Entrepreneur in Post-World War II American Popular Music," *American Music* 15: 4 (Winter, 1997), pp. 535-562.

that they have come to embody, and that the ideological underpinnings of these genres have become inherited into discussions of these artists. In the years that have passed since the careers of Dylan and Cooke briefly but significantly converged around "Blowin' In The Wind" and "A Change Is Gonna Come," the perilously vague concept around which the separation of Cooke and Dylan, and by extension black and white music in this period, has been enacted, is authenticity. On one hand, Cooke's marginalization in criticism and historiography has largely been the result of his instability within discourses of black musical authenticity; on the other hand, Dylan's centrality to rock historiography is constructed around an ideology of authenticity that claims him as its benchmark.

This chapter argues that both these ideologies are not only disingenuous but bear such a strong familial relation to each other that they are essentially mirror images, sustaining and reinforcing each other, linked by a history that stretches back much farther than the music that they purport to describe. By considering Dylan and Cooke together I want to disrupt a troubling and ongoing tendency to listen to and analyze these artists in racially reductive and overdetermined ways, and offer an alternate path into understanding their music that rescues a moment in which "change" was in the air, the ears, and the songs themselves.

The Making of Sam Cooke: Commerce, Religion and Black Musical Authenticity

In the early morning hours of December 11, 1964, Sam Cooke was shot to death at a $3-a-night motel in a dilapidated neighborhood of Los Angeles. It was the most significant rock-and-roll death since Buddy Holly's, but because of the timing and mysterious circumstances of the shooting, news of Cooke's death was slow to arrive, and details were sketchy as they emerged. Hotel employee Bertha Franklin quickly confessed to pulling the trigger but claimed self-defense, alleging that a drunken and enraged Cooke had broken

down the door to her office and physically accosted her, and on December 15 a coroner's jury ruled the singer's death a "justifiable homicide."[13]

Reaction to Cooke's death, particularly in the African American community, was mixed and skeptical, with rumors of a "frame-up" circulating so persistently that Los Angeles police were forced to issue a formal denial.[14] A letter to the editor of the Chicago *Defender* by a high school student who identified herself as "Frances L." declared of the verdict: "There have been so many things overlooked. Why? I know the answer, and so does everyone else. If it had been the Beatles or Ricky Nelson, the investigation wouldn't stop until the truth was known. Will the Negro ever get a equal chance—even in death?"[15] Others accepted Franklin's story, and blamed Cooke for his own demise: ""[i]f he hadn't have left God, left the church, it never would have happened," Reverend Clay Evans of the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Cooke's hometown of Chicago later declared.[16]

In death as in life, Sam Cooke was many things to many people. To some he was a handsome and clean-cut pop idol; to others he was a disgraced fallen angel who had left gospel music for the hedonism of rock and roll; to still more he was a shining example of African American pride and independence, a self-made entertainer and businessman whose groundbreaking successes helped alter the racial dynamics of the entertainment industry. In the years since his passing, Cooke's stature as both a major American vocalist and a formative influence on the history of popular music has only grown. As Craig Werner writes, his was "a voice that possessed a unique ability to call forth strong responses from

[13] "Motel Aide Exonerated in Slaying of Singer," *Los Angeles Times* 17 Dec. 1964, 36.
[14] Betty Washington, "L.A. Cops Deny 'Frame-Up' In Cooke's Death," *Chicago Defender* 16 Dec. 1964, 1.
[15] "Says Millions Reject Verdict On Sam Cooke," *Chicago Defender* 9 Jan. 1965, 9.
[16] Wolff, 346.

the black folk attending the gospel show that night in California and from the teens, black and white, who heard it on their transistor radios."[17]

For all of this influence, however, Cooke's position in musical historiography is an uneasy one, and as was the case during Cooke's life, many evaluations of the singer's posthumous legacy are plagued with anxieties over this very crossover. In his widely-read, polemical history of mid-century African American popular music, Nelson George complained of "the obnoxious studio input of white producers"[18] on Cooke's music, even though it is well-documented that Cooke was largely in charge of his own studio production; historian Brian Ward has since assailed George's accusations of interracial interference but still laments the "glutinous strings and perfunctory female choruses"[19] of Cooke's "pop" material; and critic Dave Marsh writes that in Cooke's transition from gospel to pop, "the aesthetic purity of [his] music had been sullied."[20]

Such statements express discomfort towards certain of Cooke's musical choices because they see the singer's embrace of a more "pop" aesthetic as dilutive and inauthentic. This dilution/purity dialectic has a long history in discussions of black music but was perhaps most prominently articulated in Amiri Baraka's (then LeRoi Jones) landmark and massively influential study *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, first published in 1963, the year Sam Cooke first heard "Blowin' In The Wind."[21] In Baraka's vision of history black music's proximity to a variety of imagined white influences was seen as a compromising if not outright destructive influence. "The most expressive Negro music of any give period will be an exact reflection of what the Negro himself is," the writer declared, a provocative if

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[17] Craig Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race, and the Soul of America* (New York: Plume, 1998), 31.
[18] Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988), 81.
[19] Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 147.
[20] Dave Marsh, *The Heart of Rock and Soul* (New York: Da Capo, 1989), 252.
[21] Amiri Baraka (as LeRoi Jones), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963; repr. New York: Perennial, 2002).

tautological declaration that was subtly dependent upon Baraka's own specific criteria of racial authenticity, to be discussed further below.[22]

In such purity/dilution-driven appraisals Cooke's recorded career is roughly viewed as having three stages: a gospel stage, in which the young Cooke sang lead for the Soul Stirrers, one of the most successful gospel quintets in the country, from 1950-1957; a move to pop which found Cooke forsaking his gospel roots in search of mainstream success with songs such as "You Send Me," "Wonderful World" and "Cupid;" and a final return to a gospel aesthetic, in which Cooke re-embraced his past and reached his apotheosis, musically evidenced by his civil rights masterpiece, "A Change is Gonna Come," released as a single shortly after the singer's death in 1964.

Instead of approaching Cooke's life and work as a stunted teleology, fragmented by anxieties over autonomy and authenticity, I examine the entirety of Cooke's career as a holistic endeavor united by an ongoing aesthetic experimentalism. To characterize Cooke's crossover in terms of compromise and dilution strips him of the very artistic autonomy whose supposed loss is lamented by critics like George; what's more, it perpetuates essentialist notions of "authentic" black performance rooted in an ideological formation of black music as primordial and pre-modern, what Ronald Radano has described as "as a sonic beyondness in a world of disenchanted existence."[23] This imagining of black music necessarily presupposes the existence of an ideal black musical purity while drawing from a legacy of racial thought dependent upon ideas of unequal difference and cross-cultural ineffability.

In an essay published only a few months prior to Cooke's recording "A Change Is Gonna Come," Ralph Ellison wrote that "no matter how strictly Negroes are segregated

[22] ibid., 137.
[23] Ronald Radano, *Lying Up A Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 23.

socially and politically, on the level of the imagination their ability to achieve freedom is limited only by their individual aspiration, insight, energy and will."[24] Cooke's career is a study in individual imagination, one misunderstood by far-reaching systems of thought that would quietly seek to limit its possibilities. The "problem" of Sam Cooke, the problem that I believe accounts for the striking critical silence that surrounds him, is a problem of race. Cooke is made to stand in for a host of anxieties about a singer's obligation to his race, not in the political sense of his racial community—Cooke both felt this obligation, and strove to fulfill it—but in the metaphysical notion that there is and and ought to be an immutable connection between skin color and artistic capacity. When viewed in these terms such debates seem constrictive and deeply conservative, a hard-dying ember of racial determinism and unequal ideas of difference.

Sam Cook was born January 22, 1931 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the fifth of Reverend Charles Cook and Annie Mae Cook's eight children.[25] Shortly before Sam's second birthday Charles announced intentions to move the family to Chicago, where he found a congregation at the Christ Temple Church in Chicago Heights, an ethnically diverse suburb thirty miles outside of the city. Charles also took employment the Reynolds Metals plant, where he would work long enough to reach the position of shop steward, and where his income allowed him to move his family to a comfortable apartment in the four-story Lenox building at 3527 Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago.

By the age of six, Sam was singing tenor among four of his siblings in a five-member gospel quartet called the Singing Children: at the height of their popularity, the group had a manager, a booking fee and was chauffeured to performances in a white Cadillac. Charles

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[24] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 116.
[25] Unless otherwise noted, for basic biographical and historical information I relied on the two existent biographies of the singer, Guralnick's *Dream Boogie* and Wolff et al.'s *You Send Me.*

Cook's relationship towards his children's musical gifts—and particularly Sam's—was multilayered: on one hand, he saw his children's precocity for singing in terms of divine authority, and believed it God's will that their careers be cultivated. On the other hand, Cook was an ambitious self-made man who recognized the commercial appeal of his talented progeny, and a drive for material success fueled his interest as well. For the Cook family, music provided the potential for both spiritual fulfillment and material advancement, an intertwining of religion and commerce that would dominate Sam Cooke's entire musical career and his posthumous legacy.

For all of the musical achievements to arise out of the Great Migration, issues of class have long been controversial. In one of the more incendiary chapters of *Blues People,* Baraka outlines the particular pathos which he identifies with the rise of the African American middle class, declaring that "[t]he black middle class wanted no subculture, nothing that could connect them with the poor black man or the slave."[26] While many—most famously Ralph Ellison—have critiqued Baraka's use of straw-figures in his rebuke of the black bourgeoisie, one must look no farther than the Cook family to see the incomplete nature of such characterizations.[27] The Cook family did not wish to *deny* their race but rather to re-imagine their own position as African Americans in a white-dominated society. Baraka's contention that the black middle class "thought that the best way for the black man to survive was to cease being black" removes mainstream economic advancement from his own imagined criteria of black authenticity. While Baraka's distaste for the black middle class is polemical*,* the essentially bohemian assertion that commercial ambition and black musical authenticity are antithetical to one another has remained a theme in discussions of African American music-making, as later chapters of this dissertation will also show.

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[26] Baraka, 132.
[27] See Ellison, 247-258.

In 1949, during his senior year at Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, Cook joined a fledgling gospel quartet called the Highway QCs. The group quickly achieved considerable regional success, and the following year Cook was asked to audition for the Soul Stirrers. Formed in Trinity, Texas in 1926 by Senior Roy (S.R.) Crain, the Soul Stirrers rose to national stardom with the addition of tenor R.H. Harris in 1937, whom gospel historian Anthony Heilbut has written "not only created but defined the terms of good quartet singing."[28] In 1950, the Soul Stirrers were named the country's "Top Gospel Group" by an *Ebony* magazine writer who noted that the Stirrers "employ the revival-type of spirituals which appeal to emotions."[29] That same year, Harris abruptly quit after tiring of the group's grueling tour schedule, and a replacement needed to be found quickly.

Crain and the Soul Stirrers were impressed by Cook's voice and developing talent for songwriting, and at the age of nineteen, Sam Cook was named to replace the most famous gospel tenor in the most famous gospel group in the United States. After several months of rehearsals and occasional performances, Cook accompanied the Soul Stirrers to Los Angeles, where the group was scheduled to have a recording session with Specialty Records. Specialty was an independent label run by a displaced white Pennsylvanian named Art Rupe, who had founded the label in 1946 with the primary aim of producing gospel and rhythm and blues performers.[30] Rupe was initially hesitant to record the Stirrers without Harris, but when he finally released "Jesus Gave Me Water," the first single featuring Sam Cook on lead vocal, the single became the group's highest-selling in history and established Cook as a star.

The Stirrers remained one of the nation's most successful gospel acts through much of the 1950s, during which time they produced a vast and brilliant recorded legacy for

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[28] Anthony Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 113-114.
[29] "Gospel Singers: They Move Millions With Their Ringing Voices," *Ebony* Dec. 1950, 92.
[30] For background on Rupe and his founding of Specialty, see Guralnick, 68-69.

Specialty Records. The livelihood of a national gospel group, however, was not determined by the studio but largely by the road, and Cook and his fellow group members toured constantly. While many of these performances went unrecorded, an exception is the 1955 First Annual Summer Festival of Gospel Music, held at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium. This recording features three numbers by the Soul Stirrers and culminates in an eight-and-a-half minute, show-stopping rendition of "Nearer To Thee," an original composition by Cooke that is a refashioning of the hymn "Nearer My God To Thee."[31]

The performance at the Shrine Concert is a vocal showcase for Cooke: the timbre of his voice is more full-throated and ravaged than on Soul Stirrers studio recordings as he dramatically plays with time, phrasing and dynamics. Cooke's performance is impassioned yet painstakingly controlled, and as a twenty-four-year-old showman he is expertly seasoned. As the performance reaches its climax, the audience is erupting as Cooke moves off the microphone for his loudest cries, a shrewd technique that creates the effect of a power almost unbearable. Baritone Paul Foster echoes each word of Cooke's "Nearer My God To Thee" refrain with antiphonal shouts, and the guitarist, Leroy Crume, plays propulsive triplets evocative of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, or in perhaps a more apt contemporary parallel, Chuck Berry. Craig Werner has written that "the key to Cooke's success, even within the gospel world, lay in his provocative blending of sex and spirituality," and the sense of ecstasy elicited from this performance is not entirely theological.[32]

The Shrine Concert can be heard as a representative triumph of Cooke's time with the Soul Stirrers, and one can already begin to hear him exceeding his own stage. Specialty Records was well aware of Cooke's tremendous potential and began sending Bumps Blackwell, an A&R man who had recently signed a charismatic Georgian named Little

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[31] Various Artists, *The Great Shrine Concert 1955,* Specialty SPCD-7045-2, 1993, CD.
[32] Werner, 36.

Richard, out on tour with the Soul Stirrers to scout their lead singer's performances. Specialty's role in Cooke's ambitions and career trajectory shouldn't be understated: in 1952, a little more than a year after Sam Cook recorded "Jesus Gave Me Water," the label released Lloyd Price's "Lawdy Miss Clawdy." "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" quickly became the biggest R&B hit in Specialty's history, and it was widely acknowledged that a great deal of its success was due to "white under-the-counter sales," a development that presaged the coming commercial explosion of rock and roll.[33]

"You Send Me" and the Question of Crossover

In 1956, Sam Cooke sent a letter to Art Rupe in which he informed his label head that "a friend I've been knowing for quite a while asked me if I would consider recording some popular ballads for one of the major recording companies if he could arrange it. I told him yes."[34] Rupe told Cooke that under no circumstances could he record for a label other than Specialty, but that Specialty would happily record him singing popular material. Cooke's first foray into pop singing was a song called "Lovable," a secularized re-write of the Soul Stirrers' "Wonderful." The record, released under the pseudonym "Dale Cook," did not sell. Frustrated, Cooke rededicated himself to songwriting and in April 1957 sent Bumps Blackwell a sketch for a song called "You Send Me." Cook recorded "You Send Me" in the basement studio at Specialty Records' Los Angeles office, and Cooke and Blackwell chose to bring in big-band arranger Rene Hall to give the proceedings an air of pop sophistication. Art Rupe arrived to the session late and flew into a rage over Hall's arrangement, causing Cooke and Blackwell to surreptitiously bring the song across town to a label called Keen Records. Keen agreed to record Cooke's pop material and to give Blackwell and Cook more artistic and economic independence than Rupe had ever

[33] Guralnick, 87.
[34] Ibid., 129.

conceded, although the circumvention of Specialty later led to a Byzantine and costly legal dispute.[35]

"You Send Me" is a catchy and straightforward piece of pop music. The verse section relies on a simple I-vi-ii-V chord progression, and consists of repetitions of "darling, you send me" and "darling, you thrill me." The song's bridge, which occurs twice in the single's two minutes and forty-five seconds, contains the closest approximation of a narrative: "At first I thought it was infatuation / But oh, it's lasted so long / And now I find myself wanting / To marry you and take you home." In a 1958 interview conducted after the breakthrough of "You Send Me," Cooke explicitly credited his pop success to his gospel experience: "I think singing spirituals is the best training for a singer. That's how I developed my easy style from singing spirituals."[36]

Nonetheless, "You Send Me" was both a commercial and artistic experiment for the singer: the song's arrangement is decidedly different than anything attempted by the Soul Stirrers, and harmonically the song's chord changes are more reminiscent of Tin Pan Alley than a hymn (the song's chord progression mirrors the opening bars of George Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm," perhaps the most oft-borrowed chord changes in American popular music[37]). Perhaps the most startling difference between "You Send Me" and Cooke's earlier material—and the element of the arrangement which apparently most enraged Rupe—is the presence of white female backup singers, as this is the first time in Cooke's recorded career that he is singing with anyone besides an all-male supporting cast, and a facet of the recording that simultaneously softens and subtly sexualizes the young star. When the song

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[35] The details of Cooke's falling-out with Specialty are extensively recounted in Guralnick, esp. 171-183.
[36] Ernest Cofield, "Close Look At Sam Cooke," *Chicago Defender* 18 Oct. 1958, 11.
[37] David Yaffe has written of the ubiquity of "I Got Rhythm"'s chord progression, noting that "[t]o this day, calling for 'Rhythm' changes is a universally understood directive on the bandstand." David Yaffe, *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006), 17.

was released by Keen in 1957 (under the name "Sam Cooke") it began a startling rise up the *Billboard* Pop charts, eventually reaching Number One and selling over two and a half million copies.[38]

By the time Sam Cooke left the Soul Stirrers in 1957, in the wake of his surprising transition into pop stardom, African American gospel music was a big business in the United States, and had been so for a long time. Thomas A. Dorsey had begun his career as a jazz and blues pianist, then started writing gospel songs in the early 1930s and became one of the most successful American songwriters of his generation, owner of his own publishing company and author of standards such as "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" and "Peace In The Valley." The Soul Stirrers' contemporaries like the Golden Gate Quartet, the Swan Silvertones, and Mahalia Jackson were highly successful by almost any standard of the recording industry. The notion that African American religious music was divorced from the commercial market had been false since at least the late 19th century, when performers such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University achieved considerable success for their fledgling university by performing arranged spirituals on concert stages for paying audiences.[39]

Still, the idea of religious music as being the "purest" form of black musical expression has deep roots: W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke are just a few of the more famous African American intellectuals who claimed the Spirituals as the pinnacle of black art in the United States during the early 20th Century, with Johnson

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[38] All *Billboard* chart information is derived from Joel Whitburn's *Billboard Top Pop Singles: 1955-1999* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2000).

[39] See Sandra Graham, "The Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Concert Spiritual," (Ph.D Diss., New York University, 2001). Anthony Heilbut's *The Gospel Sound* remains a classic study of African American gospel music. Jerma Jackson's *Singing In My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 2004) and Bernice Johnson Reagon's *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001) are more recent. On Thomas Dorsey, see Michael W. Harris, *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

describing them as "a record and a revelation of the deeper thoughts and experiences of the Negro in this country," Locke as "[t]he most characteristic product of the race genius as yet in America," and Du Bois, perhaps most memorably, as "the most beautiful expression of human experience, born this side of the seas… the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people."[40] Much more recently, musicologist Ronald Radano has argued that this legacy stretches back even farther, to the early writings of white "collectors" of the Spirituals, and that by building an intellectual edifice of black religious music as a source of unknowable expressive riches, white collectors were actually inscribing ideologies of racial difference. Radano writes that "in images at once Godlike and heathen, the slave songs represented the height of spiritual perfection… References to the slave songs as spirituals epitomized the new alignment of blackness and the sacred."[41]

The authenticity claims for black religious music also speak to a broader tendency noted by Karl Hagstrom Miller in his study of racial ideologies in the emergence of the folk music industry during the early 20th-century: namely, the urge for critics and historians to analyze and describe black music-making in terms that are inherently *collective*.[42] This has extended to both musicological and non-musicological contexts, in which the call-and-response dynamic, the "ring shout," and jazz-derived metaphors of collective interaction have been influential in discussions of African American music and culture more generally.[43]

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[40] James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson, *The Books of the Negro Spirituals* (Boston: Da Capo, 2002), 12; Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 199; W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), 178.

[41] Ronald Radano, "Denoting Difference: The Writing of the Slave Spirituals," *Critical Inquiry* 22:3 (Spring 1996), 519.

[42] See Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 73-74.

[43] Craig Werner's *A Change is Gonna Come* and Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr.'s *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) both employ the call-and-response framework to considerable success; Samuel A. Floyd Jr.'s *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) offers the ring shout as meta-theory for African American music; Robert O'Meally's edited collection *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), as its title

While undeniably useful, and often correct—there is no doubt that forms such as the ring shout and tropes such as call-and-response are fundamental elements of the African American musical tradition—Miller points out that the abundance of metaphors about music-making as a "collective" experience "has a tendency to trap individuals within a racial collectivity, naturalizing music as an outgrowth of one's life rather than a cultivated talent and obscuring the meaning and uses of art that falls outside of racially defined cultural borders."[44] In other words, the practice of individuals and a diversity of ambitions and performance styles become subordinated to an individual's position within a group and the imagined obligations within that group, as a specific musical group becomes metaphorically expanded into a far broader racial group.

When Sam Cooke departed gospel for pop this notion of collective obligation was violated, and in a way that also ran afoul of beliefs that the most "authentic" black music was that which was farthest from the (white) market. Gospel finding its way into the secular mainstream was, of course, by no means unprecedented before Cooke. In 1954, Ray Charles broke into stardom with a song called "I Got a Woman," which hit Number One on the *Billboard* R&B charts, opening the door for Charles to become one of the most successful recording artists of the Twentieth Century. "I Got a Woman" was essentially a secular rewrite of the hymn "It Must Be Jesus," one that anyone familiar with the Golden Tones' recording of the hymn that same year would have recognized, and many would have undoubtedly found blasphemous. Charles, however, had not previously been identified as a gospel star, and had been in the business of making secular music his entire adult life—whatever blasphemy he may have committed, he could not be made an apostate.

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suggests, presents jazz music as a metaphorical lens through which to understand large portions of American culture more generally.

[44] Miller, 74.

Furthermore, "I Got a Woman" did not cross over from *Billboard*'s black music chart to its white one, as "You Send Me" did, meaning that Cooke's transgression could be construed as not merely a religious treason but a racial one.

The presumed authenticity of black religious music, and that presumption's connection to an overarching constellation of ideas about anticommercialism, collectivity, and racial authenticity, is crucial to understanding the dynamics of Sam Cooke's transition from gospel to pop, both in the context of Cooke's initial crossover and in the discourse surrounding it since. With the success of "You Send Me," Cooke seized upon the lucrative potential of a mixed-race teenaged audience by writing and recording hits such as "Only Sixteen" and "Wonderful World" (both 1959). The singer also started to assume increasing control over his own destiny as both a performer and a businessman, and in 1959 Cooke and an associate, J.W. Alexander, founded SAR Records, which would go on to record a wide array of pop and gospel acts, including Cooke's own former group, the Soul Stirrers, and would remain active until Cooke's passing.[45] Later that same year Cooke left Keen and signed a deal with RCA, who would now record and release Cooke's own material while also handling distribution for SAR.

Cooke's songwriting was beginning to change as well, showing an increasing interest in social concerns. In 1960, he wrote the song "Chain Gang," stemming from an encounter that Cooke and his brother Charles had with a prison work crew while traveling in the South. While not an explicitly political piece of music, with its emphasis on hardship, pain and uncertainty, "Chain Gang" contained a deeper severity than any pop material that Cooke had written previously. Despite its bleak subject matter—the song is a lament sung by a prisoner, pining for his "baby" while the other prisoners "moan their lives away"—the song

[45] SAR was an acronym for Sam, Alex (Alexander's nickname) and Roy (S.R. Crain, who was an initial partner but amicably relinquished his responsibilities in 1960).

reached number two on the Pop charts and became Cooke's biggest hit since "You Send Me."

Entering the early 1960s, Cooke's career was a study in versatility. He was a successful pop idol and gospel producer, a man who could perform before mainstream America on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and a predominantly black audience at the Town Hill Club in Brooklyn. He had emerged as a study in musical cosmopolitanism, his talent and breadth of interests led him to challenge numerous musical and cultural borders, implicitly and explicitly. He became a musical leader, helping other musicians that were attempting to transition from sacred to secular music, or from R&B to Pop. In 1961, Cooke went on tour with the daughter of his friend the Reverend C.L. Franklin, a shy nineteen-year-old named Aretha, who later recalled "deeply appreciated Sam's friendship" and the inspiration she derived from knowing that "[i]f Sam could make it, perhaps I could too."[46]

On April 26, 1962, Cooke went into a Los Angeles recording studio to record "Bring It On Home To Me," a new composition credited to Cooke that was actually a loose rewrite of his friend Charles Brown's "I Wanna Go Home." "Bring It On Home To Me" is a fascinating moment in Cooke's musical development. Performed as a duet with backup singer Lou Rawls, Cooke and Rawls sing the entire song in tandem, with Rawls providing gruff baritone harmony to Cooke's lead. The song's refrain—"Bring it to me, bring your sweet loving / Bring it on home to me"—is followed by a call-and-response pattern, with Cooke singing a simple "yeah" and Rawls, J.W. Alexander and associate Fred Smith echoing the word. From a performance standpoint "Bring It On Home" was strikingly reminiscent of Cooke's work with the Soul Stirrers, and perhaps the most overtly gospel-influenced recordings of his pop career to date.

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[46] Aretha Franklin and David Ritz, *Aretha: From These Roots* (New York: Villard, 1999), 77-78.

But the song's lyrics indicate an aesthetic engagement with another contemporary musical happening, one with strong ties to the ongoing civil rights movement, namely the folk revival of the early 1960s. The final couplet of "Bring It On Home To Me," "You know I'll always be your slave / Until I'm buried, buried in my grave," is a reference to the 19th century anti-slavery song "Oh Freedom!" the refrain of which contains the line, "and before I'd be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave." In 1956, African American folksinger Odetta had recorded "Oh, Freedom!" on her debut album, *Odetta Sings Blues and Ballads*, and by the early 1960s the song had become a staple of the folk revival and the civil rights movement. In August of 1963 Joan Baez performed "Oh Freedom" at the March on Washington, an event that also featured a young Bob Dylan, who only a few years prior had quit his high school rock and roll band to take up folk music after hearing *Odetta Sings Blues and Ballads*.[47] That same day, hundreds of thousands of marchers were also treated to Peter Paul and Mary's rendition of Dylan's "Blowin' In the Wind," the song that would soon inspire what is widely considered Cooke's masterpiece, "A Change is Gonna Come."

Liveness, Politics and "A Change Is Gonna Come"

In January of 1963 Sam Cooke recorded a live performance for RCA at Miami's predominantly black Harlem Square Club, intended for release under the somewhat salacious title *One Night Stand*.[48] Eighteen months later, in July of 1964, Cooke recorded another live performance at New York's prestigious (and predominantly white) Copacabana night club, released later that year under the title *Live at the Copa*. *Live at the Harlem Square Club* and *Live at the Copa* are the two most well-preserved and comprehensive documents of Sam Cooke's

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[47] As Dylan told *Playboy* magazine interviewer Ron Rosenbaum in 1978, "The first thing that turned me on to folk singing was Odetta;" he then goes on to list "Miule Skinner," "Jack of Diamonds," and other songs on *Sings Blues and Ballads*. In *Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews,* ed. Jonathan Cott (New York: Wenner Books, 2006), 204. Odetta, *Odetta Sings Blues and Ballads,* Tradition TLP 1010, 1956, 33rpm.

[48] The album was in fact never released until 1985, when it was released under the title *Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963*.

live performances in the 1960s, and the two recordings are a fascinating study in contrasts and versatility. *Harlem Square Club* finds Cooke performing in full gospel fury, inciting the crowd to a frenzy and racking his voice to the edge of oblivion. *Live at the Copa*, on the other hand, is debonair and refined: after having notoriously bombed at the nightclub as a callow teen idol in 1958, Cooke was intent on proving himself to a new audience. "You know these old cats," he told an interviewer before the show, "they don't go out much. A lot of them are lonely. They *need* records. They need them worse than anybody. I'm going to sell them."[49]

The choice of repertoire on *Live at the Harlem Square Club* and *Live at the Copacabana* is quite different, perhaps unsurprising given the demographics of each venue, and it is in the space of this difference we hear the formation of the aesthetic that would birth "A Change Is Gonna Come." In the Square Club recording, Cooke mostly performs his own material in a set heavy with contemporary hits such as "Chain Gang," "Cupid" and "Bring It On Home To Me," while the Copa set is primarily made up of standards. An instructive contrast between the two performances can be heard in the difference between the renditions of "You Send Me," which on the Square Club recording lasts only a moment, as a quick tease during a lengthy introduction to "Bring It On Home To Me." The Square Club "You Send Me" features dramatic stop-time accompaniment from the band while Cooke weaves a half-sung, half-spoken narrative about the collapse of a relationship and his desire to get his "baby" back. Cooke works the crowd with precision, inviting and acknowledging their interjections and addressing his audience as "children," a secularized rendition of the gospel practice of "testifying." Cooke goes on to describe a phone call between him and his baby which leads to the payoff line, the instantly-recognizable "Darling, You Send Me" refrain,

[49] Robert Alden, "Sam Cooke at the Copa," *New York Times* 7 Jul. 1964, 27.

released to a bevy of shrieks. Cooke's vocal here is singed with urgency and, the "oh" that precedes the ubiquitous "you send me" refrain on the original recording is elongated into an anguished cry, while the "you" cascades melismatically, dripping with meaning. He repeats the refrain three times, then goes into two repetitions of his famous "whoa-oh-oh-oh" yodel—separated by a devious and playful laugh—finally landing on the long-anticipated "honest you do," at which point the band breaks into "Bring It On Home To Me."[50]

Cooke's performance of "You Send Me" at the Copa is markedly different. Cooke performs the song as part of a medley, alongside the standards "Try a Little Tenderness" and "For Sentimental Reasons," and gone is the testifying and stop-time arrangement from the Square Club. Cooke's vocal at the Copa is not furious and ravaged, but subtle and mellifluous. He toys with his phrasing, makes playful asides to his audience, and while the churlish laughter from the Square Club performance is heard here as well, it sounds more charming than lustful. The arrangement is lush and refined: as opposed to the small group heard on the Square Club recording, the Copa performance has full horns, a gently swinging rhythm section and a light electric guitar playing fills and flourishes. By the close of the performance, his Copa crowd is won, and Cooke's return to the club proved triumphant: "He has dignity, humility and feeling to go with a strong voice," wrote the *New York Times,* tempering its own praise with some well-worn racist platitudes.[51]

While it is tempting to hear Cooke's fiery performance before the black audience in Miami as more "authentic" than his more subdued performance on the Copa stage, a closer listen hears Cooke using his own versatility to disrupt various dichotomies and constraints. The Square Club recording finds Cooke overtly applying gospel performance practices to secular and outwardly lustful material, a thrilling transgression that is manifested both in the

[50] Sam Cooke, *Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963,* RCA PCD1-5181, 1985, CD.
[51] Alden, 27. Sam Cooke, *Sam Cooke at the Copa,* RCA LPM/LSP-2970, 1964, 33rpm.

ferocity of his performance and the titillation of the audience's response. On the other hand, the Copa performance finds a young, black pop star playing before an upper-class, white and relatively conservative audience, winning them over on his own terms.

Cooke's performance at the Copa features another component that resists arguments that Cooke "continued to tiptoe around the sensibilities of his mainstream white audience," as one writer claims: an upbeat and swinging cover of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind."[52] The inclusion of Dylan's civil rights anthem is not merely an unusual song choice in a set largely made up of standards, but it is also a clear political gesture from Cooke, who by the time of the Copa recording had grown increasingly engaged with the civil rights movement. In late 1963, Cooke had been arrested in Shreveport, Louisiana for refusing to leave a hotel that would not allow him and his wife to register, and by 1964 he had established a friendship with Malcolm X, whom he had met through mutual friend Cassius Clay.

Cooke's decision to bring "Blowin' In The Wind" to the crowd at the Copa was both politically and culturally transgressive. While many in his audience surely knew the song—likely through Peter, Paul and Mary's hit version, which had sold two million copies in the summer of 1963—in mid-1964 Bob Dylan was still seen as a subcultural figure in American life, poet-troubadour to a rising New Left whose behavior and artistic persona was viewed by many as overly radical. Already the object of media fascination, Dylan was assuredly famous, but his music was perceived as oppositional to conventional American society, and many of his most publicized moments reflected this, such as his ban from television's *Ed Sullivan Show* for refusing to remove the satirical "Talking John Birch Society Blues" from his act in 1963.[53] Although he was African American and Dylan was white, Cooke still had entry

[52] Ward, 291.
[53] Val Adams, "Satire on Birch Society Barred from Ed Sullivan's TV Show," *The New York Times* 14 May 1963, 61.

into levels of "establishment" America that the young folksinger did not, as the Copa engagement illustrates, and his decision to introduce one of the young songwriter's most politically-charged compositions into this context is a significant one.

"Blowin' In The Wind" had a profound impact on Sam Cooke and was a primary inspiration for what is arguably his most famous composition, "A Change Is Gonna Come." Cooke biographer Daniel Wolff has also written that partial inspiration for "A Change Is Gonna Come" came from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, while Cooke's fellow Soul Stirrer S.R. Crain claimed that the song was rooted in Cooke's gospel past: "If you ever listen to a Soul Stirrer Song, you'd recognize it."[54] By the time Cooke recorded "A Change Is Gonna Come" in January 1964, the song was a melding of the divergent styles heard on *Harlem Square Club* and *Copa* recordings, a striking blend of sacred and secular, pop and protest, elegance and urgency.

"A Change Is Gonna Come" opens with a bombastic orchestral introduction, replete with strings, tympani, and a mournful French horn that leads into Cooke's vocal. On the song's opening couplet, "I was born by the river, in a little tent," Cooke's voice soars to a high B-flat on the word "born," then drops the final "r" on the word "river," a clearly deliberate move from a singer who prided himself on diction. "Oh, and just like the river, I've been running ever since," completes the first verse, and we hear the song's refrain: "It's been a long time coming, but I know / a change gonna come." While the musical arrangement and backdrop—strings, lush horns, and a drummer playing brushes—resembles the Copacabana far more than the Harlem Square Club, Cooke's vocal draws from the gospel tradition while his lyrical text culls its imagery from spirituals. The song's third verse is its most explicitly and immediately political—"I go to the movies, and I go downtown /

[54] Wolff, 291.

somebody keeps telling me, don't hang around"—while the bridge is despairing and angry: "I go to my brother / and I say brother, help me please / But he winds up knocking me / Back down on my knees." Harmonically, the song" chord changes weave between major and minor, its refrain featuring a G-minor chord on the line "A Change Gonna Come" that resolves to B-flat major on the final affirmation, "Oh yes it will."

The grandeur of "A Change Is Gonna Come" is stylistically inverse to the stripped directness of "Blowin' In The Wind" as it appears on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.* If one listens closely, however, one can hear "Blowin' In The Wind" in "A Change Is Gonna Come." The spiritual-inflected cadences of "Change" derive from the same tradition as "Blowin' In The Wind," the melody of which Dylan had adapted from the 19th-century slave song "No More Auction Block," which will be further discussed shortly. "I was born by the river, in a little tent / and like that river I've been runnin' ever since" contains the same pastoralism as the roads, mountains and doves of "Blowin' In The Wind," and both songs include ruminations on death. "It's been too hard livin, but I'm afraid to die / cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky" is the second-verse couplet of "Change," the doubt expressed toward the existence of God imbuing the song with immediacy. "Blowin' In The Wind"'s closing verse opens with the question, "How many times must a man look up / before he can see the sky?" and ends asking "How many deaths will it take till he knows / That too many people have died?"

"A Change Is Gonna Come" can be heard as an emphatic response to the questions of "Blowin' In The Wind," which unfolds as a litany of interrogatives answered by the refrain, "The answer, my friend / is blowin' in the wind." "A Change Is Gonna Come" asks no questions, and instead is a series of declarative statements. Moreover, "A Change Is Gonna Come" corrects the sense of indeterminacy invoked by "Blowin' In The Wind"'s

refrain, declaring that, in fact, a change *is* going to come. While "Blowin' In The Wind" exists in a pre-modern bucolic folk landscape, Cooke invokes modern imagery of material deprivation through his explicit mention of being turned away from stores and movie theaters. Here racism and segregation are not only questions of existential morality but also of real, lived disadvantage.

In January of 1964 Ralph Ellison gave a lecture at the Library of Congress in which he discussed the power of "technique" in the practice of writing, arguing that the process of mastering a form allows artists to forge an identity and self that transcends boundaries of racial category. "Techniques," declares Ellison

> are not a mere set of objective tools, but something much more intimate: a way of feeling, of seeing and of expressing one's sense of life. And the process of *acquiring* technique is a process of modifying one's responses, of learning to see and feel, to hear and observe, to evoke and evaluate the images of memory and of summoning up and directing the imagination… perhaps the writer's greatest freedom, as artist, lies precisely in his possession of technique... it is *technique* which transforms the individual before he is able in turn to transform it.[55]

"A Change Is Gonna Come" is a triumph of technique, and a tribute to its potential freedoms. Cooke marshals a wide array of musical and lyrical devices in a statement of artistic liberation and racial justice, which is in turn direct product of Cooke's ongoing project of expanding notions of what black music could or should be. "A Change Is Gonna Come" is an ambitious and audacious piece of music, an orchestral "answer record" from one of the most powerful black entertainers in America to a young white folk singer, one that stretches from the gospel circuit to the bright lights of Los Angeles, from the Shrine Concert to the Copacabana. Cooke's vision of black music, as evidenced in "Change," held race as a basis for political struggle rather than a basis for predetermined aesthetic criteria, in

[55] Ellison, 162-163

which the notion that skin color was correlated to the content of one's character, musical or otherwise, was to be resisted rather than enforced.

To suggest that "A Change Is Gonna Come" exceeds "Blowin' In The Wind" in political immediacy isn't to diminish the latter. Dylan wrote the song when he was twenty years old, and by the time Sam Cooke recorded his revision, Dylan was already wary of the extent to which the song had come to define him. Like Cooke, Dylan would take the increasing pressures he was facing—both interior and exterior—and emerge with a piece of music that would alter the trajectory of rock and roll music, "Like a Rolling Stone," one that Cooke would not live to hear.

Also like Cooke, "Like a Rolling Stone" would place Bob Dylan at the center of a emergent genre discourse that he would in many senses come to embody, that of "folk rock" and then simply "rock" music, although one that did not openly concern itself with discussions of racial authenticity or collective purity. Rather, rock music came to imagine its ideal of creativity in fiercely individualist terms, as a matter of personal identity transcendence that could hardly be more opposed to the collectivist ideas of black musical authenticity discussed above. In doing so, rock music constructed an ideology of authenticity that was based on a notion of heroic genius and resistant rebellion that rendered its racial qualifications implicit rather than explicit.

By adopting its individualist ethos, rock ideology was able to deny outwardly race's salience, even proclaim its own affinity for and indebtedness to black musical forms, while constructing an expressive ideal increasingly defined by an exclusionary white masculinism. And through no real fault of his own, the figure who enabled this was Bob Dylan, an artist whose legendary "break" from folk to rock and roll was far more of a connective move than both communities would ever be inclined to admit.

"It Matters Less Where He Has Been than Where He Is Going": The Folk Revival and the Making of Bob Dylan

The famed ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger once remarked that "the folk song is, by definition, and, as far we can tell, by reality, entirely a product of plagiarism."[56] It's fitting, then that according to Dylan historian John Bauldie it was Seeger's son, the eminent folk revivalist Pete Seeger, who first pointed out that the melody to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind" was lifted from the 19th-century spiritual "No More Auction Block." [57] Dylan never made a studio recording of "No More Auction Block" but buried amidst the marginalia on the first disc of the 1991 compilation *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1* is a 1962 recording of a twenty-one-year-old Dylan performing the song at a Greenwich Village coffee shop called the Gaslight, a performance whose affective gravity is matched only by its strangeness.

Dylan accompanies himself on acoustic guitar, his instrumental backdrop marked by sparse, single-string melodic figures cushioned by chorded thirty-second-note tremolos. The vocal performance carries an affected agedness, a boyish voice rendered world-weary, occasionally venturing to intone the repeated "no more, no more" with a clipped melisma. The song's famous "many thousands gone" refrain is carefully elongated, its severity and sorrow palpable. On the recording Dylan is only a few years younger than Sam Cooke was when he sang "Nearer To Thee" at the Shrine Concert, and while Dylan lacks the soaring virtuosity of Cooke's performance his precocity is just as remarkable, his sense of time and phrasing already well-formed. As opposed to the frenzied ecstasy of the Shrine Concert, at the Gaslight there is little crowd noise audible, as the audience hangs raptly on the young singer's every word.

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[56] Qtd. in Keith Negus, *Bob Dylan* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), 95.
[57] John Bauldie, liner notes to Bob Dylan, *Bootleg Series, Vol. 1-3,* Columbia C3K-47382, 1991, CD.

Of course, there is something uncanny in hearing a young white Minnesotan intone a song explicitly about the horrors of chattel slavery, replete with imagery of pints of salt and drivers' lashes, all rendered in the first person. Dylan's performance is remarkably powerful, but precisely what inspires and enables this power begs a number of difficult questions. Is the imaginative elision of an angst-ridden white identity with the historical reality of black slavery, even in such a serious context, simply another iteration of the reach of blackface minstrelsy? Is the solemnity of this performance, and the audience's response to it, a remnant of what Radano identifies as white inscription of unknowable difference, attendant to the history of writing and rewriting slave spirituals?[58] Or does an intercultural re-contextualization of this material for a progressive political project represent a harnessing of black music by white performers to a different end, where the envisioned utopia is not the racial subjugation of minstrelsy but rather a world of integrated equality?

The underlying tension of these questions speaks to the strange mix of history, nostalgia and racial ideology that permeated the late-1950s and 1960s folk revival, a musical movement that sought to reconcile a nostalgic American populism to a progressive political ideology of redistribution, Cold War demilitarization, and desegregation. Like all folk revivals, it was necessarily and explicitly derived from historical lineage but it was also unique to its own time, and the revival that produced Dylan's performance of "No More Auction Block" carried its own unique set of artistic stakes and political motivations.

In the remainder of this chapter I will argue that the racial imagination of the folk revival is the clearest intellectual and ideological antecedent to the racial imagination of rock music that took shape in the 1960s and has extended far past it. I will then also argue that the vision of black music that permeated the folk revival and was transferred to white rock

[58] The song's lyrics first appeared in print under the title "Many Thousands Go" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 19 (June 1867), 692.

music is strikingly similar, if not even identical, to that which haunts discussions of Sam Cooke.

A key vessel through which this transference took place was Bob Dylan. It was through Dylan that the mass culture of rock and roll was able to selectively appropriate certain philosophies of a musical culture—the early 1960s folk revival—whose anticommercialism and antimodernism were seemingly antithetical, if not outwardly antagonistic, toward it. Dylan's departure from folk music has been marked by writers as alternately the "end" of the folk revival and the "beginning" of serious rock music, his legendarily controversial performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival and subsequent release of "Like a Rolling Stone" being the generally agreed-upon turning points. Much in the way that Sam Cooke fled gospel for the world of pop, helping to create the genre of soul music through his sacrilege and sacrifice, Dylan has carried the burden of genre formation and musical epoch-making in rock music upon his shoulders since the mid-1960s.

Critic Lee Marshall has argued that "the gravitas Dylan attained from being a 'serious' folk artist is important for the ideology of rock," and Simon Frith has argued that Dylan's move from folk to rock and roll gave rock ideology its first legitimate "individual genius" figure.[59] I would go further and argue that Dylan brought to rock and roll music a racial imagination, specifically a way of thinking about African American music, nearly identical to that espoused by the folk revival. It was an imagination rooted in deep historical fantasies about the purity and power of black performance that had adapted itself to various historical circumstances, as it would again in its transfer from the folk revival to rock and roll music.

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[59] Lee Marshall, "Bob Dylan and the Academy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan,* 105. Simon Frith, *The Sociology of Rock* (London: Constable, 1978), 186.

The details of Bob Dylan's biography have been recounted exhaustively and with such frequency elsewhere that they require only nominal retelling here.[60] Born Robert Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, the first of Abraham and Beatrice Zimmerman's two sons, on May 24, 1941, his family moved seventy-five miles northwest to the town of Hibbing in 1947, where Dylan would spend the remainder of his childhood and adolescence. By his own account the young Dylan was a musical sponge: in his 2004 memoir, in the same discussion of his first exposure to the folk songs of the Kingston Trio and Brothers Four, Dylan writes effusively of Roy Orbison, who "transcended all the genres—folk, country, rock and roll or just about anything. His stuff mixed all the styles and some that hadn't even been invented yet. He could sound mean and nasty on one line and then sing in a falsetto voice like Frankie Valli in the next."[61] Zimmerman joined his first rock and roll band at the age of fourteen, first playing rhythm guitar but soon switching to piano and vocals. As one of his former bandmates recalled, "It was Bob being pretty much of a personality. He was Little Richard, with rhythm in the background. This was strictly Little Richard."[62]

Indeed, one of the most formative musical influence on Dylan's teenaged years in Minnesota was Little Richard, label-mate to Sam Cooke at Specialty, who had burst into stardom in 1955 and then abruptly abandoned rock and roll in a fit of religious guilt only two years later. The period from 1955-1957 during which Little Richard first unleashed his ferocious brand of music on the American public was extraordinarily significant for Dylan, who briefly played piano professionally in Bobby Vee's band in 1959.[63] Dylan's 1959 Hibbing High School yearbook listed the senior's ambition as simply "to join the band of

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[60] There are many biographies of Bob Dylan: three of the more thorough are Robert Shelton's *No Direction Home,* Bob Spitz's *Bob Dylan* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989) and Paul Williams' three-volume study *Bob Dylan: Performing Artist* (Vol. 1 Novato, CA: Underwood-Miller, 1990; Vols. 2 and 3 New York: Omnibus, 1994 and 2004, respectively).
[61] Bob Dylan, *Chronicles, Vol. 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004). 33.
[62] Anthony Scaduto, *Bob Dylan* (New York: New American Library, 1973), 11.
[63] Dylan, 80.

Little Richard."[64] In a 1961 interview conducted in advance of his first album, Dylan informed a Columbia Records publicist that "I used to play great, great piano. Very great—I used to play the piano like Little Richard style…. You ever heard Little Richard? Ah, Little Richard, he was something else."[65]

Dylan's turn away from the piano was occasioned by his burgeoning interest in folk music, which took shape while living in Minneapolis, where he briefly enrolled at the University of Minnesota before dropping out after a semester. Minneapolis had a vibrant folk scene, and it was here that Bobby Zimmerman began calling himself Bob Dylan and became increasingly drawn to the music of Woody Guthrie. Dylan's fascination with Guthrie would largely be his motivation for leaving Minneapolis for New York City in January of 1961, as he had learned Guthrie was slowly dying of Huntington's Disease in Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital in Morristown, New Jersey.

Dylan's time as an obscure folksinger in Greenwich Village was strikingly brief; on September 29, 1961 he was the subject of an article in the *New York Times* by folk critic Robert Shelton entitled "Bob Dylan: A Distinctive Folk-Song Stylist." Describing Dylan as a "cross between a choir boy and a beatnik" and conceding that "Mr. Dylan's voice is anything but pretty,' Shelton ended his review with one of the more insightful predictions in the annals of music criticism:

> But if not for every taste, his music-making has the mark of originality and inspiration, all the more noteworthy for his youth. Mr. Dylan is vague about his antecedents and birthplace, but it matters less where he has been than where he is going, and that would seem to be straight up.[66]

Dylan attracted the attention of legendary Columbia Records talent scout John Hammond, who signed him the following month. Hammond had previously been

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[64] Shelton, 38.
[65] Williams, 38.
[66] Robert Shelton, "Bob Dylan: A Distinctive Folk-Song Stylist" *New York Times* 29 Sept. 1961, 31.

responsible for "discovering" or otherwise advancing the careers of Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, and Robert Johnson, and the year before signing Dylan he'd signed an 18-year-old Aretha Franklin. Dylan's eponymous first album was recorded over two days in November of 1961 and released in March of 1962, and although the album failed to chart or sell particularly well, between his youth, talent and the publicity behind him Dylan was poised to break through.[67] His folk stardom would become full-fledged the next year with the release of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* in March of 1963 and the enormous success of Peter, Paul and Mary's cover of "Blowin' In The Wind" later that summer.

Dylan's trajectory from Minnesota obscurity to national folk star unfolded remarkably rapidly, nearly as rapidly as Sam Cooke's rise from Chicago High School student to national gospel star. In the early 1960s there was considerable money to be made in folksong, and Dylan had the commercial folk "craze" of the late 1950s and early 1960s to thank for Columbia's almost instantaneous interest in him and probably for his own exposure to folk music in the first place, as his recollections of hearing the Kingston Trio on the radio would indicate.[68] The commercial folk craze was an offshoot of a larger folk revival of the same period; as Neil Rosenberg points out, the folk revival was both fiercely anti-commercial and anti-capitalist and also blatantly enabled by the entirely commercial and capitalist recording industry, with its more successful performers, from the Kingston Trio to Dylan himself, finding it a lucrative vocation.[69] The Kingston Trio sold more than three million copies of the single "Tom Dooley" in 1958 and made the cover of *Life* magazine, Harry Belafonte was a fixture on the *Billboard* charts, and young Joan Baez's debut album

[67] Bob Dylan, *Bob Dylan,* Columbia 62022, 1962, 33rpm.
[68] See Dylan, 32-33.
[69] Neil Rosenberg, "Introduction," in Neil Rosenberg, ed., *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 8.

reached the Top Ten in 1960. Folk music was big business, and the revival at large was unmistakably implicated in this.

In folklorist David Evans's formulation, also adopted by Robert Cantwell as well, the folk revival of the late 1950s that stretched long into the twentieth century was in fact the fourth "stage" of a broader twentieth-century fascination with folk music.[70] According to Evans, the first stage of this was the early-20th century interest in folk music that led to concert-hall performances of "folk" music and the rise of folk forms as an object of academic study. The second stage was the Popular Front era of the 1930s and 1940s that saw performers such as Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Josh White using folk music as a tool for social critique and protest. The third stage came with the post-war "reissues" of the 1950s, most famously in the form of Harry Smith's Folkways *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952), the widespread appeal of which begot the fourth stage, which found young Americans, inspired by the Smith anthology and other recordings, reviving the actual practice of folksong for themselves.

A constant throughout all four stages of the 20th century folk revival was an abiding concern with authenticity, the specific stakes and criteria of which fluctuated, but the existence and centrality of which was taken for granted. The hermetic authenticity claims of folk revivals and other folkloric movements are generally problematic: as Robin D.G. Kelley argues, "the boundaries erected around 'folk' culture are as socially constructed and contingent and permeable as the dividing line between high and low or, for that matter, black and white."[71] Furthermore, Karl Hagstrom Miller's recent work on both the business and study of folk music in the early part of the twentieth century has shown that the

[70] See David Allen Evans, "Folk Revival Music," record review, *Journal of American Folklore* 92 (1979), 110-111. Also Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996), 34.
[71] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Notes on Deconstructing the Folk," *American Historical Review* 97:5 (Dec. 1992), 1403.

supposed purity of folk music was far more central to the recording industry and revivalists than it was to the music's actual practitioners. Miller argues that much of the early-20th-century thinking on the nature of white and black folk culture derived from the openly inauthentic practice of minstrelsy: "The folkloric paradigm ascended, in part, by inheriting and perpetuating some of the qualities of minstrel authenticity: folklorists invested minstrel and hillbilly stereotypes with scientific authority."[72]

Some of the foremost chroniclers and collectors of folk music brought such strong preconceptions and agendas to their ostensibly preservationist project that they were essentially inventing the musical spheres that they believed to be preserving. Miller reproduces a fascinating 1940 exchange between John Lomax and Blind Willie McTell in which Lomax asks McTell to play "complaining songs, complaining about the hard times and sometimes mistreatment of the whites." McTell responds that he does not know any such songs, but Lomax persists, asking him to play a song called "Ain't it Hard to be a Nigger, Nigger." McTell again says he doesn't know the song; Lomax then observes that McTell seems "uncomfortable."[73] Such an exchange demonstrates the ways that John Lomax, one of the most influential folklorists of the Twentieth Century, brought his own expectations to bear on McTell's music, and that what Lomax assumes to be "authentic" to McTell's musical journey is more fantasy of Lomax than lived reality of McTell.[74]

Nonetheless, every stage of the 20th century folk revival took the authenticity of its music as central, and the fourth stage was no exception to this, although its authenticity ideals were perhaps the most complicated. A crucial distinction between the third and fourth stages of the revival was the reclamation of a left-political ideology for American

[72] Miller, 6.
[73] Ibid., 80.
[74] Cantwell, 75.

folksong; in the context of the 1950s Folkways reissues the leftist associations of the 1930s folk enthusiasm had to be downplayed in the environment of McCarthyism and the Red Scare. The revival of the late 1950s and early 1960s resuscitated the notion of folksong as a political tool, and as Ronald Cohen's history of the revival has shown, while the political ideology of the late 1950s revival was characterized by a pro-peace, anti-military stance, by the early 1960s concerns over the bomb were being supplanted by a growing interest in the Southern struggle of the civil rights movement.[75]

The revival of the late 1950s and early 1960s was largely clustered around colleges, undoubtedly helped along by an unprecedented number of post-War students who now had the means and proclivity to pursue higher education. Much like the early stages of the New Left—many of whose progenitors were folk enthusiasts themselves—the folk revival of this period was largely a product of middle-class, educated, young white people, the Woody Guthries and Leadbellys replaced by Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, both of whom had grown up in relative comfort, particularly Baez, whose father was a prominent physicist. The youthful adherents of the fourth-stage revival couldn't claim the lived "folk" hardship of past heroes, so instead embraced a more personal and flexible notion of authenticity, a curious mixture of metaphysical vagueness, exhaustive study and a profound veneration of forebears such as Guthrie, Leadbelly, and perhaps most significantly, Pete Seeger.

A figure of boundless energy and enthusiasm, Seeger was both an elder-statesman figure to the fourth-stage folk revival—he'd begun his career squarely in the second stage—and a key participant in it. In her study of the British folk revival of roughly the same period, historian Georgina Boyes has noted that "[a] revival is inherently both revolutionary and conservative. It simultaneously comprehends a demand for a change in an existing

[75] See Ronald Cohen, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940-1970* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), esp. 183-191.

situation and a requirement of reversion to an older form."[76] Seeger himself embodied these contradictions. A Harvard-educated Northeasterner who would freely affect down-home grammatical inaccuracies into his speech, an unabashed political progressive who refused to plead the fifth amendment or name names when called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1955, a stance that led to a contempt-of-court conviction and blacklisting. Artistically, he was a fiercely protective conservationist: the story of his threats to take an axe to Bob Dylan's electric cables at Newport in 1965 is legendary (Seeger later denied making the threats, but continued to express rage at Dylan's performance).[77]

Seeger exerted considerable intellectual and ideological influence on the fourth-stage folk revival. He was extraordinarily generous to the younger revivalists, encouraging their music and serving as a living example that musical expression and personal politics could intertwine even when the folksinger hadn't emerged from a dust bowl homestead or sharecropper's shack. Seeger's rhetoric was that of self-making and rebirth, and the suggestion that the authenticity inherent to folksinging was a volunteerist proposition rather than a strictly socioeconomic one held tremendous appeal to young revivalists. In an article penned for *Sing Out!* in 1964, Seeger wrote of folksinger Ramblin' Jack Elliott (born Elliot Adnopoz in Brooklyn, New York) was a "fake":

> Jack Elliott is a self-made man…. When some people find that Jack Elliott was born in Brooklyn—he with his cowboy hat and boots, rough lingo and expert guitar playing—their first reaction is, "Oh, he's a fake." They're dead wrong. Jack reborned himself "in Oklahoma." He didn't just learn some new songs, but he changed his whole way of living.[78]

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[76] Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (New York: Manchester UP, 1993), 3.

[77] Cohen, 236. According to Paul Rothchild, Elektra records producer for the Paul Butterfield Blues Band (also at Newport), "We were just getting the music up there to where it was exciting and here comes Pete again; here we are two diminutive guys, Pete Seeger towering over us by a foot, easily, just screaming and threatening…. Peter Yarrow [of Peter, Paul and Mary] said, Pete get away from here or I'll fucking kill ya. And Pete turned on his heel and left."

[78] Pete Seeger, "Johnny Appleseed, Jr.," *Sing Out!,* February-March 1964, 71. Also qtd. in Cantwell, 329.

This is passage is notable in the way that Seeger so forcefully articulates an alternative idea of musical and cultural authenticity, one rooted at the level of the personal rather than the social or historical. Jack Elliott's self-invention becomes evidence of his authenticity, and there's no bright line between playing a role and becoming a role. The phrase "Jack reborned himself 'in Oklahoma'" is particularly striking for its affected grammar: the intermingling of performance and identity here is so twisting it's almost indecipherable where one begins and the other ends.

The folk revival also boasted a fierce disdain for commercialism, and rock and roll music was a frequent target of its scorn; in 1959, Alan Lomax organized a concert at Carnegie Hall called "Folksong '59" at which he brought a black rock and roll band, the Cadillacs, onstage. Lomax—himself no dogmatist—aimed to show the audience that rock and roll music was actually a mixture of black and white folk forms. While the *New York Times* praised the program as "an area of rich and varied talent and material," the audience seemed less convinced, and the Cadillacs were forced to end their set early due to widespread booing and walk-outs.[79] Despite the fact that performers such as Elvis Presley came from backgrounds closer to the music and musicians they revered than many folk revivalists did, rock and roll's relationship to the modern market rendered it suspect.

Many Thousands Gone: Race and Black Music in the Folk Revival

By the early 1960s the folk revival was becoming more clearly defined and assertive in its musical and ideological stances, and took steps to separate itself from its earlier-stage predecessors. A prominent outlet for this was a small publication entitled the *Little Sandy Review*, which was started in Minneapolis in 1960 by Jon Pankake and Paul Nelson, the latter

[79] John S. Wilson, "Program Given by Alan Lomax," *New York Times* 4 April 1959, 13. Reports of the booing can be found in Cohen, p, 140. Cohen also quotes revivalist, folklorist and Folklore Center proprietor Izzy Young as describing the concert as a "turning point in American folk music."

of whom would later go on to become an influential rock critic at the *Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*, in another small but fascinating instance of the folk revival following Dylan into rock music.

Spanning thirty issues in total and running from 1960 to 1965, *Little Sandy Review* in many ways anticipates the modern fanzine: its earliest issues were typed and mimeographed, often rife with typographical errors. The writing itself was passionate and fiercely opinionated—an early issue derided Paul Robeson as "pretensious" [sic] and declared that the "impression of the Negro spiritual which Robeson (and alas, that fine singer Marian Anderson) have given to the American urban public" was "erroneous," a brash declaration from an anonymous (but likely young and white) Minnesotan that is itself rooted in authenticity concerns, as Robeson and Anderson had previously performed concert arrangements of folk spirituals.[80]

Both Bob Dylan and the *Little Sandy Review* emerged from Minneapolis during the same period, and Dylan became friendly with the magazine's editors and contributors during his relatively brief time in the Minneapolis folk scene.[81] *Little Sandy Review* is historically instructive because it represents a publication dedicated to the fourth-stage revival actually spawned by those revivalists itself, unlike, for instance, *Sing Out!*, the most prominent national folk music publication, which had been founded in 1950 by Irwin Silber. Although the age difference between the two publications was only ten years, the tonal gap was vast, and the opinionated passion of *Little Sandy Review* carried with it a sense of upstart energy and impatience, particularly when contrasted with the more measured, demure tone of *Sing Out! Little Sandy Review* was argumentative and iconoclastic, and obsessed with authenticity: early issues derided the music of the Kingston Trio as "Ivy League Folkum," lashed out at

[80] *Little Sandy Review*, no. 4 (1960), p. 21.
[81] Shelton, 61.

Odetta's "enormous dishonesty," and characterized Harry Belafonte as "AWFUL," claiming that the latter's recent Carnegie Hall album failed to contain "even one honest folk song."[82]

Little Sandy Review's youthful impetuousness mixed with its purist sensibility and its obsessive relationship to the past in curious ways, and this contradiction broadly reflected the early stages of the New Left. The language of the Port Huron Statement—the widely-disseminated 1962 political manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society, and a benchmark document of Sixties political counterculture—is rife with mystical idealism, lamenting "the decline of utopia and hope" as its authors declaring that "[w]e regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love."[83] The language of declension is elegiac and nostalgic, while the language of unfulfilled potential is hopeful and progressive.

According to historian Doug Rossinow, the New Left was steeped in an ideology that linked political activism to personal authenticity, analogous to the revival's notion of a self-made authenticity through practice and performance. The early stages of the New Left were philosophically indebted to the Christian existentialism of thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the combination of this thought with an increasing politicization begat an ideology in which political activism and self-actualization were held as part-and-parcel of each other, what Rossinow refers to as a "politics of authenticity."[84] The most overwhelming area in need of attention was the civil rights movement; the Port Huron Statement cites "the Southern struggle against racial bigotry" in its opening paragraphs as the

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[82] Jay Smith, "The Samplers in Person," *Little Sandy Review* 13 (1962), 8; "Odetta at Carnegie Hall," *Little Sandy Review* 9 (1961), 9; Bob Dahe, "Belafonte Returns to Carnegie Hall," *Little Sandy Review* 9 (1961), 11.
[83] Tom Hayden and Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement: The Visionary Call of the 1960s Revolution* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 50-51.
[84] See Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998).

first concern of SDS, ahead of the Cold War and nuclear escalation.[85] Identification with African American culture and struggle became linked to political activism—as Rossinow notes, SDS leader Tom Hayden spoke openly of his hopes that his group would become a "counterpart to SNCC" but in the north (a significant qualification).[86] That activism was in turn linked to personal authenticity, a way to fulfill the "unfulfilled capacities" lamented above.

In the early 1960s this was paralleled in the folk revival, where the civil rights movement was becoming an increasing focus and the performance of black music was seen as a mode of aligning oneself with African Americans more generally. In 1962, the *New York Times* ran a lengthy article by Robert Shelton entitled "Songs a Weapon in Rights Battle" that noted that "[t]here have been many echoes in the North of the freedom songs white and Negro singers… Bob Dylan, a young professional songwriter, has penned 'The Ballad of Emmett Till' about a slaying in Mississippi, and 'Blowin' In The Wind' about patience and dignity."[87] The following year Shelton wrote another article entitled "'Freedom Songs' Sweep North" that included a photograph of Dylan, and noted that "New songs on this theme [the Southern civil rights struggle] are not only weapons in the civil rights arsenal, but are also developing into valuable commodities in the music industry." Shelton claimed that '[t]he new anti-segregation lyricists are the descendants of the Hutchinson Family of New Hampshire," the famous abolitionist singing group of the 1840s and 1850s, a comparison that perfectly encapsulates the strange mix of nostalgia and progressive politics that permeated the music in this period.[88]

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[85] Hayden et al., 45.
[86] Rossinow, 165.
[87] Robert Shelton, "Songs a Weapon in Rights Battle," *New York Times* 20 Aug. 1962, 1, 14.
[88] Robert Shelton, "Freedom Songs Sweep North," *New York Times* 6 July 1963, 7.

For the folk revival the performance of African American music offered a powerful entry into a formulation in which proximity to black culture was linked to political progress, which was in turn linked to self-fulfillment and personal authenticity. In many senses the link between black music and white youth progressive politics was made explicit, such as Baez's frequent performances of "We Shall Overcome," "My Lord What a Morning," and "Kumbaya."

The folk revival's mixture of political progress with a nostalgic yearning for a more "authentic" past became more complicated with its increasing focus on the civil rights movement. When its political focus had been Cold War demilitarization, protests against the Bomb could be easily enfolded into an antimodernism, but looking to the past for solutions to racial inequity was a more troublesome proposition. Furthermore, a parallel problem emerged of how to reconcile investment in African American music with the idea of musical authenticity through performative self-invention. After all, the notion of a white folksinger inhabiting the spirit of Woody Guthrie presented fewer complications than the notion of a white folksinger inhabiting the spirit of Leadbelly, or Blind Lemon Jefferson.

The solution to these quandaries was worked out in a profoundly imaginative relationship to black music that essentially boiled down to a belief that black music and musicians were engines of raw and unknowable power that existed primarily in the past. Modernity and "authentic" African American music were implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, held to be irreconcilable to one another. This belief co-existed easily with the folk revival's generally ambivalent relationship to the present, although it left the current status of black music and musicians in a precarious position. There are numerous stories of young folk revivalists being shocked to learn that some of the heroes from the Harry Smith *Anthology* were not only alive but still performing music. In an article on legendary gospel-

blues guitarist Reverend Gary Davis, for example, *Little Sandy Review* noted that "Davis' territory is the streets and store-front missions of New York City's Harlem, where he has provided free music for twenty years while, just a couple of miles down the Island, his old records were sold for fabulous prices to collectors unaware of his existence."[89] In their history of the Cambridge folk revival, former revivalists Jim Rooney and Eric Von Schmidt recalled their surprise when Mississippi John Hurt turned up alive and well at the Newport Folk Festival in 1963: "John Hurt was dead. *Had* to be."[90]

What the folk revival could not accommodate was a vision of black music as fluid and present: to do so would have exposed the contradictions of its intermingled musical and political ideology. Proximity to African American culture was key to both political conscience and musical purity, untrammeled as it was by the bourgeois commercialism of whiteness—a remarkably similarly formulation to that set forth by Baraka in *Blues People*. The notion of black music being a product of the same market system as white music might suggest that Mississippi John Hurt had more in common with Elvis Presley or Frank Sinatra than he did with the anonymous authors of the spirituals, and such a suggestion did not conform to the revival's expectations of black musical authenticity.

In a famous critique of what he termed anthropology's "denial of coevalness," Johannes Fabian wrote of the discipline's "persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse."[91] The disciplinary project of modern anthropology, argued Fabian, rested on a notion that its object of study was always in the past, and it was by way of this assumption that anthropological knowledge produced and protected its authority.

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[89]"Blind Gary Davis – Harlem Street Singer," *Little Sandy Review* 11 (1962), p. 11.
[90] Jim Rooney and Eric Von Schmidt, *Baby, Let Me Follow You Down: The Illustrated Story of the Cambridge Folk Years* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 189.
[91] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 31.

Folk revivals are fundamentally anthropological projects, and by insisting that authentic black music was on the brink of extinction, the fourth stage of the folk revival produced its authority of knowledge while simultaneously validating its own musical practices. Authentic black music was always believed to be vanishing, and thus in dire need of preservation by the revival's proselytizers. This was consistent with the revival's view of folk music of all kinds, although the notion of disappearance was particularly affixed to black music, and necessarily so, as it muted any ethical problems attendant to appropriation and identity transference.

Again, this idea is made resoundingly clear in the pages of the *Little Sandy Review*. In a 1963 review of *Blues, Rags, and Hollers* by "Spider" John Koerner, Dave "Snaker" Ray, and Tony "Little Sun" Glover, a trio of white blues musicians who had formed while students at the University of Minnesota, writer Barry Hansen opened his review with the following statement:

> It seems inevitable that by 1970 most of the blues worth hearing will be sung by white men. For years, the younger Negroes have been losing interest in this 'old-fashioned' form; no really significant young Negro blues singer has emerged since 1953. As the older singers pass their prime, the Negro blues seem doomed to certain extinction.[92]

There is a youthful presumptuousness and perhaps even odd prescience here, although likely not as its author intended. It is hard to imagine that the Rolling Stones, Cream or Led Zeppelin circa-1970 would have fit Hansen's definition of "blues worth hearing," to say nothing of Janis Joplin, who is excluded a priori here by the phrase "white men." The passage also indicates the extent to which folk revivalists felt comfortable making claims on what was or was not "authentic" black music, and similar statements

[92]Barry Hansen, "'Spider' John Koerner, Dave 'Snaker' Ray, and Tony 'Little Sun' Glover" - *Blues, Rags, and Hollers,*" *Little Sandy Review* 27 (1963), 3. Hansen frequently wrote on blues music and blues albums for *LSR* In an interesting and truly bizarre twist, he later went on to fame as radio personality "Dr. Demento," a popular, nationally-syndicated disc jockey perhaps best known for starting the career of song parodist "Weird Al" Yankovic.

abound in the *LSR*. An album called *Negro Folk Rhythms* was criticized for being "a purposeful attempt by educated Negroes to remove the white stereotype of Negro music as something 'barbaric' and to show these whites that negro music is noble and good, in the whites' own image."[93] A review of a John Lee Hooker album praised the guitarist for returning to his "primitive and harsh" style and complained about his recent, "more sophisticated" recordings: "Hooker [has] deliberately turned to an older blues style – he plays alone with a non-electric guitar. The result is his best recording to date AND his emergence as a fine folk artist."[94] Finally, a review of an album by Robert Pete Williams, a penitentiary inmate in Louisiana, praises the artist as "a singer who has developed to a fabulous level of artistry in an all-Negro environment completely free of any reason or desire to 'refine' for a sophisticated folkum market," an endorsement of authenticity-through-incarceration to which one might imagine Williams himself objecting vehemently.[95]

By constructing a worldview in which "real" black music was on the verge of disappearance, and casting themselves as the last line of defense in this disappearance, revivalists added a new dimension to the concept of playing black music as an ethical act—it now came from not only a political impulse, but a preservationist one—while also boxing the potentials of black music into an impossible position. Folk scholar Neil Rosenberg observes that the fourth stage of the folk revival constantly dealt with inconsistencies reconciling "an intellectual music with an anti-intellectual ethos." "The *idea* that such a thing as folksong existed was an intellectual construct," writes Rosenberg, but "an essential aspect of the construct was that folk music was unselfconscious behavior."[96] Deriding "more sophisticated" recordings by black artists as "inauthentic" reinforced the anti-modernism

[93] Barry Hansen, "Negro Folk Rhythms," *Little Sandy Review* 13 (1962), 11-12. Underlining in original.
[94] "John Lee Hooker – Folk Blues" *Little Sandy Review* 7 (1961).
[95] "Robert Pete Williams – Angola Prisoner's Blues" *Little Sandy Review* 4 (1961), 29.
[96] Rosenberg, 8.

and anti-intellectualism of the revival, but it also allowed no forward-looking concept of black music that wasn't determined by white stereotypes.

Bob Dylan's emergence as a major figure in the folk revival of the early 1960s complicated this construction, and sooner than most would notice. As previously noted, Dylan's early musical years had been marked by exposure to rock and roll music, a fact that did not make him unique among many fourth-stage revivalists. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Dylan appears to have never fully cast off the legacy and influence of rock and roll, and in certain of his early performances even seems to outwardly embrace it. An example of this can be heard in the last track on Dylan's frenetic and stirring version of Blind Lemon Jefferson's classic "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean," the last track on his 1962 debut album for Columbia Records, titled *Bob Dylan.*[97] "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" was first recorded in 1927—two years before Jefferson froze to death during a visit to Chicago—and was re-released on Harry Smith's influential *Anthology* in 1952, attracting the attention of revivalists to Jefferson's music, both his nimble, flamenco-inflected guitar playing and his gruff, powerful singing voice. Dylan's performance of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" is, as we might expect, vastly different than Jefferson's: the guitar lacks the percussiveness, rhythmic nuance and melodic precision of Jefferson's, and while the tempo on Dylan's version is quicker, his vocal performance is boyish and reedy, bearing little resemblance to Jefferson's deep baritone.

Keith Negus has written that "[t]he blues had a profound and enduring impact on Bob Dylan, as they did on many musicians and listeners of his generation. Dylan acquired a means of expression from the blues voice… over time it has become clear that Dylan is far

[97] Bob Dylan, *Bob Dylan,* Columbia 62022, 1963, 33rpm.

more part of a blues tradition than any modern-day rock tradition."[98] This argument makes generic sense with regards to Dylan's performance of Jefferson, although seems overly broad given the differences in musical, social, and historical context between the two performers, and it also seems to enact a similar sort of vague retrospection as practiced by the folk revival itself. Furthermore, partitioning Dylan off for the "blues tradition" rather than the "modern-day rock tradition" obscures the intense connectedness between these two traditions—Dylan himself is exemplary of this.

Barry Shank has pointed out that Dylan sings the melody of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" nearly a full octave higher than Jefferson (Jefferson's recording of "Grave" is in E-flat, Dylan's is in D), and argues that "[t]his shift to an upper range of either basic notes or overtones is common in white appropriations of black musical forms and styles," which leads him to suggest that "this upward tonal shift characterizes the historical performance practice of blackface minstrelsy."[99] This is a provocative claim but ultimately unverifiable, as no real sonic evidence exists of what original blackface minstrels actually sounded like, and Jefferson had a famously deep voice, far more so than other early blues singers like Mississippi John Hurt, Son House, or Robert Johnson.

Rather than the blues or minstrelsy, I would instead suggest that the primary musical and cultural influence heard on Dylan's version of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" is rock and roll music. Dylan's 2004 memoir contains an evocative description of early rock and rollers as "singers who sang like they were navigating burning ships," and it is this frantic, hyperactive, desperate intensity that pulsates through Dylan's performance of Jefferson on his first record. There is likely more Little Richard than Blind Lemon Jefferson

[98] Negus, 82.
[99] Barry Shank, "'That Wild Mercury Sound: Bob Dylan and the Illusion of American Culture," *Boundary 2* 29: 1 (Spring 2002), 109.

or Thomas Dartmouth Rice to be found here, and while one can certainly argue that rock and roll music shared certain imaginative and performative traits with the minstrel tradition, to suggest that the two forms are directly connected to a point of contingency is ahistorical, and musically difficult to support.

The rock and roll influence in Dylan's performance of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" becomes particularly evident when contrasted with Dave Van Ronk's version from 1961, titled "Please See That My Grave is Kept Clean." Like Dylan, Van Ronk was a young white transplant to Greenwich Village, although his journey was considerably shorter (Van Ronk was born and raised in Brooklyn). Van Ronk became one of the most highly-regarded musicians of the folk revival, widely admired for his finger-picking guitar techniques and vocal ability. He was also more of a traditionalist than Dylan, so it's not surprising that Van Ronk's rendition of "Grave" is closer to Jefferson's version than Dylan's in most respects, from tempo to arrangement to performance style.[100]

Dylan was certainly familiar with Van Ronk's performance of "Grave." The two had become friends shortly after Dylan's arrival in Greenwich Village, and Van Ronk was one of the members of the revival with whom Dylan maintained a friendship after his perceived defection.[101] The fact that he strays from Van Ronk's performance and arrangement and into the propulsive rhythms and vocal style associated with early rock and roll suggests that even at this early stage in his career Dylan was cut from a different ideological cloth from many of the folk revival's progenitors and adherents. Dylan's performance of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" weds the sound of rock and rollers like Little Richard and Johnny Burnette—

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[100] This performance was originally released on Folkways' *Dave Van Ronk Sings, Vol. 2,* Folkways FA2383, 1961, 33rpm. It can also be heard on the Van Ronk compilation CD *Folkways Years, 1959-1961,* Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SF-40041, 1991, CD.

[101] "I'd heard Van Ronk back in the Midwest on records and thought he was pretty great," writes Dylan in *Chronicles, Vol. 1*, "copied some of his recordings phrase for phrase… I loved his style." Dylan, 15.

whose 1956 hit "Train Kept A-Rollin'" might be the most direct antecedent to Dylan's performance—to Blind Lemon Jefferson.

In 1962 Dylan recorded what would become his first single for Columbia Records, "Mixed-Up Confusion."[102] The song featured guitar, piano, bass and drums and is unmistakably a rockabilly-infused rock and roll track, squarely in the vein of Carl Perkins and early Elvis Presley. Two other tracks recorded during these sessions, "Rocks and Gravel" and a version of Arthur Crudup's "That's Alright, Mama" (most widely known as Elvis Presley's 1954 debut single), were recorded with a similar full band lineup, though neither were released. "Mixed-Up Confusion" was released as a single in mid-December of 1962 but didn't sell, and yet the existence of these recordings shows Dylan's comfort playing within a rock and roll idiom. It also shows that Columbia Records and producer Tom Wilson, who produced these sessions and Dylan's other material through "Like a Rolling Stone," were nearly as flexible in their vision of the singer's future as Dylan himself was. Dylan's uses of rock and roll during his revival years suggest an engagement with African American music in which Little Richard and Chuck Berry remained as relevant as Robert Johnson and Blind Willie McTell.

Despite the fame he achieved from "Blowin' In The Wind," Dylan was never exclusively a political or protest songwriter, and by the release of *Another Side of Bob Dylan* in 1964, Dylan had all but purged his songwriting of overtly topical material.[103] As Tom Wilson put it to writer Nat Hentoff in a 1964 interview, conducted during the single-night recording session for *Another Side,* "he's not a singer of protest so much as he is a singer of *concern* about people. He doesn't have to be talking about Medgar Evers…. He can just tell a

[102] Bob Dylan, "Mixed-Up Confusion," Columbia 4-42656, 1962, 45rpm.
[103] Bob Dylan, *Another Side of Bob Dylan,* Columbia 2193, 1964, 33rpm.

simple little story of a guy who ran off from a woman."[104] In the same article Dylan spoke of his determination to stop writing "finger-pointing songs," "pointing to all the things that are wrong. Me, I don't want to write *for* people anymore. You know, be a spokesman. Like I once wrote about Emmett Till in the first person, pretending I was him. From now on, I want to write from inside me."[105] The choice of words is interesting because Dylan seems to obliquely critique an aspect of the folk revival's racial imagination, namely that by singing songs written by or about African American people—specifically dead people—one might come closer to spiritually inhabiting an African American experience.

A Different Kind of Bag: The Invention of "Folk Rock"

In late 1964 Irwin Silber, editor of *Sing Out!* magazine, published an infamous "Open Letter to Bob Dylan," in which Silber expressed his worry that Dylan seemed "to be in a different kind of bag now:"

> Your new songs seem to be all inner-directed now, innerprobing, self-conscious—maybe even a little maudlin or a little cruel on occasion…. Now, that's all okay—if that's the way you want it. But then you're a different Bob Dylan from the one we knew. The old one never wasted our precious time.[106]

The letter is a strange mix of hand-wringing and entitlement, and the use of the phrase "[t]he old one never wasted our precious time"—a reference to the closing lines of Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right"—reads as a barbed ad hominem attack. If Dylan was feeling unduly confined by the ideological pressures of the folk revival, Silber's decision to use his own lyrics to shame him in such a public forum was unlikely to alleviate the sense of constriction.

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[104] Nat Hentoff, "The Crackin, Shakin', Breakin' Sounds," *The New Yorker* 24 Oct. 1964, 66.
[105] Ibid., 65.
[106] Irwin Silber, "An Open Letter to Bob Dylan," *Sing Out!* November 1964, 22-23.

In early 1965 Dylan released the single "Subterranean Homesick Blues," his first release with an electric band since "Mixed-Up Confusion" two-and-a-half years prior. An homage to Chuck Berry's 1957 hit "Too Much Monkey Business," the single became Dylan's biggest chart hit to date and his first Top 40 single.[107] In March of 1965 Dylan released his fifth studio album for Columbia Records, *Bringing It All Back Home*.[108] The first side of *Bringing It All Back Home* featured electric guitars and a rock and roll rhythm section and included a song called "Maggie's Farm," Dylan's most disdainful broadside at the folk community to date. "They say 'sing while you slave' / and I just get bored," sneers Dylan, and the potential meanings embedded in the imagery of slavery are notable—Dylan as "enslaved" by the confines of folk music, but also the revival's equation of black hardship with musical authenticity—and even recall Sam Cooke's similarly irreverent invocation of slavery on "Bring It On Home To Me," the title of which bears an obvious (if incidental) similarity to Dylan's own LP. The second side of *Bringing It All Back Home* consisted of more traditional acoustic material, including "Mr. Tambourine Man," which soon became a Number One *Billboard* Pop hit for the California rock and roll band The Byrds.[109]

If "Subterranean Homesick Blues," *Bringing It All Back Home* and the Byrds' hit version of "Mr. Tambourine Man" all brought Dylan to the precipice of rock and roll stardom and a profound shift in his genre association, "Like a Rolling Stone" would be his breakthrough. Recorded at New York's Studio A on June 16, 1965 with a band made up of session musicians including pianist Paul Griffin, drummer Bobby Gregg, guitarist Mike Bloomfield, and organist Al Kooper, "Like a Rolling Stone" was released in late July of 1965

[107] Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," Columbia 43242, 1965, 45rpm.
[108] Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home,* Columbia 2328, 1965, 33rpm.
[109] The Byrds, "Mr. Tambourine Man," Columbia 43271, 1965, 45rpm.

and reached Number Two on the *Billboard* charts, kept from the top spot only by the Beatles' "Help!".[110]

"Like a Rolling Stone" was a landmark recording in both Dylan's career and popular music more generally. At over six minutes long, it far outlasted any prior major rock and roll release. As Greil Marcus notes, longer records such as Ray Charles' "What'd I Say" (1959) had previously been hits but were usually partitioned into two parts, with the first side getting the overwhelming majority of radio play.[111] From almost the moment of its release, DJs played "Like a Rolling Stone" in its entirety.

The song turned Dylan into a full-on rock and roll star, but moreover, it decidedly changed the way that people talked about rock and roll music. By the end of 1965 the music press was abuzz with a new phrase, "folk rock." "Folk Rock" was a strange piece of terminology, seemingly more prescriptive than descriptive—after all, it was hard to tell what precisely about "Like a Rolling Stone" was folk-related, other than that its author had been previously identified as a folk singer. As Phil Spector once remarked, the chord changes to the song's chorus are lifted from Ritchie Valens' 1959 classic "La Bamba."[112] Still, a *Los Angeles Times* article (which actually described the phenomenon as "rock-folk") suggested that "[t]he new songs are called rock-folk because they combine the rock beat, tunes and performers with the 'message words' of one branch of folk music," and the *New York Times*

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[110] Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone," Columbia 43346, 1965, 45rpm. Information on recording dates from Marcus, 204-223.
[111] Marcus, 120.
[112] Famed producer Phil Spector is particularly fond of pointing this out, and told an interviewer in 1969 that "It may not be the greatest thing he ever wrote, but I can see why he gets the most satisfaction out of it, because rewriting 'La Bamba' chord changes is always a lot of fun." (Marcus 34)

described folk rock as "a folk song sung to a rock 'n' roll big-beat background."[113] For his part, in August of 1965 Dylan told an interviewer that "It's all music; no more, no less."[114]

By the time the *Los Angeles Times* covered the "folk rock" phenomenon again in 1966, a consensus had emerged that whatever folk rock was, it was more serious, thoughtful, and artistically high-minded than previous rock and roll music. "Let's face it, folk rock is big because the teens love it," wrote the *Times*. "And the teens love it because it has the rhythm that is theirs, and has something to say—something besides 'I love you' and 'moon, June, spoon.'" The article also noted that "[i]t all started with Bob Dylan—the original poet of protest, a writer of contemporary folk songs, a rebel with many causes—some personal, some social."[115]

"Like a Rolling Stone" is an extraordinary piece of music.[116] As musicologist Wilfrid Mellers described it:

> Although the words are dismissive, the music—with its jaunty repeated notes and eyebrow-charging rising thirds, its fragmented phrases that leave one agog for what's coming next—is positive in total effect.... He is putting down a girl who may have wanted to gobble him up like a lollypop, but music so affirmative cannot be finally destructive.[117]

From Bobby Gregg's snare hit that opens the song, to Bloomfield's major-pentatonic guitar fills coming out its choruses, to Paul Griffin's dancing barrelhouse piano and Al Kooper's indelible organ part, the recording is a work of tremendous invention by almost any measure. Dylan's vocal performance is assured and mature, as intricate and dazzlingly wordy phrases like "you never turned around / to see the frowns on the jugglers

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[113] Mary Campbell, "Rock 'n' Roll Music Gets Message, Man," *Los Angeles Times* 20 Sept. 1965, C19; Thomas Meehan, "Public Writer No. 1?" *New York Times* 12 Dec. 1965, 45.
[114] Robert Shelton, "Pop Singers and Song Writers Racing Down Bob Dylan's Road," *New York Times* 27 Aug. 1965, 17.
[115] Sylvie Reice, "Why Teens Switched to Folk Rock," *Los Angeles Times* 6 Jan. 1966, E8.
[116] In its December 9, 2004 issue (RS 963) *Rolling Stone* magazine named the song Number One on a list of "The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time."
[117] Wilfrid Mellers, *A Darker Shade of Pale: A Backdrop to Bob Dylan* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 104.

and the clowns / when they all did tricks for you" pour forth with both feeling and precision, his voice rising to a high G on the wordless "aaahhh" that sets up the song's final verse. The text is a mélange of strange and evocative imagery—Napoleons in rags, diplomats on "chrome horses," soon-to-be pawned diamond rings—in the service of what is finally nothing more or less than a jilted love song. Its mixture of timely and timeless is announced in its first four words, which recontextualize the most famous phrase in storytelling: "once upon a time."

"Like a Rolling Stone" exceeds the sum of its parts, but its legacy has far outstripped even its own considerable ambitions. Much like the Beatles' music of the same period, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, in the years since its release "Like a Rolling Stone" has been claimed by many as the moment rock and roll music became "serious," a suggestion we begin to see emerging in the "folk rock" discussions that surrounded it. If, as critics at the time argued, "folk rock"'s seriousness was derived from its partial roots in folksong, this is by no means the only ideological vestige of the folk revival that crossed over into rock and roll music on June 14, 1965, when Dylan and his bandmates finally nailed "Like a Rolling Stone" on the fourth take of their second day of trying.

Once Upon A Time: "Like a Rolling Stone" and Rock Ideology

"Like a Rolling Stone" has been positioned as a foundational text of rock ideology, its authentic creativity and expression unimpeachable, a notion that is both informed and evidenced by Dylan's singular position as heroic genius. As Simon Frith argues, the cultural association of Dylan as an "folk" singer—an association that confirmed "his individual genius, his personal insights, his unique voice and style… dense poetic forms and rambling

melodic structures that made audience participation impossible"—left important legacies for his emergence into rock stardom.[118]

The release of "Like A Rolling Stone" in particular has been spoken of in terms of a rapture. Inducting Dylan into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, Bruce Springsteen recalled the snare-drum hit that opens "Like A Rolling Stone" as sounding "like somebody kicked open the door to your mind," a piece of imagery whose hyperbole mirrors the level to which the song's importance has been elevated in criticism and historiography.[119] "Like a Rolling Stone," and the period it marks in Dylan's career, has become a foundational event of the creation myth for the genre of "rock," which takes care to distinguish itself from the earlier, passé sounds of "pop" or "rock and roll." Writes Lee Marshall:

> …rather than rock being just another mainstream music, it emerged in the mid-1960s as a way of *stratifying* mainstream musical consumption, as a means of creating higher and lower levels of popular music. The basis of rock is the claim that, rather than all forms of popular music being mindless and disposable, certain elements of popular music are worthy of being taken seriously in their own right.[120]

The centrality of Bob Dylan to this idea can hardly be overemphasized. As Keith Negus writes, by 1966 "Bob Dylan seemed the archetypal rock singer, defining the style as an intelligent genre addressed to adults, leaving behind the inarticulate rebellion of rock 'n' roll and the naïve romance of pop."[121] While the Beatles soon bolstered the notion of rock music as art with the experimentations of *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Dylan's status as a white American male, and as an artist whose *individual* intellect and seriousness had already been confirmed by his position in folk music, made him a uniquely appealing figure for an emergent ideology of rock music.

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[118] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 30.
[119] Transcript available online at http://rockhall.com/inductees/bob-dylan/transcript/bruce-springsteen-on-dylan/
[120] Lee Marshall, "Bob Dylan and the Academy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan*, 105.
[121] Negus, 41.

As noted in the Introduction of this dissertation, rock ideology is, at its core, profoundly concerned with authenticity. The shift between "pop" music as trivial and "rock" as serious and enduring is essentially located around this concept of authenticity: as Theodore Gracyk has argued, more than simply being "fun" or "enjoyable," rock music takes itself seriously as a vehicle for personal expression.[122] Frith also argues that rock's preoccupation with authenticity derives from a tension between the music's aspirations to art and its reality of being a mass, commercial culture.[123] By clinging to a notion of rock stars being driven entirely by personal expression and self-actualization through music, rock ideology is able to excuse away the fact its heroes have made millions of dollars by seeing it as a happy byproduct of their art, rather than a driving force behind it. And in terms of media, Philip Auslander also suggests that rock authenticity is peculiarly located *between* recordings and performance: recordings, particularly albums, are fetishized by rock fans, but the ability to "play live" is also seen as paramount, to prove one is not simply a market creation. Although, Auslander argues, live performances by bands are frequently evaluated *in comparison* to the album: if a band or artist is seen as unable to replicate the sounds heard on its album, authenticity is rendered suspect.[124]

It is striking how many of these characteristics speak directly to Bob Dylan and seem to extend from the folk revival: the anxieties over commerce, the notion of authenticity through self-expression, the uneasy relationship between "original" recordings and "original" performance. Through Dylan's transition from folk to rock—at the time seen as the creation of "folk rock," in later years as simply the creation of rock—rock music's emergent genre ideology was able to selectively appropriate certain remnants of the folk revival while

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[122] See Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), esp. 208-223.
[123] See Frith, *The Sociology of Rock,* esp. 191-201.
[124] See Philip Auslander: *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. pp. 63-109.

leaving others behind, perhaps most importantly its political concerns. The phenomenal success of "Like a Rolling Stone"— the piece of authentic self-expression that achieves the happy byproduct of commercial success—becomes an ideal moment of transference. Also transferred, crucially and incompletely, was the racial imagination of the folk revival. The remainder of this chapter traces this legacy, and finally explores what a generosity of attention paid to Bob Dylan has to tell us about a paucity of attention paid to Sam Cooke.

Bringing It All Back Home: Bob Dylan, Sam Cooke, and Racial Imagination

There are numerous reasons why the positiong of "Like a Rolling Stone" as a "Big Bang" moment for serious rock music is highly problematic. For starters, by casting Dylan as a heroic progenitor of individual genius, the contributions of others are subtly written out. In the case of "Like a Rolling Stone" this could include Bobby Gregg, Paul Griffin, or producer Tom Wilson, the latter two of whom were African American and each of whom made formative contributions to one of the most famous records ever made but none of whom are household names. By extension, it also writes out other practitioners of rock and roll with whom Dylan heard himself in conversation, such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, or Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound" productions with such groups as the Ronettes and Crystals.[125]

The glaring injustice of such erasures is that the origin story of "Like a Rolling Stone" has been used to buttress an image of rock music as a fundamentally white enterprise, one that outwardly denies the salience of race in its ideal of individual authenticity while silently confirming the centrality of whiteness. This is the most striking ideological remnant of the folk revival in rock ideology: by deciding that "Like a Rolling Stone" is a formative moment for when rock music turned serious, black music becomes something to

[125] Greil Marcus writes that Dylan allegedly suggested Spector as his next producer when he and Wilson parted ways shortly after "Like a Rolling Stone." Marcus,140.

be admired but at the same time kept at a remove. The consensus becomes that while Little Richard and Chuck Berry were important influences on Dylan, Dylan took what they did and made something more significant. As Simon Frith writes, "deeply embedded in rock ideology is the assumption that while black music is valuable as an expression of vitality and excitement, is in other words 'good to dance to', it lacks the qualities needed for individual expression."[126] Through no fault of his own this notion in rock music first begins to solidify around Bob Dylan, and "Like a Rolling Stone," a figure whose centrality in rock discourse has nothing, and yet absolutely everything, to do with race.

In critical literature on Bob Dylan there is a longstanding and persistent tendency to describe the singer in terms or metaphors of racial indeterminacy. Barry Shank and Wilfrid Mellers are two of the more prominent Dylan critics who have linked him to the practice of minstrelsy; recently, Todd Haynes' celebrated 2007 bio-pic *I'm Not There* featured a segment in which a young "Dylan" is played by a young African American boy. This is not a new development, and since early in his career much has been made of Dylan's supposed ease within non-white musical traditions. Nat Hentoff's 1964 profile of Dylan in the *New Yorker* characterized his singing as "strongly influenced by such Negro folk interpreters as Leadbelly and Big Joe Williams;"[127] a year later, in a lengthy *New York Times* piece on Dylan, Thomas Meehan argued that Dylan's songs "mix for the first time the sounds of Negro blues with the twang of country music."[128] In more recent years, Paul Williams has argued that Dylan's "seemingly authentic spiritual awareness" in his early music derived from "a direct transmission through black music, through the records he'd been listening to,"[129] while Jean

[126] Frith, *Sociology of Rock*, 181.
[127] Hentoff, 74.
[128] Meehan, 132.
[129] Williams, 35.

Tamarin has written that "this skinny white boy seemed to be singing from the soul of a black man who had seen it all."[130]

It is noteworthy that all of these passages rely on a notion of black music as predecessor, as something unmistakably old. The racial imagination that was transferred from the folk revival to rock ideology was one that held black music on a mystified pedestal, viewing it as raw, powerful and important but at the same time denying it as presently viable. As the 1960s progressed, older black blues performers such as Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson became elevated to mythic status among white rock stars, American and British, but these performers were thought to be of a bygone era, and in cases such as Johnson they were long dead.[131] When Muddy Waters released an album entitled *Fathers and Sons* in 1969 featuring young members of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, the album's cover depicted a revision of Michelangelo's famous image of God reaching down to Adam: in the album cover God is depicted as an old black man, Adam a young white man wearing sunglasses.[132] The message was unmistakable: the aging black "god" Waters passing the secrets of the blues down to his white disciples.

Finally, the concept of black music that emerged in rock music around the mid-1960s, a view largely derived from the folk revival and partially enabled by the figure of Bob Dylan, is remarkably similar to the ideology of black music that haunts discussions of Sam Cooke. The idea that black music is the product of a race while white music is the product of individuals has resulted in a cultural shorthand in which black music and black people are imagined to be one and the same. Such a notion is not only conducive to but required by a

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[130] Jean Tamarin, "Bringing It All Back Home," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan,* 132.
[131] For a recent consideration of the importance of black American blues on late-1960s British rock musicians, see Andrew Kellett, "Fathers and Sons: American Blues and British Rock Music, 1960-1970" (Ph.D Diss., University of Delaware, 2008. For a specific discussion of Eric Clapton and Cream's relationship to Robert Johnson, see Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 32-62.
[132] Muddy Waters, *Fathers and Sons*, Chess 127, 1969, 33rpm.

racial imagination such as that embraced by the folk revival, and later rock music, which rested on both a denial of heterogeneity within black music as well as a denial of its vitality as a present form, one that might allow black musicians the same sorts of identity transcendence afforded to folk revivalists and, later, rock stars. Sam Cooke's music has been partially marginalized by critical discussions in which its worth has been judged in direct correlation to its racial-cum-musical authenticity, a construct based around an intertwining of anticommercialism, political uses, aesthetic "raw"-ness, and hermetic blackness. All of these criteria might as well be ripped from the pages of the *Little Sandy Review*.

What has been disallowed in discussions of Sam Cooke is the notion that a black artist pushing boundaries of form and genre might achieve a liberatory identity transcendence *through* music, that his pop-chart triumphs and orchestral performances at the Copacabana might in fact be his own attempts to reconfigure the possibilities of what black music could be, where it could go, what sorts of music black people could make. In short, he has been disallowed the same notions of identity transcendence that the folk revival was predicated on, and which Dylan brought with him to the emergent ideology of rock music. The notion of white performers transcending racial category had been part of rock and roll music at least since Elvis Presley, and was a shared tenet of the folk revival through its connection of political authenticity to the performance of black music. When this formulation traveled from the folk revival to rock music, "political" element disappeared, and not particularly gradually.

By placing the burden of "serious" rock music squarely on Dylan's shoulders, the music thus became naturalized as the birthright of white men, a development that radically re-racialized rock and roll as a cultural form. Heard from this context the snare hit that opens "Like a Rolling Stone" in 1965 sounds less like an explosion into possibility than the

opening sounds of a reactionary ideology of white masculinist heroism and intellectual supremacy, a move that was no fault of Dylan's own but was enabled by his symbolic capacity as a young American white male in this period. After all, to talk about the Promethean genius of "Like a Rolling Stone," to incessantly remark upon someone's precocious comfort within black musical forms: these are just ways of talking about someone being white while pretending to talk about something else. The folk revival claimed itself as preserver of a black musical culture that they assumed had already vanished; rock music took this notion of interracial transference and made it the stakes of white creativity. In the ideology of both, casting off the shackles of one's whiteness through musical performance was central to musical and personal authenticity. Of course, in order to cast off the shackles of whiteness, one must be white to begin with.

- Chapter Two -
The White Atlantic: Cultural Origins of the 'British Invasion' in Myth and Music

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Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(which was rather late for me) –
Between the end of the "Chatterly" ban
And the Beatles' first LP
-Philip Larkin, "Annus Mirabilis"[1]

Groups of guitarists are on the way out.
-Decca Records' rejection of the Beatles, January 1962[2]

The October 27, 1962 issue of *Melody Maker*—England's most venerable weekly periodical for the coverage of jazz and popular music—featured a letter in its "Mailbag" column entitled "Why Must We Copy?" Penned by one Mervyn Wilmington of Nelson, Lancashire, the missive reads as follows:

> The American influence on our popular music personalities strengthens every day. Even the speech of many singers is becoming slovenly and tainted with an American accent.
>
> I fail to understand the tendency for the pop music industry in Britain to constantly adopt the current American music trends without question.
>
> Of course America is the home of rock and Twist, but why must we try to make cheap copies of American styles of music—many of which are shocking to start with?
>
> Let's have a little more home enterprise, a few more people of the caliber of Anthony Newley, people who realize that good, original work is what we need.
>
> Newley is successful here and has sold his work to the Americans.
>
> American young people I have met have been amazed at the way in which we have adopted their music unquestionably. They laugh at our foolishness.
>
> I long for something more pure and unadulterated.[3]

At first glance there is little in this letter to distinguish it from similar complaints that appear incessantly in the reader correspondence and editorial content of *Melody Maker* during

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[1] Philip Larkin, "Annus Mirabilis, in *The Complete Poems*, ed. Archie Burnett (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 90.
[2] Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), 118.
[3] "Mailbag," *Melody Maker*, October 27, 1962, 16.

this period.[4] The lack of originality in British popular music in the 1950s and early 1960s is a popular lament and a hopelessly overdetermined one: as Mr. Wilmington's letter illustrates, jeremiads over musical mediocrity and copyism barely conceal broader worries over the scandal that rock and roll had recently unleashed on both sides of the Atlantic, to say nothing of the rising threat of post-War Americanization more generally. Wilmington's concluding flourish—"I long for something more pure and unadulterated"—is almost breathless in its romanticism.

The significance to this particular letter lies not so much in its content but in the date of its publication. The October 27, 1962 issue of *Melody Maker* also boasted its weekly "Top Fifty," and appearing at number 48 that week was "Love Me Do," the first EMI/Parlophone release from a recently-signed quartet called the Beatles.[5] It is unknowable whether Mr. Wilmington would have his yearnings for purity satisfied by this single—it's quite possible that to his ears the Liverpudlian Beatles' "Scouse" accents would be as "tainted" as American ones—but the Beatles' emergence would soon render the lack of "home enterprise" in British popular music a quaint notion.

In 1963 the band dominated the British music scene, placing four singles atop the pop charts; in February of 1964 they arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City, where two nights later they played before an estimated seventy-four million Americans on CBS's *Ed Sullivan Show,* the television largest audience in history at the time.[6] This performance and its attendant fanfare has widely come to be seen as the opening salvo in a happening known colloquially as the "British Invasion," as the Beatles' runaway success

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[4] A few examples of this: "Cliff Richard Slams British Stars," *Melody Maker*, January 23, 1960, 20; "'Americanised' BBC & ITA Attacked," *Melody Maker,* February 18, 1961, 1; "British Stars Don't Copy," *Melody Maker,* August 5, 1961, 13; and "British Pop? The Yanks Don't Want to Know!" *Melody Maker,* August 18, 1962.

[5] "Top Fifty," *Melody Maker,* October 27, 1962, 4.

[6] Gary Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television* (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), 261.

would soon open America to what fans and detractors alike perceived as an unrelenting onslaught of British musicians with ambitions fixed on the *Billboard* charts: the Beatles gave way to the Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers, the Animals, and the Rolling Stones, who in turn gave way to the Kinks, Manfred Mann, the Zombies, and the Who. The "British Invasion" concept has cut a powerful swath in retellings of popular music history and the cultural history of the 1960s more broadly. It has spawned a cottage industry of books, music compilations, television documentaries and radio theme weekends, and fits nicely with a longstanding American attraction to English culture that predates the Beatles by considerable margin.[7]

This chapter examines this construct from a transatlantic perspective through its prehistory, its points of emergence, and in its relation to a broader historical landscape, with specific attention to the ways in which musical and racial imaginations were entwined and articulated, broadcast and re-broadcast, in the long moment before the Beatles' legendary touchdown at JFK. The first part of this chapter will illuminate four flaws inherent in what I will call the "British Invasion Myth," namely its stubborn parochialness, its mistaken sense of simultaneity, its reductive nationalism, and its denial of reciprocity. My use of the term "myth" in this context draws from Richard Slotkin's definition, in which myth "is invoked as a means of deriving usable values from history, and of putting those values beyond the reach of crucial demystification. Its primary appeal is to ritualized emotions, established beliefs, habitual associations, memory, nostalgia… Myth does not argue its ideology, it exemplifies

[7] Barry Miles' *The British Invasion: The Music, The Times, The Era* (New York: Sterling, 2009) and Bill Harry's *The British Invasion: How The Beatles and Other UK Bands Conquered America* (New Malden: Chrome Dreams, 2004) are two recent books on the subject, incidentally both by British authors; the number of compact discs, documentaries, television specials and other tributes are too many to list.

it." It is, in short, "history successfully disguised as archetype."[8] What seemed to American audiences and media to be a unified assault of shaggy-haired, accented young men was actually a diverse mixture of aspirations, localities, performance ideologies, and of course musical ability: despite the breathless hype of interested parties on both sides of the Atlantic, none of the bands that followed the original Invaders would prove to be the "next Beatles."

The long remainder of this chapter examines the foundational role of post-War British youth subcultures, musical and otherwise, in the development and international emergence of the generation of musicians that would constitute the "British Invasion." Most infamous among these is the "teddy boy" subculture of the 1950s, young working-class men defined by their Edwardian dress and perceived proclivity for violence, and whose love of rock and roll music, I argue, makes them pioneering figures in rock ideology's tendency to forcibly separate the imaginative power of black music from its connection to actual black people. Even more notable than the teds were two nascent musical cultures that emerged in the 1950s: the brief but significant moment known as the "skiffle craze" of the mid-1950s, and the emergence of the British blues subculture shortly thereafter. Both British skiffle and British blues had sprung from the preexisting musical movement known as "trad" (short for "traditional") jazz, itself a curious form that was both obsessively American and uniquely British.

I will also examine the legacy of skiffle and British blues in "Please Please Me" and ""Not Fade Away," the first major hits of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, respectively, the former of which is a skiffle-infused approximation of American rhythm and blues penned by John Lennon and Paul McCartney; the latter a Bo Diddley-inflected "cover" of a

[8] Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 19-20. Slotkin's definition is itself drawn from the structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss.

Buddy Holly song, steeped in the musical and ideological influences of British blues. Finally, I will examine the specific problem of the racialized voice in the musical ideology of British blues generally, and in the early music of the Rolling Stones specifically, and argue that the band's revision of Holly provided an opportunity for Mick Jagger to forge the beginnings of a vocal style unconstrained by obligations to his own British whiteness on one hand, and to "authentic" imaginings of African American blues verisimilitude on the other.

Through all this I hope to show not only that the British Invasion Myth is rife with historical inaccuracy and confusion, but also that by enfolding a vast network of British musicians into a monolithic construct, what emerged was a perceived "rebirth" of rock and roll music produced by new and misleading imaginings of white male musicality that were smuggled alongside the otherness of British musicians.[9] As Raymond Williams argues, dominant cultural "traditions" are combinations of historical fantasy and presentist ideology, "a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present… a sense of *predisposed continuity*."[10] The definitively unilateral nature of the Invasion metaphor has helped retrospectively justify a vision of rock "tradition" structured around white men, but this obscures how profoundly transatlantic the aesthetics of the British Invasion were, and specifically how creatively dependent these bands were on African American artists—often far more so than they were upon each other.

Paul Gilroy tells us that "[e]xamining the place of music in the black Atlantic world means surveying the self-understanding articulated by the musicians who have made it… the social relations which have produced and reproduced the unique expressive culture in which music comprises a central and even foundational element."[11] Given the centrality of this

[9] Elijah Wald, *How The Beatles Destroyed Rock and Roll* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009).
[10] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977), 116.
[11] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 74-75.

world to Twentieth Century popular culture, "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering," I submit that such an examination should also extend to the skiffle cellars of Liverpool and jazz and blues clubs of London during the long epilogues of World War II and British colonialism, where white English youth performed their own negotiations of black musical cultures, and ultimately redirected global popular music in the process.[12]

The British Invasion Myth

The most common version of the British Invasion Myth is that in the early 1960s, American rock and roll was in the doldrums. The music's early history had been thrilling but had grown increasingly beset by crises: the untimely deaths of stars like Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and Eddie Cochran; the military conscription of Elvis Presley and his subsequent move to Hollywood; the jailing of Chuck Berry on questionable grounds; the departure of Little Richard from rock music amidst a storm of religious guilt; the public stain of payola. Into this void stepped a dubious industry of white bread, white-skinned teen stars like Frankie Avalon, Fabian, and Lesley Gore. Rock and roll was on the verge of dying, the myth holds, until the Beatles "invaded," along with their countrymen, and heroically rescued the music from the very Americans who had created it and then neglected it. In the words of rock critic Lester Bangs, who famously paired the significance of the Beatles' arrival with that of the Kennedy assassination in an influential essay from *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*:

> The British accomplished this in part by resurrecting music we had ignored, forgotten or discarded, recycling it in a shinier, more feckless, and yet more raucous form. The fact that much of this music had originally been written and performed by American blacks made it that much more of a sure thing,

[12] Ibid., 3.

> but this was not quite a replay of Pat Boone rendering Little Richard palatable to a white audience.[13]

This narrative isn't wholly faulty, and like many mythologies it contains kernels of truth: there can be no question that the Beatles reshaped popular music, and little of the music that immediately preceded their arrival has held up to critical scrutiny nearly as well as theirs (although little music made since has, either). What's more, there certainly was an "overnight sensation" quality to the explosion of Beatlemania in the U.S., much as there was in the U.K. Rarely before or since has a cultural happening commanded so much undivided attention, and the moment of popular "consensus" that the group managed to achieve remains startling: the record viewership on *Ed Sullivan*, for instance, or the week of April 4, 1964, when the *Billboard* Top Five was made up entirely of Beatles songs.[14]

However, the British Invasion Myth is also deeply flawed, and four primary problems stand out for consideration. First, and most obviously, the concept contains a deeply American bias—even in its more self-flagellating forms the narrative enacts its own sort of parochial exceptionalism, with America at the center and the "invaders," heroic as they may be, as irreducibly alien. Since its beginnings, the "British Invasion" wasn't so much a way for Americans to understand a transatlantic musical movement as it was a way to understand something they perceived as happening *to them*, and much of the early press coverage of the British "invaders" betrays a predictably isolationist alarmism. Take the following excerpt, from the editorial page of the *Baltimore Evening Sun,* shortly before the band's stateside arrival:

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[13] Lester Bangs, "The British Invasion," in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, eds. Anthony DeCurtis, James Henke, Holly George-Warren and Jim Miller (New York: Random House, 1992), 199.
[14] Jack Maher and Tom Noonan, "Chart Crawling With Beatles," *Billboard* April 4, 1964, 1. The Beatles had a total of 12 records in all on the Top 100 this week, including their new single "Can't Buy Me Love," which entered at #11.

> The Beatles are coming. Those four words are said to be enough to jelly the spine of the most courageous police captain in Britain... Since, in this case, the Beatles are coming to America, America had better take thought as to how it will deal with the invasion... Indeed, a restrained 'Beatles, go home' may be just the thing.[15]

Secondly, the Myth suggests a strange simultaneity, a sense of "all-at-once"-ness that's anachronistic. The "British Invasion" did *not* happen overnight, as the Beatles and Rolling Stones would be the first to concede, both having suffered numerous and painful stateside failures before finally breaking through. In 1963, the prominent black-owned label Vee-Jay Records released two Beatles singles stateside ("Please Please Me" and "From Me To You") and an album (*Introducing… The Beatles)*, and Philadelphia's tiny Swan Records had even acquired the rights to "She Loves You" for American pressing.[16] None of these early releases sold, derailed by circumstance, audience indifference, and faulty promotion.[17] The delay in American recognition was enough to cause a British reporter to interrogate a visiting Roy Orbison on the Beatles' stateside viability in 1963, prompting Orbison to predict, "[t]hese boys have enough originality to storm our charts in the U.S. with the same effect as they have already done here, but it will need careful handling."[18]

The Rolling Stones had even more difficulty finding stateside success: their first American Number One hit came in June 1965, well over a year after the Beatles arrived in the US, and by which point the Beatles had already charted eight stateside Number Ones.[19] The idea that the Rolling Stones sailed triumphantly across the Atlantic on the Beatles'

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[15] Qtd. in Nat Hentoff, "Nat Hentoff's Flashes From New York," *New Musical Express* 31 Jan. 1964, 11.
[16] The Beatles, "Please Please Me," Vee-Jay 581, 1963; "From Me To You," Vee-Jay 522; *Introducing… The Beatles*, Vee-Jay 1062, 1963; "She Loves You," Swan 4152, 1963.
[17] American rock and roll star Del Shannon actually released a cover of "From Me to You" in 1963 that outsold the original and beat the Beatles onto the American charts. Del Shannon, "From Me To You," Big Top 3152, 1963.
[18] Chris Hutchins, "Roy Orbison Says 'The Beatles Could Be Tops in America," *New Musical Express*, May 31, 1963, 3.
[19] All *Billboard* chart information is derived from Joel Whitburn's *Billboard Top Pop Singles: 1955-1999* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2000).

coattails is flatly mistaken; in fact, after the Stones' initial 1964 trip to the States, Mick Jagger confessed to a British reporter that "we bombed in some parts but so have all the other British groups, with the exception of the Beatles."[20]

Thirdly, the "British Invasion" idea has tended to lump together a variety of artists who had little in common with one another outside of the accident of nationality, to invent connections where there are none and to ignore difference in favor of a false unity. For instance, American coverage of the Beatles tended to focus on their Englishness and downplay the fact that they were from Liverpool, a culturally distinct port city that bears little resemblance to London, or Newcastle upon Tyne, where the Animals were born. This national flattening has persisted in the popular imagination, and again, nowhere is it more telling than in the persistent and compulsive urge over the past forty-five years to view the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in tandem. As this chapter shows, the differences between the early careers of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones are vast and significant, but rock history has still tended to view the Beatles and the Stones as a duality, or dichotomy, the Beatles as rock and roll's Apollonian ego, the Stones its Dionysian id. This has been a powerfully persistent formation, and one that again takes its roots from an "outsider's" view of England as a distant land from which new ideas about pop music as art, hedonism, or both were handed down.[21]

Finally, and most significantly, the British Invasion Myth is faulty for the denial of porosity implicit in its central metaphor. Not only does the language of "invasion" give an adversarial tinge to the musical happenings of this period, it also neglects the fact that the British music press had been using the language of "invasion" for years before Americans

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[20] "Stones Roll Home Again," *New Musical Express,* June 26, 1964, 4.
[21] See, for instance, Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot, *The Beatles vs. The Rolling Stones: Sound Opinions on the Great Rock 'n' Roll Rivalry* (Minneapolis: Voyageur, 2010).

took it up, in reference to popular touring acts such as Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Sam Cooke.[22] Moreover, the British Invasion Myth ignores the avenues of exchange that existed in these early years between British musicians and their American, and especially African American, counterparts. The Beatles, Rolling Stones, and other bands named black musical heroes with obsessive frequency in interviews, and spoke openly of discomfort with the fact that their music had reached heights of popularity in England that their black idols in the U.S. had never achieved. As a young Mick Jagger declared to *Melody Maker* in 1964: "To those who listen to groups like ours, and think we are originators, we say—don't listen to us. Listen to the men who inspire us. Buy their records. Why get your information second hand when it's fairly easy to buy it new?"[23]

For too many of his listeners, this question would continue to remain unanswered, and for many more in years going forward it would simply go unasked, lost in the haze of unilateral Invasion mythology. In order to best understand the events of February 1964 and all that has since come after it, we must return to the contexts that produced it, contexts that suggest the "British Invasion" was simply an unprecedented moment of visibility for an ongoing process of transatlantic musical exchange that stretched back far longer than the onset Beatlemania. The remainder of this chapter examines the peculiar intermingling of young people, music, and racial imagination in England in the long moment before the Beatles touched down at JFK.

Teenage Dreams, American Slouches: Young England and the Long Boom

> I got off my stool and went and stood by the glass of that tottering old department store, pressed up so close it was like I was out there in the air,

[22] Two prominent instances of this among many are the cover of *New Musical Express* from February 21, 1958, that announces "They're Coming Over!" with photos of Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis and Paul Anka and the cover story to the August 10, 1963 edition of *Melody Maker*, entitled "U.S. Stars Invade!" and featuring write-ups of Sam Cooke, Dinah Washington and Josh White.
[23] "The Pop Heroes," *Melody Maker*, May 2, 1964, 3.

> suspended over space above the city, and I swore by Elvis and all the saints that this last teenage year of mine was going to be a real rave. Yes, man, come whatever, this last year of the teenage dream I was out for kicks and fantasy.[24]

The above passage is found in the opening pages of *Absolute Beginners,* Colin MacInnes' novel of late-1950s disaffected British youth culture, a first-person account of four months in the life of a working-class teenaged photographer in an increasingly multicultural London cityscape. Released in 1959, *Absolute Beginners* quickly became an influential text of postwar England, cherished by some for its perceived honesty and unflinching portrayal of teenaged subcultural angst, reviled by others for its alleged depravity and nihilism.[25] While predating the international breakthrough of British rock and roll by nearly five years, *Absolute Beginners* offered a glimpse into a changing England, where the national pride of past generations had given way to a stark awareness of encroaching provincialism, rendered in a teenaged voice that articulated insecurities of race, class, and sexuality with surprising frankness.

In the years since MacInnes' novel, the youth subcultures of post-War Britain have been a recurring subject of interest to scholars and critics, and numerous classic texts of British cultural studies consider the phenomenon at least peripherally and often centrally.[26] These subcultures—Teddy Boys, Traddies, Rockers, Mods, to name just a few—were often clustered around tastes in popular music. MacInnes himself was a frequent if cautious

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[24] Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners* (1959; London: Allison and Busby, 2007), 12.

[25] *Absolute Beginners* was particularly influential among British musicians: in 1986 David Bowie produced a musical film of the book starring himself and Ray Davies of the Kinks. The *Evening Standard* took a less charitable view of the book upon its release: Here, you citizens, tax payers, oldsters, you conscripts, sordid and squares, dig this—This is what you and your city and the civilisation you have made there look like to an articulate teenager. It's not very pretty if you want to know." Qtd. in Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States* (London: Oxford UP, 1998), 62-63.

[26] Some examples include Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1979); Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1976 [1993]), and Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and the Rockers* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972).

defender of these groups, noting that the groups of young people gathering around juke boxes in coffee houses and milk bars to the consternation of their elders seemed less determined by England's rigid class structure than any generation in history.[27] Others were less convinced, as indicated by the following passage from Richard Hoggart's 1958 study, *The Uses of Literacy*:

> I have in mind rather the kind of milk-bar—there is one in almost every northern town with more than, say, fifteen thousand inhabitants—which has become the regular evening rendezvous for some of the young men. Girls go to some, but most of the customers are boys aged between fifteen and twenty, with drape-suits, picture ties and an American slouch. Many of them cannot afford a succession of milk-shakes, and make cups of tea serve for an hour or two whilst—and this is their main reason for coming—they put copper after copper into the mechanical record player. About a dozen records are available at any time; a numbered button is pressed for the one wanted, which is selected from a key to titles. The records seem to be changed about once a fortnight by the hiring firm; almost all are America… all have been doctored for presentation so that they have the kind of beat which is currently popular; much use is made of the 'hollow-cosmos' effect which echo-chamber recording gives… The young men waggle one shoulder or stare, as desperately as Humphrey Bogart, across the tubular chairs.[28]

In the years since these authors and others first attempted to glean meaning from the strange collections of youths dressing and behaving in new ways, class has been the primary critical lens through which most commentators have examined post-War British youth cultures. There are a number of reasons why this should not be particularly surprising. First and most obviously, England has a long national tradition of class rigidity, and as MacInnes and others argued, the emergence of "youth" as a meaningful social category during this period was a locus of potential disruption. Secondly, in the latter half of the twentieth century, England developed a robust left-intellectual tradition around a generally class-based view of historical and cultural processes, from E.P. Thompson's path-breaking "bottom-up"

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[27] See Colin MacInnes, *England, Half English* (New York: Random House, 1961), 55.

[28] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1958; New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998), 189. It is hard not to wonder if the anthropological complaint of this passage is perhaps Hoggart's first exposure to Elvis Presley, as the "echo-chamber recording" was a hallmark of Memphis' famous Sun studios.

social history, to Raymond Williams' ruminations on the intersection of culture and nation, to Richard Hoggart's own work on literature and popular culture.[29] As Paul Gilroy has since argued, these scholars tended to embrace a vision of England with class at its core, occasionally to the exclusion of other concerns, race chief among these.[30]

Finally, the emergence of these youth cultures came at a time in which England was experiencing a dramatic economic realignment. Coming on the heels of the "age of austerity," the harsh period of economic uncertainty and deprivation immediately following the second World War, the new British youth cultures emerged into what Eric Hobsbawm calls the "long boom," a period of growth and affluence that largely mirrored the preceding American post-War economic explosion.[31] The emergence of the "teenager' as a subject of fascination was directly tied to this, as the new youth cultures seemed crucially united by a recourse to disposable income. In the above passages, Hoggart and MacInnes both suggest that a disproportionate amount of that income was dispensed into jukeboxes and record store cash registers. What seems clear is that a robust economy rife with opportunities for young people had created a vision of British youth with unprecedented purchasing power and social and cultural power soon to follow.

All that said, the emphasis on class in studies of post-War British youth subcultures is not without its drawbacks. First, the preponderance of the class-based analyses has produced a tendency to view these subcultures primarily as symbolic relations, rather than real lived activities: the teddy boy's violent behavior is viewed as working-class protest, the

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[29] See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Columbia UP, 1958).
[30] See Paul Gilroy, "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*": *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. pp. 11-42.
[31] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: 1750 to the Present Day* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 230-255.

mod's expensive clothing a satire of bourgeois consumption.[32] This inclination calls to mind the "refusal of thickness" that anthropologist Sherry Ortner has argued often haunts studies of cultures in "resistance."[33]

Even more significantly, as Gilroy suggests, the preoccupation with class has tended to obscure other influences, such as the racial fantasies and new forms of racial thinking that ran through British youth cultures. These ideologies, preoccupations, and sometimes obsessions were most nakedly revealed at juke boxes and record stores, coffee houses and jazz clubs, and by the early 1960s a generation of young Britons had spent considerable time and money feeding their own racial imaginations through music, in modes no less powerful than their young American counterparts and to uniquely varied ends.

Historian George McKay argues that, at least since the arrival of jazz music in England in the early Twentieth Century, there has been a tendency among British musicians and writers to strategically avoid discussions of race. "The racial element of the music's origins, its dominant blackness from the United States, is to be lost in translation, or ignored, or considered secondary, while their own ethnic identity, as whites, is barely worth consideration at all."[34] However, any suggestion that England has enjoyed a markedly less potent relation to syntheses of musical and racial ideology during the twentieth century is readily dispelled, as the long history of black music in England quickly reveals the prominent role of racial ideology in British musical discourse. McKay notes that in 1926 the rector of Exeter College, Oxford implored his congregation not to "take your music from America or from the niggers," and that same year the founding editor of the jazz periodical *Melody*

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[32] For examples of this tendency, see, for instance, Hall and Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, and Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.*

[33] See Sherry Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37:1 (Jan. 1995), 173-193.

[34] George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 10.

Maker, Edgar Jackson, penned an editorial in which he declared that "the habit of associating our music with the primitive and barbarous negro derivation shall cease forthwith."[35] As Andrew Blake argues, American musics have long been "resisted from within and without the British musical establishment on the grounds that these were black or black-derived forms and that black music was dangerous… There was a particular fear that eroticized and narcotized music would make white women open to the advances of black men, the common fear of 'miscegenation' around which many forms of racism have been organized."[36]

The suggestion that British audiences failed to interact with popular music through similar bounds of racial fantasy to their American counterparts is disingenuous, but one must also be careful not to graft American understandings onto British performers.[37] Young Britons' relationships to black music, while profound, were different than Elvis Presley's, or Bob Dylan's, and while post-War England harbored a generous mixture of musical and racial fantasies, the specific content of these was widely variant and home-grown. In the days of rock and roll's first arrival to the United Kingdom, arguably the most spectacular exhibitor of these fantasies was the teddy boy, perhaps the most fretted-over and enduring subcultural figure in post-War England.

Rock and Roll, Riots, and Race

Unlike beatniks or rockers, the teddy boy had no real American analogue. His style and worldview were uniquely British, right down to his clothes, the Edwardian formalwear that provided his name. As Tony Jefferson has argued, their "adoption and personal

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[35] Ibid., 106-107.
[36] Andrew Blake: *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York: Manchester UP, 1997), 85.
[37] Take, for example, when Amiri Baraka accused the Beatles and Stones of "minstrelsy" in his famous essay,"The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)." LeRoi Jones, *Black Music* (1967; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 205.

modification of Savile Row Edwardian suits" was the Teds' "one contribution to culture… their dress represented a symbolic way of expressing and negotiating with their social reality; of giving cultural *meaning* to their social plight."[38] Less charitably, Dick Hebdige has characterized teddy boy style as a "shamelessly fabricated aesthetic," but the teds seem not to have been particularly concerned with authenticity.[39] Their style and attitude was governed by affected indifference to school, the law, and civil society in general, and as posture it was clearly effective. By the mid-1950s the teds had come to be seen as a general menace to Britain, characterized by the press as violent, nihilistic louts.[40]

Although the teds' emergence in England predated the arrival of American rock and roll by several years, the teds were quick to co-opt the music, one of the reasons that the demarcation between the teddy boy and the slightly later "rocker" subculture is often blurry. It is important to emphasize here the fluidity and ever-changing nature of youth subcultures in general: of course, this is partially due to the time-bound nature of "youth," but also to the fact that these cultures never exist in true autonomy. As Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson argue, subcultures tend to experience themselves *in terms* of the dominant culture, and youth subcultures in particular inhabit a "double-articulation," simultaneously located in relation to both the "parent culture" and the "dominant culture."[41] A working-class youth subculture such as the teddy boys thus negatively defined itself in terms of both adult working-class culture, with its affected dress and embrace of American rock and roll, and in terms of dominant "British" culture, through violent behavior and rejection of institutions of work and education. This doubly-determined nature results in constantly shifting and often

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[38] Tony Jefferson, "Cultural Responses of the Teds," in *Resistance Through Rituals*, 86.
[39] Hebdige, 51.
[40] Stanley Cohen describes the teddy boys as producing a "moral panic." See Cohen, 1-3.
[41] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson & Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview," in *Resistance Through Rituals*, 15.

incoherent youth subcultural ideologies, and nowhere is this more evident than in the figure of the teddy boy.

Dick Hebdige argues that, "temperamentally detached from the respectable working class," the ted "found himself on the outside in fantasy. He visibly bracketed off the drab routines of school, the job and home by affecting an exaggerated style which juxtaposed two blatantly plundered forms," namely the Edwardian sartorial style and the sounds of American rock and roll.[42] By the mid-1950s the teds had fully incorporated rock and roll music into their peculiar aesthetic, and in 1956 a moral panic erupted in Britain at the conjunction of the music itself and the violence of its listeners. The British release of the film *Blackboard Jungle*, with its prominent use of Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock," occasioned riots throughout the country, widely seen as the work of teds run amok. Writes historian Edward Pilkington, "[t]he phrase 'Rock 'n' Roll riot' was coined to describe their Saturday night escapades: instead of rocking in their seats the Teds took to ripping them up, which was much more fun."[43] Following this, Dick Bradley argues that "[i]f the cinema riots *fixed* the association of rock 'n' roll with teenagers, they also fixed another association, in the eyes of the parent culture—namely, that between rock 'n' roll and 'juvenile delinquency'."[44]

More specifically, I would argue that a cognitive link between the teddy boys (white English youth), rock and roll (interracial American music) and "riot" violence was forged during this period in England, one that would take on greater proportions in the wake of the Notting Hill Riots of 1958, which one historian describes as "some of the worst outbreaks

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[42] Hebdige, 50.
[43] Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), 94.
[44] Dick Bradley, *Understanding Rock 'n' Roll: Popular Music in Britain 1955-1964* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992), 56.

of civil unrest and racial violence" in Twentieth Century England, and, like the cinema riots, an event for which the teds were widely blamed.[45] As the 1950s progressed, many teds had come to embrace a reactionary conception of British ethnic nationalism that was essentially a form of white supremacy.[46]

For all of their resistance to British dominant culture, the teds' fierce attachment to whiteness was actually an enthusiastic exaggeration of the mainstream during a period of racial upheaval in England, as the collapse of British colonialism had resulted in a steady influx of East and West Indian immigrants to the UK. Historian Bill Schwarz describes a "hardening" of British racial attitudes during this period, and notes that by the late 1950s various polls revealed increasing hostility toward issues such as mixed marriages. Writes Schwarz: "to put this in abstract terms, one could conclude that in these years England was 're-racialised'... the rediscovery on the part of English people in this period of themselves as 'white' is as forceful a historical fact as any of the other more conventional ethnic discoveries of the 1950s and 1960s."[47]

The teds' combustible combination of racial nationalism and antisocial behavior reached a flashpoint during the race riots of August and September of 1958. The demographics of West London's Notting Hill area had grown increasingly Caribbean since Second World War, and while relations between blacks and whites in the area had been generally peaceful, in the late 1950s the neighborhood became increasingly targeted by nationalist/fascist groups such as Sir Oswald Mosley's "Union Movement," organized under the slogan, "Keep Britain White" whose Notting Hill protests were covered by the *London*

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[45] Pilkington, 6.
[46] See Hebdige, 50-51.
[47] Bill Schwarz, "Black Metropolis, White England," in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, eds. Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (New York: Routledge, 1996), 199.

Times.[48] Rioting began on the evening of August 23rd, died down, then resumed in force on August 30, ultimately raging for four consecutive days and nights. Edward Pilkington writes that by Tuesday, September 2nd, "Notting Hill looked like a scene from a film set in the American South… as it began to get dark gangs of several hundred youths started roaming around the Colville area shouting: 'We want a nigger.'"[49]

All in all 108 people (76 white, 32 "coloured") were arrested during the violence, but the harshest sentences were reserved for nine youths who brutally attacked five Caribbean men in separate incidents on the night of August 24; when apprehended they informed police that they had been "nigger-hunting," and received four years apiece from a judge who declared, "[i]t was you men who started the whole of this violence in Notting Hill."[50] The nine young men ranged in age from 17 to 20; all were pointedly identified in the *Times* as either working-class or unemployed. The teddy boy subculture was widely vilified for its overzealous participation in the riots, and in 2002,the *Guardian* newspaper revealed confidential police files confirming that "the disturbances were overwhelmingly triggered by 300-to 400-strong 'Keep Britain White' mobs, many of them Teddy boys armed with iron bars, butcher's knives and weighted leather belts, who went 'nigger-hunting' among the West Indian residents of Notting Hill and Notting Dale."[51]

The teddy boys' devotion to rock and roll—an interracial musical form—and their enthusiastic participation in anti-black violence are difficult to reconcile. Hebdige argues that the teds focused their most intense musical fandom towards white rock and rollers such

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[48] "'Keep Britain White' Call in Notting Hill Area," *London Times* 10 Sept. 1958: 5.
[49] Pilkington, 123.
[50] "Four-Year Terms for Nine 'Nigger-Hunting' Youths," *London Times* 16 Sept. 1958, 4.
[51] Alan Travis, "After 44 Years Secret Papers Reveal Truth about Five Nights of Violence in Notting Hill," *The Guardian* 24 August 2002, available online at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/aug/24/artsandhumanities.nottinghillcarnival2002

as Elvis and Gene Vincent, leaving them "impervious to any sense of contradiction" in their attacks on West Indian immigrants:

> …it was not until black gospel and blues had fused with white country and western to produce a completely new form—rock 'n roll—that the line between the two positions (black and British working-class youth) could be surreptitiously elided…. In the face of what was necessarily a somewhat crude and cerebral appropriation, the subtle dialogue between black and white musical forms which framed the trembling vocals was bound to go unheard. The history of rock's construction was, after all, easily concealed.[52]

While this is an interesting argument, I am not sure it is the end of the story. For starters, with regards to the riots themselves, the counterfactual implication that a teddy boy would infer commonality between black American musicians and West Indian immigrants is a shaky one, as is the general suggestion that there exists a positive correlation between the demographics of one's record collection and one's commitment to racial justice: the long history of white enjoyment of black music in America illustrates as much. Secondly, the suggestion that the teds simply adopted a belief that rock and roll was white in origin, as Edwin Jackson of *Melody Maker* had with jazz in the 1920s, seems unlikely, given the widespread circulation of rock and roll records and the fact that artists such as Berry, Little Richard and Fats Domino had enjoyed British chart success alongside their white American counterparts.

I would instead suggest that teddy boys took what they wanted from the gateway that rock and roll provided into longstanding white fantasies of blackness—danger, aggression, liminality—and simply discarded its real attachment to black bodies, or at least any political uses of that attachment. In doing so, the teddy boys were able to reconcile a worldview marked by ethnic nationalism, a desire to "Keep Britain White" with an enthusiasm for a music that was neither white nor British. This move seems extraordinarily

[52] Hebdige, 50.

important, as it positions the teddy boys as perhaps the first in a long line of white rock and roll fans who have violently mined the music for racialized fantasies of hypermasculinity while strategically ignoring any real connection to black people. One need only look to the infamous Comiskey Park "disco riot" of 1977, or the visible pockets of white supremacy on the Los Angeles punk and hardcore scenes of the 1980s, for other such examples.

The fact of the teddy boys' Britishness is thus also significant, and complicates suggestions that the "whitening" of rock and roll was simply another iteration of an exceptionally American cultural legacy of racial expropriation. In 1950s America rock and roll was still an object of hysteria among white supremacists, evidenced by the persistent linkage of rock and roll music to miscegenation (and, by theoretical extension, communism) by conservative commentators.[53] The teddy boy, in a rather stunning reversal, was both the youthful face of a thuggishly insurgent white supremacy in England *and* the country's most visible connoisseur of rock and roll records. Through the high-profile public panic over the teddy boy in the wake of the "Rock 'n' Roll Riots," a panic shortly thereafter transferred to the Notting Hill riots, in late-1950s England a powerful imaginative link was forged between American rock and roll and racial violence.

Trad, Skiffle, and Becoming the Beatles

For all of their significance as England's most visible early rock and roll connoisseurs, by and large the teds were not a music-making subculture, and never taking the important step from buying Elvis Presley records to buying an electric guitar. One of the prominent and influential music-*making* subcultures of 1950s England, that of traditional, or "trad," jazz, existed in almost direct opposition to the teddy boy. Musical cousins to the more literary "beatniks," "traddies" tended to be openly intellectual, politically liberal and

[53] See Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Da Capo, 1988), esp. 41-43.

musically snobbish.[54] Trad as a form boasted a strangely nostalgic emphasis on what were considered to be the original, or traditional, roots of American jazz music, specifically the acoustic, duple-meter-driven New Orleans jazz combo. Trad was also far more enduring than a simple fad, lasting into the 1960s and even still persisting in England to this day, albeit in niche form. [55]

Historians and critics have rightfully treated trad as part of the larger transatlantic interest in "folk" music during this period partly discussed in the previous chapter, although in the U.S. this interest did not encompass traditional New Orleans jazz to nearly such strong degrees.[56] Like other folk revivalists, many in the trad community saw themselves as the last bastion of "true" jazz music, as evidenced by a 1961 *Melody Maker* editorial that claimed, "[t]here's no U.S. jazz scene; it's our job to teach the Americans about jazz."[57] George McKay suggests that the traddie's avowed disinterest in bebop and other more modern styles sprung from an acute awareness of the technical difficulties of these forms, and that "bebop was understood as an avowedly racialized cultural form…. Its complexities, secrets, language, and semiotics of style were expressions of black masculine authority, originality, exclusivity."[58] This partly explains the traddie's embrace of earlier forms of jazz music that featured relatively simple rhythmic and harmonic structures, less emphasis on individual virtuosity, and, crucially, more potential for dancing. Trad offered a music that was relatively accessible for both musicians and listeners on a variety of levels, and could be learned and performed by homegrown players without endless practice or immersion.

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[54] An excellent treatment of trad as a political culture can be found in McKay's *Circular Breathing*, esp. pp, 48-59.
[55] There are numerous online trad communities at the time of this writing; see http://www.jazznorthwest.co.uk/ for just one example.
[56] See, for instance, McKay, esp. 30-33, and 47-86.
[57] Chris Barber, "There's No U.S. Jazz Scene: It's Our Job to Teach the Americans About Jazz," *Melody Maker* 30 May 1961, 2-3.
[58] McKay, 98.

Trad as a musical and cultural movement began shortly after the Second World War but reached its apex in the 1950s. Among its more significant figures were trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton, trombonist Chris Barber, clarinetist Acker Bilk, and, perhaps most centrally, trumpeter and cornetist Ken Colyer. Musician and writer Chas McDevitt refers to Colyer as "the Godfather of British New-Orleans-style jazz," a characterization seemingly born out by Colyer's influence on the music and trad ideology.[59] In 1952, Colyer joined the merchant marines with the sole purpose of making his way to New Orleans, where he jumped ship and played in a band with African American clarinetist George Lewis, his adventures catalogued in a series of widely read, foreign-correspondent missives to *Melody Maker*. When he was ultimately deported back to England in 1953, rumors circulated that his return was occasioned by his courageous and flagrant violations of the city's segregationist racial mores.[60]

Racial imagination and musical ideology were intertwined to dizzying extremes in trad jazz. On one hand, and much to their credit, traddies tended to be attuned to issues of racial justice: these concerns were initially focused abroad, toward black-white relations in South Africa and the United States, but throughout the 1950s would become increasingly germane to racial strife within England as well.[61] The flipside side of the traddies' enthusiasm for racial equality was a naked and often problematic fetishization of black musicianship. In his 1989 autobiography, Ken Colyer confessed his belief that "I was born about sixty years too late, the wrong colour, and in the wrong country."[62] Others apparently took this wish to more literal extremes, and Harry Shapiro writes of a tale that "circulated on

[59] Chas McDevitt, *Skiffle: The Definitive Inside Story* (London: Robson, 1997), 54.
[60] Ibid., 5.
[61] For a discussion of progressive politics in British trad see McKay, esp. 47-69.
[62] McKay, 93.

the jazz scene of the man who went into Charing Cross Hospital to see if they had injections to turn his white skin black."[63]

Traddies shared many of the contradictions of American folk revivalists: they were politically progressive (Colyer was a vocal supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) yet aesthetically reactionary; they were self-appointed white British protectors of black American music at least a half-century old; and they embraced a fiercely anti-modern stance while cobbling together a musical subculture that was uniquely enabled by circumstances of modernity (the transatlantic circulation of records, the post-war economic boom). And like the folk revival, when rock and roll began to invade England in the mid-1950s, trad had little use for it.

If trads and teds offered competing racial imaginations through which they filtered their musical tastes—the trads by placing black music and musicians on an exalted pedestal, the teds by selectively and incompletely re-racializing their music in service of a white supremacist worldview—both subcultures came to their music secondhand, its authenticity bound in no small part to its Americanness.

The most significant "homegrown" musical subculture in 1950s England, skiffle, emerged out of trad but would have far greater impact on rock and roll than any jazz or folk-based musical form. In January 1956, singer and guitarist Lonnie Donegan shot up the British hit parade with a frenetic version of Leadbelly's classic "Rock Island Line."[64] Thus began what would soon come to be known in England as the "skiffle craze," a brief and strange musical moment that would prove to have resounding (if unintended) implications for global popular music in the next decade. Skiffle musician and historian Chas McDevitt notes that the word "skiffle" is most likely Scottish in origin and appears frequently in Ulster

[63] Harry Shapiro, *Alexis Korner* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 62.
[64] Lonnie Donegan, "Rock Island Line," Decca FJ10647, 1956, 45rpm.

dialect; its slang meaning is simply, "in a hurry."[65] As a musical term, the word first appears in association with African American musicians: in 1925, clarinetist Jimmy O'Bryant recorded with a group called "Chicago Skiffle," and in 1928 Paramount Records released a compilation entitled *Hometown Skiffle* that featured bluesmen such as Charley Patton and Blind Lemon Jefferson. In its American contexts the word is curiously amorphous, loosely applied to energetic, improvisatory music that could range from New Orleans-style jazz to downhome country blues. The Scots-Irish origins of the term suggest a significant degree of white (and quite possibly rural) involvement as well, although the few American recordings that bear the term tend to feature African American performers.[66]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the impetus for "reviving" skiffle came from the trad scene, though it must be stressed that, unlike trad itself, skiffle was less a revival than a re-imagination. As writer Harry Shapiro describes it, skiffle "was essentially a jazz-band rhythm section with the voice carrying the melody instead of the brass frontline," and British skiffle supposedly originated from the rhythm section "breaks" featured in Ken Colyer's band, which at various points included musicians such as bassist/trombonist Chris Barber, guitarist Alexis Korner, and Lonnie Donegan himself.[67]

Skiffle was a passing if intense fad in England—Donegan, the music's longest-lasting star, had his last British chart hit in 1962, fittingly departing the charts as the Beatles' "Love Me Do" was entering.[68] The cultural impact of the skiffle craze in the U.K., however, was enormous: if trad had appealed to young musicians for its relative simplicity of performance, skiffle was even easier. The typical skiffle performance contained three or four chords, an

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[65] McDevitt, 17-18.
[66] This prehistory of British skiffle in its American contexts can be found in McDevitt, 13-37.
[67] Shapiro, 48.
[68] All British chart information derived from Neil Warwick, Jon Kutner & Tony Brown, *The Big Book of British Charts: Singles and Albums,* 3rd Edition (London: Omnibus, 2004), 342.

easily accessible vocal melody, minimal dynamic variation and simple, driving rhythmic feature. In its emphasis on speed and energy it was undeniably effective dance music, and during the mid-1950s "skiffle cellars" throughout the British Isles were populated with young people. In the words of British pop singer Adam Faith, "Anyone who could afford to buy a guitar and learn three chords was in business as a skiffler. It grew in cellars, nice dark cellars, and it shot up like mushrooms."[69]

The legacy of the skiffle craze as introducing young Britons to the *practice* of music—and particularly a guitar-based, American-derived, aurally-transmitted music—is hugely significant. McDevitt suggests that by 1957 there were between 30,000 and 50,000 skiffle groups throughout the United Kingdom; while this number is impossible to confirm and might be astronomically high, that same year a major British retailer estimated selling *250,000* guitars, as opposed to just 6,000 in 1950.[70] A notable and perhaps unsurprising side effect of this popularity was a tendency among musicians, promoters and record companies to label nearly any record made by young English people as "skiffle" for the duration of the craze, and such fluidity makes the ideological components of skiffle as a genre, already remarkably diffuse, difficult to pin down.

The racial imagination of skiffle seems to have been far less foregrounded than that of trad, where the presumed correlation of skin color to musical ability was sometimes explicitly stated. Because of the pre-existence of traditional British folk music that bore an understandably resemblance to American folk music, and which would itself be the subject of a revival in late-1950s England, skiffle was far more easily reconciled with Englishness than trad, even if many of skiffle's figures of admiration, such as Leadbelly, Josh White, and Big Bill Broonzy, were African American, and Lonegan's own repertoire included minstrel-

[69] McDevitt, 8.
[70] Ibid., 6-7.

ish folk songs such as "Pick a Bale of Cotton."[71] As Iain Chambers has argued in regards to skiffle, "the paradoxes of white men seeking to reproduce faithfully a black folk music, of Britishers slavishly imitating a now largely extinct Afro-American cultural form, drew it up short of such artificially purist closure."[72] George McKay draws attention to the pointed use of "slavishly" in Chambers' analysis, and while the influence of Leadbelly on Donegan's "Rock Island Line" vocal is unmistakable, Donegan exhibits little of the obsessive attention to black blues verisimilitude that Mick Jagger would bring to the Rolling Stones just a few years later.[73]

Skiffle's import lay neither in its aesthetic achievements nor in its ideology of authenticity, both of which were modest, but rather in its availability, both in that it was easy to play, and that it was sufficiently hybrid enough to welcome amateur performers from London to Liverpool who might have previously balked at playing "American" music. Major British musicians who began their amateur careers in skiffle bands during this period include Van Morrison, Roger Daltry (later of the Who), David Gilmour (later of Pink Floyd), and, most famously, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, whose musical collaboration began in a Lennon-founded skiffle group called the Quarrymen. As McCartney later remembered, "once Lonnie Donegan came along, we got the feeling we could actually be part of it. We could actually do it."[74] The influence of skiffle can be heard in the Beatles' music on such recordings as "I've Just Seen a Face," McCartney's composition from *Help!* that features driving acoustic guitar and a stomping, two-beat rhythm, and "Maggie Mae" from *Let It Be,* a

[71] Donegan released "Pick a Bale of Cotton" as a single on Pye Records in 1962; it was his last to chart in England.
[72] Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), 49.
[73] McKay, 100.
[74] Paul Du Noyer, *Liverpool: Wondrous Place* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), vi.

traditional Liverpool folk song that Lennon and McCartney first performed in their Quarrymen days.

Perhaps the most notable legacy of skiffle in the Beatles' catalogue is the manic energy that marks the group's earliest successes, particularly the group's first U.K. number-one single, "Please Please Me," which reached the top of the *NME* charts in February of 1963.[75] "Please Please Me" is aggressive and desperate, "Rock Island Line" as wedded to Little Richard, the Everly Brothers and early Motown, all filtered through the *Reeperbahn* of Hamburg, where the young band spent large portions of the early 1960s honing their craft through amphetamine-fueled performances that often lasted upwards of six hours in a given night. As Beatles historian Devin McKinney writes, "the Beatles had been a skilled but not outstanding live group, pre-Hamburg; by the time they left, they were a buzz saw—no group on the scene could match them."[76]

"Please Please Me" reveals the dramatic degree of musical proficiency that the Beatles had accumulated since their skiffle beginnings, and by extension it demonstrates the evolution of skiffle from novelty music to a critical ingredient in British rock and roll. The song is a barrage of rhythmic and melodic hooks, the most memorable of which being the descending diatonic riff that opens the song, as Lennon's harmonica doubles Harrison's guitar in makeshift imitation of a horn section. More subtle examples include the syncopated rhythm-guitar figure played authoritatively between each stanza of the verse, as well as the eighth-note pickup that leads into the song's chorus, a table-setting trick nicked from Tamla-Motown records like "You've Really Got a Hold On Me," to which the band had been listening with increasing attention.[77]

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[75] *New Musical Express* 22 Feb. 1963, 5.
[76] Devin McKinney, *Magic Circles: The Beatles in Dream and History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003), 33.
[77] The Beatles' relationship with Motown will be discussed more extensively in the following chapter.

To contemporary listeners the record's most striking aspect would likely have been its vocal, which Lennon and McCartney sing together in the type of harmonies that would soon be called "Beatle-esque." The vocal performances have a clear and perfectly blended simplicity, as Lennon sings the song's descending melody line while McCartney holds the root in the high octave, an effect reminiscent of the "close harmony" technique heard on Everly Brothers recordings such as "Cathy's Clown" and "Bye Bye Love."[78] Lyrically, the song contains an element of salaciousness absent from "Love Me Do," its chosen subject of sexual frustration addressed with surprising frankness. The opening couplet—"Last night I said these words to my girl / I know you never even try, girl"—is phrased such that "my" and "try" are melismatically elongated into an emphatic plea, while the Scouse accent renders "words" as *"wuhds*," "girl" as "*guhl*."

The overall effect is a performance filled with confidence and bracing newness, but the true invention of "Please Please Me" is the way it synthesizes such a thick array of musical influences—the ersatz-uptown harmonica line, the Everly-inflected harmonies, the Motown-style call-and-response on the "come on / *come on!*" chorus, and of course the manic energies of skiffle—and emerges with something undeniably distinct. In "Please Please Me" we can hear the significance of the transition from Quarrymen to Beatles, and the band's years of shuttling between Liverpool and Hamburg, but we can also hear the huge importance of the brief period between the skiffle craze and Beatlemania on British popular music generally. For all its astonishing, out-of-nowhere success, "Please Please Me" belies the notion that the British Invasion was anything resembling an "overnight" phenomenon.

Despite its indirect impact on global popular music in the coming decade, the skiffle craze barely touched the American charts, although Lonnie Donegan did make the Top 10

[78] The Beatles, *Please Please Me,* Parlophone PCS 3042, 1963, 33rpm.

stateside twice, once for "Rock Island Line," and again in 1961 with the novelty song, "Does Your Chewing-Gum Lose Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight?"[79] By this time skiffle was floundering in England, partly run aground by its own limitations, and partly supplanted by a new musical culture that was also drawn from the trad community. This was the movement of British blues, or "rhythm and blues" (the British press used the terms more or less interchangeably), and as the 1960s unfolded, it would emerge as one of the decade's most significant subcultural musical movements.

Blues, The Rolling Stones, and Bo Diddley's Buddy Holly

If Lonnie Donegan was the towering influence of British skiffle, his equivalent in British blues was guitarist and bandleader Alexis Korner, though Korner never achieved anywhere near Donegan's level of commercial success and popular recognition. A musician, bandleader, disc jockey, critic and collector, by the early 1960s British blues essentially ran through Korner and his band, Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated. While perhaps most famous for his role in the early career of the Rolling Stones—Mick Jagger and Charlie Watts had previously played together in Korner's band, and Korner secured the Stones some of their earliest bookings—Korner was a mentor figure to countless other young British musicians and blues enthusiasts. Born in 1928 in London to immigrant parents (his mother Greek, his father a divorced Austrian Jew), Korner endured a somewhat speckled childhood, part of which was spent in a quasi-reformatory called Finchden Manor to which he'd been sentenced after stealing 78s from a record store in Shepherd's Bush. In 1947 Korner joined the British Army, where his growing knowledge of music and fluent German secured him a

[79] Lonnie Donegan, "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavor (On the Bedpost Over Night)," Dot 15911, 1961, 45rpm.

position at a radio station in Hamburg, the same city that would play host to the young Beatles years later.[80]

Like Donegan, Korner had strong links to trad jazz—his first major gig as a performer was as a banjo player in Chris Barber's band—yet Korner seems to have never embraced trad's rigid purism. Korner was an avid bebop fan at a time when many traddies scorned the music; conversely, despite a friendship with Donegan he despised the skiffle craze, finding the music aesthetically impoverished and derivative and taking to the pages of *Melody Maker to* declare that "British skiffle is, most certainly, a commercial success, but musically it rarely exceeds the mediocre and is, in general, so abysmally low that it defies proper musical judgment."[81] As skiffle exploded and trad continued to thrive, Korner found himself increasingly drawn to American blues music. In 1955 he had been instrumental in bringing bluesman Big Bill Broonzy to England, and shortly thereafter Korner and Barber arranged for Muddy Waters' first English visit. By 1957 Korner had left his job at the BBC to become a full-time musician and blues evangelist, and by early 1958 had made his first recordings with Blues Incorporated.

Korner was a self-made intellectual, known for engaging visiting American musical figures from Alan Lomax to Charles Mingus in far-ranging conversations well into the night. He published prolifically as a writer, both in magazines like *Melody Maker* and in liner notes that he frequently wrote for UK reissues of classic American blues recordings. He was also, by all accounts, extraordinarily generous to younger musicians; although born a short but crucial generation earlier than apostles such as Jagger and Eric Clapton, his musical, intellectual and ideological impact on these musicians makes him a foundational figure in British rock and roll.

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[80] The definitive biography of Korner is Harry Shapiro's, from which I draw biographical information here.
[81] Alexis Korner, "'Skiffle' or 'Piffle'?" *Melody Maker* 28 July 1956, 5.

If skiffle had been a brief but powerful fad, British blues was a true subcultural movement: oppositional, anti-commercial, and passionately high-minded. The subculture of British blues was obsessed with authenticity, but whereas trad had placed a premium on meticulous imitation, be it in terms of instrumentation, arrangement, repertoire or performance style, British blues was not as outwardly concerned with attempting to *replicate* the sounds of Robert Johnson, Big Bill Broonzy, or Muddy Waters. Korner viewed himself as more promoter than protectionist: whereas trad saw itself as the last bastion of "true" jazz music, Korner, prodigious in his efforts to bring American blues musicians to England, made no such claims. Black American performers such as Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, who toured England frequently in this period, were undoubtedly revered, but their living presence dulled impulses towards obsessive conservationism among young British musicians. In his 2010 memoir *Life*—among other things, a wonderful document of the British blues subculture in this period—Keith Richards recounts the tensions between older preservationists (whom Richards explicitly and disparagingly associates with trad) and younger practitioners like himself, in the context of an electrified Muddy Waters concert in the early 1960s:

> But for this audience, blues was only blues if somebody got up there in a pair of old blue dungarees and sang about how his old lady left him. None of these blues purists could play anything. But their Negroes had to be dressed in overalls and go 'Yes'm, boss.'…. They wanted a frozen frame, not knowing that what they were listening to was only part of the process; something had gone before and it was going to move on.[82]

British blues also lacked the explicit ties to political causes that many trad musicians had cultivated, and the political conscience of British blues tended to be more vague and introspective. As Harry Shapiro argues, the "communal" elements of trad, specifically its emphasis on collective improvisation, was conducive to politicizing, the generation of

[82] Keith Richards with James Fox, *Life* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2010), 83.

musicians who came under Korner's tutelage seemed less interested in the notion of an intermingled political and musical ideology, viewing the blues as more of a vehicle for personal liberation than social or political. It was, in Shapiro's words, "their own sense of 'otherness' as much as social commentary" that attracted bored or otherwise-disaffected British youth to the music, a yearning to express a sense of *personal* authenticity rather than replicating the authenticity of those who, to paraphrase Colyer, had been born sixty years earlier and another color.[83]

British blues was as much an intellectual subculture of "angry young men" as it was a musical one, and tended to attract poised, self-serious and ambitious followers. Mick Jagger's time as a student at the London School of Economics is a frequently remarked-upon piece of trivia, as though it is deeply ironic that one of the world's most recognizable rock stars came from intellectual and economic privilege. Considered in terms of Jagger's beginnings as a singer and harmonica player on the London blues scene, it might be more remarkable if his background were anything else.

While an impressive number of devotees of the scene would later ascend to rock stardom, in its early years British blues' relationship to rock and roll ranged from ambivalence to outright antipathy. Consider, for instance, the Rolling Stones' repeated insistence on *not* being called a rock and roll group in their early career; "if you call them rock 'n' roll, they positively glower," reported *New Musical Express* in the summer of 1963, around the same time that Jagger told the small publication *Jazz News* that "I hope they don't call us a rock and roll band."[84] Even in 1964, when the Stones were on top of the *Melody Maker* charts with a cover of the black American Valentinos' "It's All Over Now" (a song

[83] Shapiro, 102-103.
[84] First quote from Chris Williams, "Rolling Stones R and B Champs," *New Musical Express* 23 August 1963, p. 8; second qtd. in Shapiro, 112.

released on Sam Cooke's SAR Records, and written by a young Bobby Womack)," Jagger "wrote" a column for *Melody Maker* in which he spoke disparagingly of Motown, calling the Temptations and Marvelettes "boring" and only speaking positively of Marvin Gaye's "Can I Get a Witness"—a song the Stones would soon cover, and which is, not incidentally, a double-time twelve-bar blues.[85]

Andrew Blake has argued that as the British blues scene progressed into the 1960s, the cults of exaltation that surrounded its musicians relied increasingly on a European romantic tradition of the intellectual and artistic hero, a troubling development given the African American background of their source material.[86] But I would suggest that the potential for white male cooptation was present in British blues since its subcultural inception: by conflating fantasies of racial authenticity with fantasies of personal authenticity British blues had already radically de-racialized itself. This is not to say that British blues musicians had deliberately rendered the blues white, any more than Muddy Waters had deliberately rendered his music black, but therein lies the point. The British blues community, as epitomized by Korner, embraced a notion of the blues as a radically democratic form: if one were compelled to sing the blues, then by all means one should, regardless of skin color, provided one treated the music with the intellectual respect and rigor it deserved.

Taken on its surface this was a bold idea, one that would allow for a premium on creativity unafforded by trad or skiffle. As Chicago-based harmonica player Sonny Boy Williamson put it to a *Melody Maker* interviewer in 1963, "I enjoy hearing them sing blues here; it makes me feel good. In the States, you don't have no white boys sing the blues."[87]

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[85] Mick Jagger, "The Top Spot? I Don't Care a Damn…" *Melody Maker* 11 July 1964, 3.
[86] Blake, 125.
[87] "Mystery Man of the Blues," *Melody Maker* 11 January 1963, 15.

Of course, this dual move to simultaneously democratize and rarify the blues did not mean that the British blues community was less obsessed with racial imagination than the trad community had been; if anything, the move away from more overtly political engagements of racial justice made the blues community's emphasis on the more fantastical and metaphysical elements of racial thinking even more pronounced.

The British engagement with the blues was romantic and mystical, and while the still-living American forebears of this music became figures of intense adulation, while deceased performers such as Robert Johnson were fetishized to mythic proportions.[88] The more feverish racial fantasies of trad—those that bypassed the political into the realms of mystical obsession—found renewed intensity in the British blues and rhythm and blues communities, to such a degree that by the late 1960s Led Zeppelin could wed musical tropes of African American blues to lyrics drawn from J.R.R. Tolkien novels with no apparent sense of discontinuity.[89]

Why the British blues scene engaged with racial imagination along more mystical lines than its trad predecessors is difficult to know, although one intriguing explanation lies in the problem of the voice. Trad jazz was, by and large, an instrumental music, whereas blues tended to be more vocally-based, hence the almost immediate centrality of a figure such as Jagger. The issue of the voice and race in popular music seems central to even the most casual elisions of musical and racial thinking: the notion that voices confirm racial expectations—or, conversely, disrupt them—is commonplace, and we expect vocal character and performance style to act so smoothly as indices of racial identity that we find it quite

[88] Musicologist Susan McClary and historian George Lipsitz have both written (quite critically) of the white blues obsession with Robert Johnson, McClary in *Conventional Wisdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 53-62, and Lipsitz in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998), pp. 199-127.

[89] See, for instance, "Ramble On" from Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin II,* Atlantic 8236, 1969, 33rpm.

literally remarkable when these expectations are disrupted. To colloquially refer to a singer as "sounding black" or "sounding white" is to gesture towards an array of commonly-understood aesthetic criteria: the purported ability of Elvis Presley to sing with "the Negro sound and the Negro feel" has led to generations' worth of apocrypha, the racial ambiguity of one of the most recognizable voices in world history forever trapped between accusations of racial theft on one hand, and encomiums of racial transcendence on the other.[90]

While one could argue that this assumption might be due to the vococentrism of popular music—Ingrid Monson has shown the frequency of similar such statements in jazz discourses—I would argue that the link between the musical voice and racial imagination runs deeper than simple familiarity or inclination of taste.[91] Jacques Lacan famously argued for the voice's status as an "*objet a*," or "*objet petit a,*" a "privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real… Its privilege—and also that by which the subject for so long has been misunderstood as being in its dependence—derives from its very structure."[92] As Michel Chion has elaborated, rather than simply "a vehicle for the verbal signifier," the "object voice" is caught between nature and culture, body and non-body, self and Other: "the voice is there to be forgotten in its materiality," writes Chion; "only at this cost does it fill its primary function."[93]

The musical voice has long been imagined to have a strange ontology of its own, imbued with an excess of expression but the specific meaning of which is nonetheless

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[90] The quotation is drawn from Sam Phillips' alleged declaration that "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars." Although Phillips' assistant, Marion Keisker, claimed to have heard him say it, there is no documentation that he ever did, although the quote has circulated profusely and is among the most famous associated with Elvis. Keisker qtd. in James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 72.

[91] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), esp. 74-78.

[92] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 83.

[93] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia UP, 1999), 1.

ineffable. Writing with regards to the voice's role in music, Mladen Dolar suggests that "the voice appears to be the locus of true expression, the place where what cannot be said can nevertheless be conveyed… This illusion of transcendence accompanied the long history of the voice as the agent of the sacred, and the highly acclaimed role of music was based on its ambiguous link with both nature and divinity."[94] This "illusion of transcendence" is particularly powerful because it fetishizes the voice, turns it into a "thing' of admiration, thus "run[ning] the risk of losing the very thing it tries to worship and revere."[95]

It is in this positioning between the bodily and extra-bodily (or inter-bodily) that the conceptual thicket of the voice begins to mirror some of the more complex and contradictory impulses of racial thought. As Richard Dyer has argued, a primary component of historical white racism has been the belief that whiteness—and, by extension race itself—is both physical and metaphysical, that white skin could function as a window to the soul.[96] Non-white people were thought to be lacking certain spiritual qualities, either completely or at least in comparison to white people. Racial ideology, therefore, has always been poised at the borders of visibility and invisibility, and it is this fundamental tension that enables racist thought to begin with: the idea that what one *looks* like is fundamentally correlated to what one *is* like.

The concept of race and the Lacanian concept of the voice thus seem to operate on parallel vectors: both are markers of difference and, in many cases, desire; both are simultaneously *of* the body and beyond it; and the ontology of each is threatened by a fetishization of aurality, such as that which occurs in music. After all, depending on which side one is on, the affront or the triumph of an Elvis Presley resides most fundamentally in

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[94] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 30-31.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 13.

the idea that *white people are not supposed to sing like that*. Race and the musical voice, particularly in the age of mass media and rock and roll, share such a profoundly overdetermined relationship that we resort to a sort of magical thinking to describe it, as evidenced by that most mystical shorthand for black vocal authenticity: "soul."

The British blues and R&B scene had to confront the problem of the racialized voice in ways unfamiliar to trad, which was largely instrumental, or skiffle, which incorporated enough elements of white Anglo-American music to render it racially indeterminate. The ambivalences—personal, social, and musical—aroused by this confrontation may account for the racial imagination that British blues adopted, one that was obsessed with authenticity but which could not allow that authenticity to become racialized to the degree that it negated the practices of its members. The prioritizing of personal "authenticity" over racial identity may have been a problematic move by the nascent British blues subculture but it was also necessary for the subculture's survival, the only way to reconcile its expressive ideals with the whiteness of its idealists.

These complexities can be heard in rawest form in the early music of the Rolling Stones, and are perhaps most productively exemplified in the band's 1963 cover of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," which became their most successful release to date in the UK, reaching number three on the charts and even cracking the U.S. top fifty.[97] Holly's original version of "Not Fade Away" employed a figure commonly known as the "Bo Diddley beat," named for the musician who popularized it on his eponymous 1955 hit, "Bo Diddley."[98] The "Bo Diddley beat" is itself an iteration of the 3/2 clave beat that Christopher

[97] The Rolling Stones, "Not Fade Away," Decca F11845, 1964, 45rpm.
[98] Bo Diddley, "Bo Diddley," Checker 1098, 1955, 45rpm. Buddy Holly, "Not Fade Away," Brunswick 55035, 1957, 45rpm.

Washburne characterizes as "Afro-Cuban," though almost certainly West African in its origin.[99]

The original recording of "Not Fade Away" is a tangled black Atlantic web indeed, one that finds a white musician from Lubbock, Texas (Holly) paying homage to a Chicago rhythm and blues musician (Diddley), who was in turn largely responsible for introducing a West African rhythm to rhythm and blues, and consequently rock and roll, in the mid-1950s. Holly's version of "Not Fade Away," released in 1957, is performed in the singer's own inimitable style, and aside from the beat, no one would mistake Holly's performance for Bo Diddley. "Bo Diddley" is marked by a pulsing, reverb-drenched, electric guitar, driving tom-toms, and a wash of maracas at the front of the mix; "Not Fade Away," while employing an identical rhythmic figure, has a clean electric guitar, understated percussion, and clean-cut backing vocals. Holly's vocal style was famously unique and has no trace of Diddley's Delta drawl (Diddley was born in Mississippi). Long after his death in 1959, Holly would remain a highly influential figure for many young British rock and rollers; one of the earliest John Lennon and Paul McCartney recordings, released as part of the 1996 Beatles *Anthology* series, is a performance of Holly's "That'll Be The Day" from 1958, recorded in a Liverpool record booth.

The Rolling Stones were, of course, exceptions to this sentiment: for Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, music was meant to be played like Chuck Berry or Muddy Waters, or ought not be played at all. In his memoir Keith Richards describes a diary he kept from January to March of 1963, less than a year before the band recorded "Not Fade Away." "Inside the cover of the pocket diary are the heavily inked words 'Chuck,' 'Reed,' 'Diddley.'

[99] See Christopher Washburne, "The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 17:1 (Spring 1997), 59-80.

There you have it. That was all we listened to at the time. Just American blues or rhythm and blues or country blues."[100]

In many senses, then, "Not Fade Away" was a perfect match for the Stones: bigger Bo Diddley fans than they were Buddy Holly fans, the Stones' version of "Not Fade Away" sounds remarkably as one might imagine a Diddley's own version of the song would, or at least as the Stones might imagine it would. Keith Richards' overdriven guitar jangles at the front of the mix, Brian Jones plays blues harmonica fills to punctuate Jagger's vocal phrases, and the "Bo Diddley beat" is even more exaggerated than it is on "Bo Diddley," by hand-claps, maracas, a tambourine and Charlie Watts' pounding tom-toms. The Stones also ratchet up the tempo considerably from Holly's original version of "Not Fade Away"—the cover clocks in at a cool one minutes and forty eight seconds, nearly forty seconds shorter than Holly's version.

But perhaps the most significant aspect of "Not Fade Away" is the vocal performance: unlike the band's previous single releases, on which Jagger sounds affected and unsure of himself, "Not Fade Away" suggests an air of comfort and confidence with the material that is lacking on the band's first single, a cover of Chuck Berry's "Come On."[101] Jagger culls a darkness from "Not Fade Away" that's embedded in the song's lyrics but largely missing from the original version, awash as it is in Holly's playful phrasing and trademark hiccups. "I'm gonna tell you how it's gonna be / You're gonna give your love to me," sings Jagger in the song's opening couplet, the second line delivered with sneering force.

The significance of "Not Fade Away" being a Buddy Holly song is crucial to this assessment. For reasons pertaining to the voice described above, the Stones' obsessive

[100] Richards, 103.
[101] The Rolling Stones, "Come On," Decca F11675, 1963, 45rpm.

relation to African American music may have been most fraught for Jagger, and while the dogged efforts of a white Englishman to avoid sounding both white and English are a common feature of the earliest Rolling Stones records, "Not Fade Away" finds these more blatant affects at a minimum. By accentuating the Bo Diddley beat and blues cadences of Holly's original, the Stones were in the position of making a "blacker" version of the song than the original, and by tackling a revision of the distinctly Caucasian-sounding Holly, Jagger temporarily freed himself from preoccupations with "authentic" verisimilitude, a freedom productively manifested in the still-potent excitement of "Not Fade Away."

For all that would later be made of Jagger's iconic rock star panache, as a vocalist his most enduring contribution to rock and roll music was his earnestness: from a technical standpoint he was deficient to John Lennon or Paul McCartney, lacking either's intonation, range, and harmonic acuity. Jagger's most significant musical act was to recognize these deficiencies and proceed anyways, carving out a vocal style that relied on blues-influenced phrasing techniques, and the dramatic flair of American R&B stars such as James Brown and Solomon Burke. Jagger's is a voice steeped in the radically democratic ideology of British blues, in which the will and desire to perform black music was seen as self-justifying, and worthy on its own terms. "Not Fade Away" is the first sound of this voice reaching something like fruition, and this development would have massive ramifications for rock and roll music in the years going forward, for better and worse.

* * * * *

The "British Invasion" did not happen suddenly, nor simultaneously, nor unilaterally. Nor did it happen "to" America; by the time the Beatles arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport in early 1964, the degree to which they had been steeped in American music, and American-derived music, was so profound that it might be more accurate to suggest that the "British

Invasion" in fact happened to England long before it came home to roost in the United States, and that the transatlantic crossing of Beatlemania was in fact simply one particularly prominent leg of a multidirectional and ongoing journey of black Atlantic musical activity. Nor was it the termination of this journey: as the next chapter illustrates, the Beatles continued to engage with black American music well after their stateside arrival in 1964, even if these engagements were sometimes obscured by the various mania the band inspired.

In late 1964, months after the Beatles had touched down in New York City, the Rolling Stones finally had their first Top Ten U.S. hit with a cover of the Jerry Ragovoy composition, "Time Is On My Side," first performed by New Orleanian rhythm and blues star Irma Thomas. The band would reach the Top Ten stateside again in early 1965 with "The Last Time," an original composition based loosely around the Staple Singers' 1955 gospel classic, "This May Be The Last Time." It was not until summer of 1965 that the Stones would have their first international number one hit, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," a Jagger-Richards composition that established the group as one of the most influential and, perhaps ironically, original musical acts of the 1960s.

When the subculture of British blues was wedded to the mass culture of rock and roll, most significantly through the Rolling Stones, it would alter both the musical and racial imagination of the music and trigger a chain reaction marked by dialectical flickerings of expropriation and homage, fetishization and appreciation, opportunism and guilt. As the last chapter of this dissertation will show, the Rolling Stones' relationship to racialized fantasies of musical authenticity—and attendant ideas of masculinity, sexuality, violence and desire—would inform both popular conceptions of the band, and the band's conceptions of themselves, throughout the 1960s and beyond. These imaginings, and the aesthetic responses they triggered, can all, in some way, be traced to the subcultural movement of

British blues, and its position within a broader constellation of musical and racial imagination that percolated in British youth culture in the long moment before "Invasion." as the 1960s drew to a close the Rolling Stones would find themselves as one of the last bastions of interracialism in rock and roll, clinging to the African American roots of a music they'd only reluctantly embarked upon playing in the first place.

- Chapter 3 -
"Friends Across the Sea": Motown, the Beatles, and Sites and Sounds of Crossover

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> When I think about the Sixties, I think of two things: I think of Motown, and I think of the Beatles. Those are the major influences… we all really influenced each other. That's really what it's all about.
>
> -Stevie Wonder[1]

To examine the run of *Billboard* magazine, the frenetic weathervane publication of the American music industry, between late 1963 through the middle of the decade is to behold two stories unfolding simultaneously, one dramatically, the other more subtly. The first of these is the American breakthrough of the Beatles, a happening that remapped the commercial, artistic and geographic landscape of popular music. In early November of 1963 there was a small item in the thoroughly-buried "Britain" portion of the magazine entitled "Beatles Soar to Success" that called the group "the sensation of the [British] nation."[2] In mid-December *Billboard* noted that the band's latest single had sold already almost a million copies in England a week in advance of its release, and reported that "[t]he group flies to New York on February 7 to make its debut on the 'Ed Sullivan Show' two nights later."[3] The band was still nowhere to be found on the magazine's Pop Charts, however, which that week were topped by the Singing Nun's "Dominique."[4]

A few issues later *Billboard* published a review of "I Want to Hold Your Hand," the Beatles' first stateside Capitol Records single. The write-up, in its jargon-ridden entirety: "This is the hot British group that has struck gold overseas. Side is driving rocker with surf on the Thames sound and strong vocal work from the group. The flip is 'I Saw Her Standing There.'"[5] The song proved popular, and a month later the magazine's cover boasted five stories on the Beatles and the British

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[1] Michael Goldberg, "Stevie Wonder," *Rolling Stone* 5 Nov. 1987, 153.
[2] Chris Hutchins, "Beatles Soar to Succes," *Billboard* 2 Nov. 1963, 30.
[3] "Beatles Score 2nd Million," *Billboard* 14 Dec. 1963, 30; Chris Hutchins, "Dealer Unity Makes Strengths," 14 Dec. 1963, 32.
[4] "Hot 100," *Billboard* 14 Dec. 1963, 24.
[5] "Singles Reviews," *Billboard* 4 Jan. 1964, 21.

music industry in advance of the *Ed Sullivan Show* performance.[6] By the time the April 4, 1964 issue of *Billboard* arrived on stands, the band held twelve spots on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in a single week, including all of the top five Pop hits, and one band from Liverpool had assured that England would never again be an afterthought to the American record industry.[7]

The second, more gradually unfolding story during this same period concerned the changing position of African American music with regards to the American mainstream popular music industry. In late November of 1963, only a few weeks after the word "Beatles" first appeared in its pages, *Billboard* discontinued its black music chart, which had existed in some form since 1942.[8] *Billboard's* decision to discontinue the chart—later reinstated in January 1965—was never explained by the magazine, but was and is widely thought to have been inspired by the extraordinary amount of "crossover" between the black R&B charts and white pop music charts.[9]

A lucrative revolution was taking place at a cross-racial intersection of young American pop consumership, and no figure was more responsible than Berry Gordy, Jr., president of the Motown Record Corporation and its various subsidiaries. Gordy had founded his operation in 1959, financed by an $800 family loan. He festooned its headquarters with the name "Hitsville, U.S.A." and would soon adorn its records with the slogan, "The Sound of Young America." 1963 had been Motown's breakthrough year, with Gordy's company scoring nine Top Ten Pop hits; his company would soon become the most successful African American business in history and the most successful record label in the United States by almost any measure, dominating American popular music through artists such as the Supremes, the Temptations, the Miracles, and the Four Tops.[10] In

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[6] See *Billboard* Feb. 1 1964, p. 1.
[7] Jack Maher and Tom Noonan, "Chart Crawling With Beatles," *Billboard* April 4, 1964, 1.
[8] In its November 23, 1963 issue, *Billboard* featured an R&B Singles chart on p. 22; the following week, it was gone.
[9] David Brackett has considered this moment extensively in his article "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 774-797. *Billboard* has never given a definitive answer for why they discontinued the chart, nor why they reinstated it.
[10] All *Billboard* chart information is derived from Joel Whitburn's *Billboard Top Pop Singles: 1955-1999* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2000).

1965 *Billboard* reported that "the firm's batting average is the envy of the record industry,"[11] and the following year 75% of Motown's single releases entered the *Billboard* charts, compared to an industry-wide average of 10%, and for the entire period of 1960 and 1969 the label put a new single onto the charts once every week and a half.[12] In the heat of American Beatlemania Motown was often singled out as the Fab Four's primary rival: "Next to the Mersey sound, the 'Motown sound' currently dominates the rock 'n' roll market," wrote *Time.*[13] "Knowledgeable persons in pop music think the strongest element of American rock 'n' roll now, musically and financially, is the 'Detroit sound," wrote the *New York Times,* in an article about the Beatles' dominance in 1965. For significant swaths of the 1960s, Motown was the primary engine keeping the American pop music industry afloat against an unrelenting tide of British imports.

In early 1964, in a fawning interview the likes of which routinely dominated the pages of *Melody Maker* at the height of Beatlemania, Beatles guitarist George Harrison was asked by a British reporter for his favorite group in the world. He listed the Miracles and Martha and the Vandellas, then proceeded to read aloud a telegram the band had received that had been signed by Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Smokey Robinson:

> Hi, George, Paul, John and Ringo. Congratulations on your fantastically successful trip to our country. You took our country by storm and we all love you… We are looking forward to visiting England in the near future and recording some tracks together with you for an album like "Friends across the sea."[14]

This chapter explores the vibrant, complex and productive transatlantic relationship between the Beatles and Motown Records during the 1960s. I do not attempt to tell the history of either entity, an undertaking that has been ably, exhaustively, and repeatedly undertaken elsewhere.[15]

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[11] "Tamla-Motown Goes Outside to Get Talent," *Billboard* 4 Sept. 1965, 10.
[12] Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 268.
[13] "Rock and Roll: Everybody's Turned On," *Time,* 21 May 1965, 86.
[14] Ray Coleman, "George Harrison – Exclusive!" *Melody Maker* 21 March 1964,10-11.
[15] There are numerous histories of Motown. The most foundational is Nelson George's *Where Did Our Love Go?: The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007 [originally published in 1985]), while

Rather, this chapter focuses on three distinct moments: the three Beatles "covers" of Motown compositions that appear on the band's second UK album, *With the Beatles,* released in late 1963; the influence of Motown music and musicians on the Beatles' mid-1960s "transitional" music, particularly *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*; and two Motown covers of Beatles compositions recorded at the decade's close, Marvin Gaye's version of "Yesterday" (1969) and Stevie Wonder's version of "We Can Work It Out" (1970), recordings that were themselves made at "transitional" moments both in the careers of those two artists, and the history of Motown more broadly.

Through these moments I will argue that the success of these two entities has been differently and in some cases unfairly received in criticism and historiography, and that in their long and vital musical relationship we can hear a crucial hidden history of Sixties music, one unbounded by genre anxieties, racial hermeticism, and ideological myth-making. I want to suggest that after a longstanding tendency to hear these two entities as leading characters in two separate stories—that of white popular music and black popular music in the 1960s, specifically—it is long overdue that we hear them together, as "Friends Across the Sea," as the artists themselves once hoped we would.

The Beatles' reputation in popular music discourse is unimpeachable—aside from Bob Dylan no artist has received the level of critical and scholarly attention that the Beatles have, and any attacks against the band's cultural significance and artistic legitimacy would be flatly dismissed today. Motown's position in critical discourse is more complicated, and the label has long held a precarious position in the historiography of R&B music. Similarly to what we have seen with Sam Cooke in the

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Gerald Posner's more recent *Motown: Music, Money, Sex, and Power* (New York: Random House, 2002) is also excellent. Gerald Early's *One Nation Under a Groove: Motown and American Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004) is a short but highly insightful work on the label's cultural significance, and Suzanne Smith's *Dancing In the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) is an outstanding study of Motown's relationship with the city that spawned it. The amount of biographies, histories and critical studies of the Beatles is too vast to begin to list. The earliest major effort was Hunter Davies' *The Beatles*, written with the band's cooperation and originally published in 1968 (New York: Norton, 2010). Perhaps the most widely read is Philip Norman's *Shout!* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981). Recent books include Jonathan Gould's *Can't Buy Me Love* (New York: Harmony, 2007), Steven Stark's *Meet The Beatles* (New York: HarperEntertainment, 2005), and Bob Spitz's *The Beatles* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

first chapter of this dissertation, though even more pronounced, Motown's "crossover" aesthetic and proximity to the white market have led a vocal cadre of critics to claim that the label was insufficiently or inauthentically black. These accusations in fact began during the 1960s, with prominent white rock critics such as Ralph Gleason, Nik Cohn and others assailed Motown for diluting black music for the market.[16] Nor was it just white critics; as my next chapter shows, the late 1960s saw a rise in discussions of black musical authenticity among African American writers as well, conversations that often rendered Motown's aesthetic achievements lacking in comparison to Southern rhythm and blues studios in Memphis and Muscle Shoals.

This trend has continued in years since, as historians of rhythm and blues have found many occasions to wring their hands over Motown's legitimacy or illegitimacy as a properly "black" musical entity. Peter Guralnick excludes Motown from his otherwise excellent book *Sweet Soul Music,* on the grounds that it is not "soul music" because it "appeal[ed] far more to a pop, white, and industry-slanted kind of audience."[17] Nelson George, one of the earliest and most thorough chroniclers of Motown, delivered perhaps the harshest assessment when he wrote that Gordy presented himself to white America on the terms of "Don't worry. I want to be just like you," accused the label of harboring "powerful feelings of black inadequacy," and effectively accused Gordy of race treachery in his dealings with other parties in the black music industry.[18]

Musicologist Jonathan Flory has recently argued that "due largely to crossover success, historical representation of Motown and its music often suffer from being branded as 'inauthentic' black music."[19] Flory sees this as largely socioeconomic and tied a broader continuum of anxieties over the black middle class and Gordy's roots and fluency within that community, anxieties Flory

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[16] Gleason, Cohn and white backlash against Motown and other black pop music is discussed in depth in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
[17] Peter Guralnick, *Sweet Soul Music* (Boston: Back Bay, 1999), 1-2.
[18] Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988), 88-89.
[19] Andrew Flory, "I Hear a Symphony: Making Music at Motown, 1959-1979," PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006, 131.

traces back to texts like E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* and LeRoi Jones' *Blues People* that emerged roughly contemporaneous with Motown's rise.

However, I would suggest that attacks on Motown's authenticity rest less on class than on a denial of porosity in discussions of black music such as described in Chapter 1, in which success within and proximity to a white market renders musical blackness suspect. Nowhere is this more evident than the persistent critical tendency to wield romanticized comparisons to Memphis' Stax Records against Motown like a cudgel of racial authenticity.[20] Leaving aside the fact that Stax was in fact a more racially *integrated* company than Motown, such unfavorable comparisons also willfully ignore the fact that Berry Gordy did not set out to be Stax: in fact, it is far more accurate to suggest he set out to be the Beatles, though long before anyone knew who the Beatles were. Motown was not founded on the goal of being the most successful black record label in America; it was founded on the goal of being the most successful record label in America. Berry Gordy was after the same integrated teenaged market that the Beatles so spectacularly attracted, and during the 1960s, only the Beatles would prove as effective at attracting them.

When Gordy opened Motown in 1959 he did so with the conviction that with the proper mix of craft and marketing, black music and musicians could be successfully packaged to white America, and his vision succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. While much of this was due to the talent he assembled and the famously regimented "quality control" standards that his label employed throughout the 1960s, Motown's triumph was also one of messaging, marketing and media. The famous "finishing school" overseen at the label by Maxine Powell prepped artists for television and prestigious supper club engagements, and by the mid-1960s all this had paid

[20] Perhaps the most extreme example of this is found in Nelson George's *Death of Rhythm and Blues,* in a chapter entitled "R&B Yin and Yang" in which he (unfavorably) judges Motown against Stax (86). Stax artists actually covered Motown songs with some frequency, with notable examples including Otis Redding's versions of Smokey Robinson's "My Girl" and "It's Growing."

extraordinary dividends. As *Billboard* noted in 1966, "Berry Gordy's Detroit finishing school… graduates nothing but polished entertainers."[21]

Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of Diana Ross and the Supremes, Motown's premier act in this period and the most successful American recording act of the 1960s. The Supremes were media darlings, a group whose appeal transcended gender, age, and race. The *Boston Globe* described them as "good looking, bright sounding, hard working, constantly improving, and we think you'll enjoy them whether you're a member of the Coke set or voted for Calvin Coolidge."[22] The *Chicago Tribune* published a lengthy profile of the group that noted "Diana studies modeling, make-up, 'visual poise,' etiquette, independedly of the others, and Motown plans to teach her German and French, using records."[23] More trenchantly, critic Richard Goldstein wrote: "The Supremes are a tribute to an ever-assimilating pop market of adults, eager for the 'with it' drive of youth without its radicalism… the Supremes concede just enough in their material and approach to be understood without a teen-slang code book."[24] If Gordy's dream was to transform popular music into a perfect vessel of lucrative middle-American acceptance, Motown's artist development was that dream realized.

In doing so his label changed the cultural perception of African American popular music, but also the cultural perception of rock and roll music more generally. Indeed, during the 1960s the only entity more responsible for changing the music's image from a teenaged fad to a serious business, in every sense, were the Beatles themselves. But while the Beatles' perceived transformation from teen sensations to highbrow art musicians has been cause for veneration by most critics, Motown's transformation of black rhythm and blues into the dominant force in American pop—"the Sound of Young America"—has been treated with deep suspicion.

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[21] "Motown's Musical Education Makes Four Tops Classy Act," *Billboard* 24 Dec. 1966, 8.
[22] William Buchanan, "The Supremes—A 'Pop' Sound for Young, Old," *Boston Globe* 10 Nov. 1966, 38.
[23] Nancy Moss, "The Supremes: 11 Frantic Hours, 50 Screaming Minutes," *Chicago Tribune* 20 March 1966, I31.
[24] Richard Goldstein, "Super Supremes: 'Stop in the Name of Love,'" *New York Times* 23 July 1967, 75.

This disparity may be just one reason that critical and scholarly discussion of the relationship between the Beatles and Motown has been relatively scant. In Beatles historiography, consideration of Motown's influence on the band tends to be confined to their early years, focusing on the obvious example of the three Motown covers on *With the Beatles* while paying vague lip service to the "formative" impact of Motown on the band in its early days. There are several problems with this, the most glaring being that its literalness obscures the ongoing influence of Motown on the Beatles' later music. More insidiously, it falls back on a tendency among white rock critics and rock listeners to view black music as strictly precursory, what Fred Moten has described as "an active forgetting of black performances or a relegation of them to mere source material."[25] Among other things this can often result in bad history, such as when a recent high-profile Beatles biographer lumps Smokey Robinson and the Miracles in with "early innovators," and implies that Lennon and McCartney were listening to the Miracles as early as 1957. John Lennon and Smokey Robinson were born the same year; in 1957 both were still in high school.[26]

The Beatles and Motown remade popular music in the 1960s—commercially, artistically, and socially—and they did not do so in isolation so much as they did so in tandem. This chapter will now examine three key historical moments to demonstrate the multilayered and extraordinarily productive relationship between the Beatles and Motown throughout the Sixties. I will begin with a reading of the contextual significance and musical meaning of the three Motown covers on *With The Beatles,* recordings that were made as both Gordy's label and Epstein's band were in moments of ascendance. I will discuss how the nature of these recordings speak to the unprecedented nature of the historical moment from which they emerge, and argue that the versions of "Please Mr. Postman," "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" and "Money (That's What I Want)" on the Beatles' second album complicate and contradict traditional notions of white-on-black song covers. I will then

[25] Fred Moten, *In The Break* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 149.
[26] See Spitz, 111.

explore the continuing impact of Motown music on the Beatles in the period spanning the releases of *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, paying particular attention to the tremendous influence of Motown session bassist James Jamerson on the band's music in this period. In doing so I show that a moment long heard as the Beatles turning away from pop toward the avant-garde of (white) rock was still marked by a deep engagement with contemporary black music, especially that coming from Detroit. The chapter then concludes in the aftermath of the Beatles' break-up, when two Motown artists remade iconic Beatles songs as they were approaching their own career crossroads. Marvin Gaye's "Yesterday" and Stevie Wonder's "We Can Work It Out" arrived at the twilight of Motown's dominance, as the label was leaving Detroit, and foretold a moment when both Gaye and Wonder would win unprecedented autonomy from Gordy's once-monolithic operation. If the Beatles' covers of Motown songs at the dawn of Beatlemania had sounded the arrival of something entirely new in Sixties popular music, Gaye and Wonder's covers of Beatles songs at the decade's end can be heard as both the sound of something ending.

Detroit to Liverpool: Covers, Commerce, and Beatlemania

The Beatles had transformed the landscape of British popular music well before their first appearance on American television in February of 1964, In October of 1962 the band's debut single, "Love Me Do," was released in the United Kingdom and reached Number 21 on the *Melody Maker* charts; by the time they appeared on *Val Parnell's Sunday Night at the London Palladium* on October 13, 1963, their three follow-ups to "Love Me Do"—"Please Please Me," "From Me to You," and "She Loves You"—had hit Number One, and their performance on the variety show was watched by an estimated audience of fifteen million.[27] The band's extraordinary chart performance, blinding rate of success and rabidity of their fan base were perfectly bundled into a neologism that soon blared from the headlines of British newspapers: "BEATLEMANIA!"

[27] On the *New Musical Express* charts "Love Me Do" hit Number 21, whereas "Please Please Me" stalled out at Number 2. "From Me To You" and "She Loves You" hit the top spot on both.

The Beatles' first British LP, *Please Please Me*, had been a famously rushed piece of work, recorded in less than ten hours on February 11, 1963.[28] Partly due to time and resource constraints, producer George Martin formulated *Please Please Me* as essentially an in-studio version of the band's live act, well-honed from countless hours on club stages of Hamburg, Liverpool and elsewhere. The album contained an eclectic mix of Lennon-McCartney originals plus a diverse array of American pop covers, from Arthur Alexander's "Anna" to a memorable rendition of the Phil Medley and Bert Russell's "Twist and Shout" (popularized by the Isley Brothers) that closed the album. When recording commenced on the follow-up album in July of 1963, EMI allotted the band considerably more time and resources. *With the Beatles* was finished in October and released in the United Kingdom on November 22, 1963. The album's cover, featuring all four Beatles in black turtlenecks against a black background, remains one of the most famous images in rock and roll, and would soon grace the cover of the band's first United States album, *Meet the Beatles!*, released in late January of 1964.[29]

On *With the Beatles* Lennon and McCartney's songwriting had tightened and matured, as immediately evidenced by the album's roaring opener, "It Won't Be Long," which featured some clever wordplay ("It won't be long / till I belong to you") snuggled against inventive chord changes and a trove of melodic ideas. "Hold Me Tight" and "I Wanna Be Your Man" were rollicking crowd-pleasers, and the album's high point may have been its third track, "All My Loving," which would go on to become one of the most famous Lennon-McCartney compositions. The album also featured numerous covers, including a rollicking version of Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven," and a gender-inverted rendition of the Donays' obscure 1962 girl-group record, "Devil in His Heart," re-fashioned as "Devil in Her Heart."

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[28] The Beatles, *Please Please Me*, Parlophone PMC 1202, 1963, 33rpm. All recording dates from Mark Lewisohn, *The Complete Beatles Chronicle* (London: Pyramid, 1992).

[29] The Beatles, *With the Beatles*, Parlophone PMC 1206, 1963, 33rpm. *Meet the Beatles,* Capitol 2047, 1964, 33rpm.

With The Beatles contained no fewer than three covers of Motown songs, a remarkable percentage of the fourteen-track LP: "Please Mr. Postman" (originally recorded by the Marvelettes in 1961); "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" (The Miracles, 1962); and "Money (That's What I Want)" (Barrett Strong, 1960).[30] All three were sung by John Lennon, and as Jonathan Gould has argued, "each of the three Motown-derived songs on *With the Beatles* represented a landmark in the rise of [Gordy's] label."[31] "Please Mr. Postman" and "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" had been hugely successful in the United States, with the former reaching Number One on the *Billboard* Pop Charts (Motown's first chart-topper) and the latter reaching Number Eight, while "Money" was the first single ever released by Berry Gordy's operation, and in 1960 had peaked at Number Two and Twenty-Three on the R&B and Pop charts, respectively. These singles had not been widely successful in England, however, and Motown would not achieve widespread success in the United Kingdom until the aftermath of its famous 1965 tour.[32]

During the sessions for *With the Beatles,* both "Money" and "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" were recorded on July 18, 1963; "Please Mr. Postman" was recorded twelve days later, on July 30. "Please Mr. Postman" was the first Motown track heard on *With the Beatles*, coming at the end of the LP's first side. "Please Mr. Postman" is an extremely straightforward piece of music, consisting of a repeating I-vi-IV-V chord progression and a simple story of a lovelorn female who misses her boyfriend. The backing vocals play an active role, from the opening "wait!" (answered by the lead singer's "oh yes wait a minute Mr. Postman") to "ooh – wah – doos" on the song's verse. The Marvelettes' 1961 version of "Please Mr. Postman" features a drum part by Marvin Gaye, and the song's stuttering hand-claps and cascading piano lines lend a vaguely calypso feel that resembles a

[30] The Marvelettes, "Please Mr. Postman," Tamla 54046, 1961, 45rpm. The Miracles, "You've Really Got a Hold On Me," Tamla 54073, 1962, 45rpm. Barrett Strong, "Money," Anna 1111, 1960, 45rpm.
[31] Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), 192.
[32] In 2011 BBC Four ran a documentary on the Motown Revue's 1965 tour entitled *Motown Invasion,* in an interesting reversal of the "British Invasion" concept. While the tour itself was largely seen as a flop at the time, the exposure generated from the *Ready, Steady, Go!* "Sounds of Motown" special filmed during the visit soon led to considerable UK chart success for numerous Motown artists.

more up-tempo version of Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs' "Stay," a Number One *Billboard* Pop hit in 1960.[33] The Caribbean theme is reinforced when lead singer Gladys Horton intones "de-liver de letter / de sooner de better" over the song's out-chorus, a charmingly incongruous bit of islands-meet-Detroit. As previously mentioned, the single was Motown's first national Number One pop hit, although the 45's "picture sleeve" pointedly boasted a cartoon drawing of an empty mailbox, not the group's faces.

The Beatles' version of "Please Mr. Postman" is louder, faster, and generally more raucous than the Marvelettes' original. The drums are mixed louder, effectively supplanting the hand-claps so integral to the Motown recording. The piano part that drives the original is gone, replaced by clean and jangling guitars. The backup vocals have a more exclamatory quality, and John Lennon's lead is hoarse, devoid of the sultry sweetness of Horton's performance. The gender inversion is notable, although as mentioned above, it is not the only instance of such on *With the Beatles*. Still, the song's narrative, sparse as it is, fits more snugly with early 1960s stereotypes of teenage femininity—the protagonist sitting at home while her boyfriend is "so far away," waiting to hear from him, a vague suggestion that perhaps he is up to no good. It is a song about disempowerment, although as Jacqueline Warwick has suggested in her study of 1960s girl groups, the actual presentation of the song is subtly affirming: with the "boyfriend" of the song totally absent, the singer is left with the solidarity of her bandmates.[34] The Beatles' version plays upon the song's undercurrents of frustration and disillusion, the gathering desperation of Lennon's vocal hinting at someone aware of being taken for granted. The Beatles' reworking might also have held particular appeal to the young female fans that the group was already attracting in mythic numbers by riffing off the fan mail inundating the group from both sides of the Atlantic. In 1964, a New York publisher even released

[33] Maurice Williams & the Zodiacs, "Stay," Herald 552, 1960, 45rpm.
[34] Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 46.

a small novelty book entitled *Love Letters to the Beatles* that anthologized the band's more memorable correspondence.[35]

"You've Really Got A Hold On Me" is a more sophisticated piece of music than "Please Mr. Postman" by almost any measure. The Miracles' original version is in a lilting 12/8 time, with a piano playing triplet triads while an electric guitar plucks a memorable six-note phrase into the I-vi chord change. This device of a guitar playing a simple melodic fill into a chord change was often employed by the Beatles as well, with "She Loves You," "Please Please Me" (as discussed in the last chapter), and "I Want to Hold Your Hand" being prominent examples of this same period. Unlike "Please Mr. Postman," which cycles through its simple four-chord progression for the entirety of the song, "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" is rife with harmonic variation, stop-time segments, and a climactic bridge. Lyrically the song is one of Robinson's earliest masterworks, full of the evocative imagery and deft wordplay that would later be heard on compositions like "My Girl," "The Tracks of My Tears" and "I Second That Emotion." The song is about romantic power imbalance, being in the thrall of someone who might not reciprocate one's intensity of feeling. The word "hold" becoming the perfect lyrical pivot for this masochistic dynamic, as "you've really got a hold on me" becomes "hold me, tighter," and "hold me, please, hold me." Robinson's vocal performance is controlled and assured, his mellifluous tenor carrying a mature and knowing bluesiness.

The Beatles' version (retitled "You Really Got a Hold On Me") features a gently swinging rhythm guitar in lieu of the piano triads heard in the original. Like "Please Mr. Postman," the performance feels louder, more dominated by guitar and drums. Lennon's vocal is hoarser and fiercer than Robinsons' original: Tim Riley notes that "where the Miracles sound elegant, Lennon sounds ruthless…. The politess it took for a black man to make this hunger for love acceptable gets

[35] Bill Adler, *Love Letters to the Beatles* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1964).

drowned in Lennonesque revenge."[36] Still, Lennon's performance and style is clearly influenced by Robinson's, even co-opting some of the latter's melodic flourishes and falsetto swoops. All in all the Beatles' "You Really Got a Hold On Me" is a remarkably faithful rendering of the original: the Beatles make almost no significant alterations to either the form or the lyrics, and unlike "Please Mr. Postman" there is no need for a gender inversion.

If "Please Mr. Postman" and "You Really Got a Hold On Me" are relatively straightforward interpretations of the Motown originals, "Money," the final track on *With the Beatles,* is another story entirely. Barrett Strong's original version of "Money" is structured around a repeating, churning piano riff. It is an exceedingly simple and clever piece of music, a twelve-bar blues whose verse sections are simply the first four bars of the form in stop-time, the chorus the last eight. The song's lyrical text is pithy and smart, and as Dave Marsh writes, "'Money,' which revolves around the idea of avarice as a substitute for love, has come to seem almost too paradigmatic of Motown's greed."[37] Indeed, the song is in many senses the perfect distillation of Gordy's ideology, one that heard the sound of rock and roll songcraft and cash registers in perfect harmony. Even the song's first line, "The best things in life are free / but you can keep them for the birds and bees" is a terrifically glib bit of writing, opening with a reference to a Tin Pan Alley standard (Ray Henderson's "The Best Things in Life Are Free"), then parrying it back with a cheeky defiance.

"Money" is also an iconic specimen of Gordy's own Motown mythology, a love song to success with a catchiness that predicts itself. The song was mostly written by Gordy, but in his own telling, then-receptionist Janie Bradford came up with the line "your love gives me such a thrill / but your love don't pay my bills." According to Gordy, the small contribution so completed the song that he insisted upon giving Bradford a co-writer credit, a story he has been fond of repeating over the years, and includes in his memoir: "Janie didn't realize I was serious about using the line.... She

[36] Tim Riley, *Tell Me Why: A Beatles Commentary* (Boston: Da Capo, 2002), 80.
[37] Dave Marsh, *The Heart of Rock & Soul* (Boston: Da Capo, 1999), 163.

was more convinced when she saw the songwriter's contract. Thinking her verse was the best of all, I gave her fifty percent."[38] If the "Money" origin story isn't exactly the Motown origin story it is a snug symbolic fit for Gordy's purposes, a perfect way to demonstrate his ear for pop success while also highlighting his own generosity to underlings, a characterization that was essential to the ideology of corporate paternalism that undergirded his business operations.

The Beatles' version of "Money," released four years after Strong's original, shatters the song and rebuilds it in the band's image. The iconic piano riff, played by George Martin, is loud and overdriven, and features a small musical variation that may well betray the drastically new British context of "Money" more generally. Martin's piano part differs from the Motown original in its harmonic movement from a fifth to a flatted sixth atop the lower movement from flatted third to major third, while the Motown version remains on the fifth over the major third. It a small change that transforms a bluesy passing tone into a more pronounced chromaticism, giving the harmonic character of the riff an angular abrasiveness, particularly when played over the V chord in the song's ninth bar, when it becomes the flatted second of the chord's root, a harmonic clash normally untouchable in pop songwriting. Given Martin's classical training, it seems entirely possible that this small but significant alteration was unintentional, as he would have been less accustomed to the fluidity between major and minor thirds so common in the blues and other African American music.

The Beatles' version is even more notable for Lennon's vocal, which is snarling and nasal, dripping with the avaricious contempt that's only latent in Strong's original performance. The Beatles' first album, *Please Please Me*, had ended with a frenetic version of "Twist and Shout" that Lennon sang with such force that it allegedly made his throat bleed, and "Money," the final track on *With the Beatles*, carries a similar intensity, although as opposed to the mad exuberance of "Twist and Shout," here the effect is that of an angry young man at the end of his rope. The entirety of the

[38] Gordy, 122.

Beatles' version has a loud, shouted quality, from Lennon's performance to McCartney and Harrison's backup parts.

If there is one shared quality between the three covers of Motown songs heard on *With the Beatles* it is the change in their volume: while the Motown versions of "Please Mr. Postman," "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" and "Money" are primarily piano-driven affairs with light guitars and modestly-mixed drums, the Beatles' versions are guitar-driven, background and lead vocals are more exclamatory and emphatic, and drums are mixed higher and played harder. The most likely reason for this is the context in which the Beatles first came to perform these songs: on concert stages. A major difference between the early Beatles and most early Motown groups is the extensive experience that the Beatles had as a live act. The Marvelettes' Gladys Horton was fifteen when she recorded "Please Mr. Postman," plucked from a high school talent show, and Smokey Robinson had also met Gordy while still in high school. In fact, a relative lack of show business experience was seen as a plus at Motown, as it meant artists were more malleable in any number of ways. Gordy saw himself first and foremost as a "record man," who saw his company's performance "talent" as just one stop in a successful production line, along with songwriting, recording, distribution, promotion. For Motown, record sales were paramount, and live performances and tours were seen as vehicles for singles promotion.

In the case of the Beatles this situation was effectively reversed. In a British pop industry that was largely dominated by American imports but where visa restrictions made it difficult for American acts to tour, live performance was a necessity for British rock and roll bands. The Beatles had played hundreds of shows before obtaining their contract with EMI, and the loudness of style in the Beatles' versions of Motown songs clearly reflects this, as all three of these songs had been staples of the band's live shows well before they were recorded for *With the Beatles*. According to historian Ian MacDonald, the Beatles had played "Please Mr. Postman" frequently throughout 1962,

"Money" was one of the songs they had chosen to perform in their failed audition for Decca Records that same year, and they had introduced "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" into their live shows by early 1963, only a few months after the song's release.[39] The difference in performance style on *With the Beatles* can be at least partially attributed to the Beatles taking Motown songs imagined for the medium of the 45rpm recording, adapting them for live performance, and then committing these adaptations to record, a complex cycle of musical mediation and re-mediation.

The Beatles' covers of Motown also subvert the traditional trajectories of white-on-black song covers in several ways unique to this historical moment. Firstly, they represent an inversion of media patterns and ideas of how black and white music was (and arguably still is) thought to circulate. In his work on black sound and modernity, Alex Weheliye writes of "the assumption that black cultures are somehow pre- or antitechnological," an assumption that has received wide proliferation in American culture at least since the days of minstrelsy, when white performers purportedly recreated performances that they had "heard" on field trips to the South.[40] While the veracity of these claims was often non-existent, they encoded a notion of black music as being local, pre-modern and unmediated that would later be rehearsed in the fetishized regionalism of the early folk and blues industry in the 1920s, institutional and commercial obstacles to black jazz bands touring during the 1930s and World War II, and the 1950s racist radio practices that saw white versions of black rock and roll songs receive disproportionately more widespread airplay to the originals.[41] The Beatles' covers of Motown speak specifically to the extraordinary circulation of Motown music even in this early period, and an early indication of Motown's global aspirations becoming realized.

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[39] Ian MacDonald, *Revolution In The Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997), 77-81.
[40] Alex Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 3.
[41] See, for instance, Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Msuic in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), and Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Attendantly, in discourses of white-on-black musical appropriation there has been a longstanding tendency to view black music as foundational, even primordial. As previously noted, this is reflected in a critical tendency to posit the Beatles' relationship to African American music as essentially prehistoric, the crucible in which the band was forged but one from which it emerged apart and distinct. While it might be true that, as Naphtali Wagner argues "[o]ne developmental path of the Beatles can be described as the gradual distancing from the basic rhythm & blues with which they began their career," writers and critics have often been too quick to hasten this distancing in retrospect, as the next part of this chapter will show. The Beatles' interest in Motown music did not precede their fame but rather directly coincided with it: according to Dave Laing's thorough catalogue of the band's early repertoire, for the most part the Beatles didn't even start performing Motown songs until early 1963, by which point they'd already made the British charts with "Love Me Do" and "Please Please Me."[42] The Beatles' relationship to Motown was not a preservationist one, à la American folk revivalists or British devotees of traditional jazz and blues: rather, they were drawn to Motown because it was current, and already successful.

Which brings us to a third way that the Beatles' covers of Motown invert prior trajectories of white-on-black song covers: namely, their relation to commerce. The phenomenon of white performers receiving market compensation for performances of black music vastly disproportionate to the originators of that music is one of the oldest in modern popular song: only a few years before the Beatles' breakthrough, white performers like Gale Storm and Pat Boone had profited handsomely with uncreatively bowdlerized covers of black rock and roll songs. Boone's music in particular, including his bloodless reworking of Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame" and Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," has become a metonym for white-on-black appropriation in rock and roll music. Reebee Garofalo describes Boone as "the singer who represents the epitome of cultural

[42] Dave Laing, Appendix to "Six Boys, Six Beatles: The Formative Years, 1950-1962," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*, 27-32.

theft," noting that "[t]he 'white buck' shoes that became his signature only reinforced the racist implications of his 'white bread' delivery," while Craig Werner explicitly links Boone to minstrelsy and argues that [t]he long-standing segregation of the record charts encouraged white artists to release sanitized 'cover' versions of black hits."[43]

One of Motown's accomplishments was to deal a severe blow to this practice by flouting that very segregation, refusing to accept that "pop" meant necessarily "white." As Berry Gordy wrote emphatically in his own autobiography years later: "In the music business there had long been the distinction between black and white music, the assumption being that R&B was black and Pop was white… 'Pop' means popular and if [a million-selling record] ain't, I don't know what is. I never gave a damn what else it was called."[44] The *Billboard* Pop chart success of the three of the Motown covers on *With the Beatles* reflect this, particularly "Please Mr. Postman" and "You've Really Got a Hold On Me." The Beatles did not sell more copies of "Please Mr. Postman" than the Marvelettes, nor were they necessarily in a position of financial advantage over Gordy's label when they recorded "Please Mr. Postman," "You've Really Got a Hold On Me" and "Money" for *With the Beatles*. In fact, according to Gerald Posner, when the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein first approached Motown about securing the rights to record the songs, Berry Gordy tried to shake him down for an astronomical fee, firmly convinced that his musical properties were worth far more to Epstein's clients than said clients were worth to his company's royalty statements.[45] Several of Gordy's Motown colleagues were already aware of the Beatles' British success and convinced him this wasn't an opportunity to risk losing, an intervention he surely appreciated when *With the Beatles* became the fastest-selling LP in British history. But Gordy saw himself in a position of power, and for good reason: rather than the previous, endlessly-rehearsed story of black musicians unduly

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[43] Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the U.S.A.,* 4th edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008, 139. Werner, *Change,* 86.
[44] Berry Gordy, *To Be Loved: The Music, the Magic, the Memories of Motown* (New York: Warner Books, 1994), 95-96.
[45] This story is recounted in Gerald Posner's *Motown*, p. 137.

compensated by a racist music industry, only to see their material taken up by white musicians with disproportionate access to a commercial mainstream, at this particular moment Berry Gordy had managed to drastically disrupt this historical trend. If in 1963 Motown and *With the Beatles* represented different visions of "crossover" aspiration—Motown from R&B to Pop, the Beatles from England to America—the former was farther along in its quest than the latter. As noted above, Motown had placed nine singles in the top ten of the *Billboard* Pop charts in 1963 alone.

Which brings us back again to "Money," the anthem of aspiration that sounds the opening of Motown Records and the closing of *With the Beatles*. Heard in 1959 from Barrett Strong it is rollicking, exuberant, awash in catchiness, ease of consumption, clever pursuit of enjoyment. Berry Gordy endeavored to make songs that you'd remember forever, and it is in this ambition that Barrett Strong's version "Money" exemplifies, the youngest sounds of "The Sound of Young America." The Beatles' version is the sound of something else unprecedented, at a similarly formative stage: by the time the Beatles recorded "Money" in late June of 1963 they had already released two UK smashes, "Please Please Me" and "From Me to You," and a third—"She Loves You"—was less than two months away. They were huge and on the cusp of becoming huger: the June 22, 1963 issue of *Melody Maker* contained an amused report of two seventeen-year-olds who were fined two pounds each by a Magistrate court for "walk[ing] round town singing the Beatles' hit 'From Me to You' at the tops of their voices."[46] For the four young men from Liverpool, things were beginning to get strange.

"Money" is this strangeness rendered into musical form, particularly Lennon's vocal performance, which takes an unbridled anthem of capitalist exultation and renders it into something much more ambivalent. Lennon was always the member of the band least comfortable with the level of fame the band achieved, and "Money" is one of the earliest sounds of this discomfort: his vocal is

[46] "Ravings," *Melody Maker* 22 June 1963, 5.

sneering and desperate, alive with the paranoia that invariably accompanies the unrepentant greed of the song's subject. Nowhere is this more evident than in Lennon's most notable revision to Strong's original, the snarling statement "I wanna be free" on the song's out-chorus. The ad-lib inverts the song's moral universe, ambiguously perched between a cynical suggestion of money as the way to freedom, and a romantic desire to throw off the shackles of greed. "I wanna be free" can be heard as replacing one of Strong's utterances from the out-chorus of the original "Money:" "all those lean greens / that's right baby, that's what I need," a rewrite perhaps necessitated by the geography of exchange. In England, money is not green.

The Beatles never released another Motown cover after *With the Beatles*; their next album, *A Hard Day's Night,* was the first released by the band that consisted entirely of original compositions.[47] The next part of this chapter looks at the influence of Motown music and musicians on the Beatles in 1965 and 1966, a period that spans between the LPs *Rubber Soul* through *Revolver* and that is generally thought to be one of the most significant in the band's history, and that notably coincides with the most commercially dominant period of Motown's own history. During this period many commentators heard the Beatles as moving away from African American influences and toward "folk rock," orchestral and avant-garde art music, genres imagined as "white."

I will instead argue that the Beatles' music in this period found them engaging with and absorbing contemporary African American pop—and specifically Motown—in new, subtle and profoundly inventive ways, ways that were overlooked at the time and have remained so in years since. These missed connections are perhaps unsurprising, since the single greatest Motown influence on the Beatles in this period—bass player James Jamerson—was one of the most important yet anonymous musical figures of the 1960s.

[47] The Beatles, *A Hard Day's Night,* Parlophone PMC 1230, 1964, 33rpm (UK); United Artists 6366, 1964, 33rpm (US).

The Low End Avante-Gare: James Jamerson and Paul McCartney in the mid-1960s

"There was only one James Jamerson. All the rest were imitators—just like there was only one Charlie Parker," Motown arranger Gil Askey once said of the legendary Motown session bassist.[48] In the words of Nelson George, "the invention, technique, and drama that emanated from James Jamerson's 1962 Fender Precision bass made him one of the most influential musicians of the sixties."[49] "There is hardly a successful pop band in the world that doesn't owe homage to James Jamerson," Berry Gordy himself remarked. "His influence is omnipotent."[50]

Outside of fervent circles of musicians and R&B aficionados, James Jamerson was never a household name. When he died in 1983 at the age of 47, the *New York Times* printed a seven-sentence wire story that appeared five days after his passing and misreported his age.[51] *Rolling Stone*'s obituary, which declared him "one of the greatest and most influential musicians of our time," still ran nearly two months after Jamerson's death, buried on page 60.[52] In years since he has been the subject of a single, self-published book, Allan "Dr. Licks" Slutsky's invaluable *Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson*, and while most histories of Motown praise the bassist reverently, they do so in a passing manner. James Jamerson may have been, in Marvin Gaye's words, "a genius," but he was never a star.[53]

This anonymity was largely the product of Berry Gordy and Motown's own design, as Jamerson's name did not appear on a Motown release until 1971. Part of this is simply historical circumstance, as crediting session musicians on singles and albums during the 1960s was not common practice in the pop music industry, but part was also due to Gordy's business acumen: by keeping its studio musicians unknown, Motown could avoid a situation in which they became stars

[48] Allan "Dr. Licks" Slutsky, *Standing In the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson* (Wynnewood, PA: Dr. Licks Publishing, 1989), 183.
[49] George, *Where Did Our Love Go*, 110.
[50] Slutsky, xii.
[51] "James Jamerson Dies at 45: Bassist Backed Detroit Stars," *New York Times* 6 Aug. 1983, 26.
[52] Marshall Crenshaw, "James Jamerson: 1938-1983," *Rolling Stone*, September 29, 1983, 60.
[53] Slutsky, 190.

in their own right, or—more likely—a situation in which larger labels would lure them away with promises of more money.

For all of his anonymity, by the mid-1960s Jamerson's musical influence had grown massive, and can be particularly heard in the bass playing of the Beatles' Paul McCartney, as this section will soon address. But for all his global reach, Jamerson's story is particular to black America, and particularly Detroit. James Lee Jamerson was born in Edisto Island, South Carolina on January 29, 1936, seven years later than Berry Gordy, and six years earlier than Paul McCartney.[54] He moved to Detroit in 1954 and took up the upright bass while a student at Northwestern High School on West Grand Boulevard, only blocks away from the two-story house that would soon bear the moniker, "Hitsville, U.S.A." By the time he graduated Jamerson had already become a fixture on the Detroit jazz scene, where he occasionally played alongside burgeoning legends like Kenny Burrell and Yusef Lateef. Jamerson quickly developed a reputation as a prodigiously talented and versatile player who could play anything from bebop to pop to R&B. By 1958, he was, according to biographer Slutsky, "one of the biggest fish in the small pond that was Detroit's studio scene."[55]

It is unclear exactly when or how James Jamerson first came to Berry Gordy's recording studio at 2648 West Grand Boulevard: he was not the first bassist at Motown, and over the years many former Motown musicians would claim to be the one who introduced Jamerson to the label. The earliest Gordy-produced track that Jamerson is thought to have played on is the Miracles' 1959 single, "Way Over There," released a year prior to the group's breakthrough, "Shop Around." Through the early 1960s he played on a majority of Motown singles while also touring extensively with both Motown and non-Motown artists, but by 1964 he had come to be considered

[54] All biographical information on Jamerson is from Slutsky's *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, unless otherwise noted. Berry Gordy was born November 28, 1929; Paul McCartney was born June 18, 1942.
[55] Ibid., 10.

indispensable by the label. Production teams refused to record without him in the studio, and Gordy offered him $250 a week to leave the road and become Motown's full-time bass player.

Jamerson did not accompany the Motor Town Revue on its 1965 tour of the United Kingdom, when the Beatles met Berry Gordy at Pinewood Studios and gushed to him about his bass player's extraordinary abilities.[56] While Jamerson remained largely anonymous, his legend among fellow musicians on both sides of the Atlantic was growing. In terms of technique and ideas Jamerson had always boasted an improvistory style several cuts above standard rock and roll bass parts, which were often as simple as the root and fifth played on the two and four. As Motown arranger Dave Van Depitte described it, "What James contributed to the music was a sense of jazz as opposed to basic R&B. When he came on the scene in the early '60s, bass parts hung on the roots and fifths and then called it a day… even his simple lines were far more complex than what anybody had been doing up to that time."[57] As Slutsky notes, Jamerson's playing in the early 1960s was marked by "chromatic passing tones, Ray Brown style walking bass lines, and syncopated eighth-note figures—all of which had previously been unheard of in popular music of the late fifties and early sixties."[58] An early example of Jamerson's dexterity can be heard on Mary Wells' Number One hit "My Guy," recorded in 1964, a track on which Jamerson can be heard playing an acoustic upright bass. As Wells intones variations on the song's refrain over the song's fade, the backing track drops out so that we hear only finger snaps and Jamerson's bass, playing dancing sixteenth-note runs and stuttering, syncopated chromatic flourishes.[59]

In 1964 and 1965 Jamerson recorded classic bass lines for songs like "Nowhere To Run" (Martha and the Vandellas), "It's the Same Old Song" (the Four Tops), and "Get Ready" (the Temptations), all of which featured melodic, driving bass parts in which the bass is effectively a lead

[56] Posner, 141.
[57] Slutsky 188.
[58] Ibid., 12.
[59] Mary Wells, "My Guy," Motown 1056, 1964, 45rpm.

instrument.[60] As Nelson George writes, "On some Motown recordings it's hard to hear the piano, the organ, and vibes blend together, the sax solo is bland, and even Benny's drums, buried beneath tambourines and guitars, are sometimes lost in a [Holland-Dozier-Holland] mix. But never, never does anyone forget the bass lines."[61] By 1965 Jamerson's sound had become so iconic that one of the biggest non-Motown R&B hits of that year, Fontella Bass' "Rescue Me," features one of the most blatant imitations of a mid-1960s Motown bass line ever put to record, so much so that to this day the song is often confused for Motown (the bass part was played by Chicago session bassist Louis Satterfield).[62]

According to Slutsky, Jamerson's bass style dramatically evolved in late 1965: "Sixteenth notes, quarter note triplets, open string techniques, dissonant non-harmonic pitches, and syncopations off the sixteenth seemed to enter into his style almost overnight… Out of nowhere, James started playing almost as if he was the featured soloist."[63] By 1966 Jamerson was laying down classic lines like "You Can't Hurry Love" (the Supremes) and "Uptight (Everything's Alright)" (Stevie Wonder) while also breaking musical ground on a trio of Four Tops singles: "Reach Out (I'll Be There)," "Standing in the Shadows of Love," and "Bernadette" (the last of which was released in early 1967). Two of the most common elements of Jamerson's bass playing in this period are heavy uses of octave leaps or drops, often broken up by the insertion of a fifth (which can be heard on "It's the Same Old Song," and with even greater frequency on "Standing in the Shadows of Love" and "Bernadette"), and the anticipation of the downbeat through a tied eighth note on the back end of the previous measure ("Nowhere to Run" and "Uptight" are among the many Jamerson performances that feature this prominently).

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[60] Martha and the Vandellas, "Nowhere To Run," Gordy 7039, 1965, 45rpm. The Four Tops, "It's the Same Old Song" Motown 1081, 1965, 45rpm. The Temptations, "Get Ready," Gordy 7049, 1966, 45rpm.
[61] George, *Where Did Our Love Go?*, 110.
[62] Fontella Bass, "Rescue Me," Checker 1120, 1965, 45rpm. "Rescue Me" went to Number One on the R&B charts and Number Four on the Pop Charts.
[63] Slutsky, 38.

In late 1965, as Motown was dominating the American charts and Jamerson was rewriting the vocabulary of his instrument, the Beatles were approaching their own crossroads. Since their British breakthrough in 1963 the band had released LPs at a rate of two per year, a grueling **output** to maintain in the face of extensive touring and film appearances. By the time the group's fifth studio album, *Help!*, was released as the soundtrack to a movie of the same name in August of 1965, the likelihood of the band maintaining the two-a-year schedule seemed unlikely. And yet in December of 1965 a new album managed to arrive. Bearing the title *Rubber Soul*, it was positively received. *Variety* called it "a surefire mop-up" and evidence of "an evolving style that is related to but distinctly different from its earlier disks,"[64] while England's *New Musical Express* gave the album five stars and declared that "the Beatles are still finding different ways to make us enjoy listening to them."[65]

In the years since, *Rubber Soul* has rightfully been heralded as an artistic leap for the Beatles. Tim Riley has written that "[w]ith *Rubber Soul* the Beatles come of age musically as their subject matter matures emotionally."[66] The band's songwriting and musicianship seemed to leap forward, from the jangling sitar of "Norwegian Wood" to the sparkling angst of "Girl." Even amidst such buoyant moments as "Drive My Car" and "I'm Looking Through You," the album seemed more serious and adult: "Michelle," with its francophone lyric, lilting melody and jazz-infused chord changes, won the Grammy for Song of the Year, the first time a rock and roll act had ever captured the award.

Something relatively un-remarked-upon was the considerable influence of contemporary African American popular music, particularly Motown, on *Rubber Soul*. The Beatles themselves were so aware of this influence that they satirized it in the album's title. As Jonathan Gould writes, "The

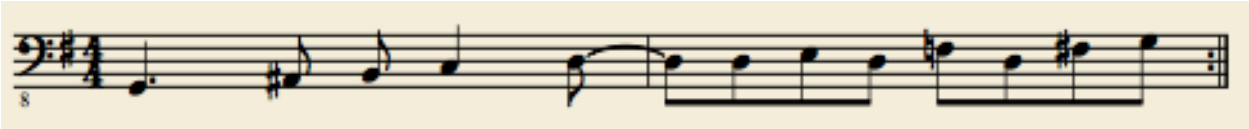
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[64] "Record Reviews," *Variety* 8 December 1965, 54.
[65] Allen Evans, "Rubber Soul," *New Musical Express* 3 Dec. 1965, 8.
[66] The Beatles, *Rubber Soul,* Parlophone PMC 1267, 1965, 33rpm (UK, Mono); Capitol 2442, 33rpm (US); Riley, 155.

title *Rubber Soul* was suggested by Paul McCartney and meant as a self-deprecating pun on the relationship between white musicians and black music."[67] Less directly, Ian MacDonald points out that the chord progression to "You Won't See Me" is based on the Four Tops' "It's the Same Old Song," and Paul McCartney has stated in interviews that "In My Life" was inspired by the Miracles.[68]
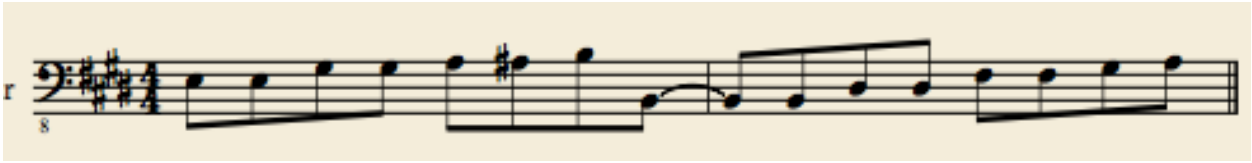
McCartney has also spoken of the influence of James Jamerson on his bass playing on *Rubber Soul*, specifically citing "You Won't See Me" as an example, and indeed McCartney's line on the song is rife with eighth-note syncopations and octave intervals.[69] Even more striking, though, is McCartney's bass playing on "Nowhere Man," a composition penned by John Lennon that appeared as the fourth track on the British version of *Rubber Soul.* "Nowhere Man" finds McCartney making heavy use of Jamersonian octave intervals and anticipated downbeats: indeed, on the song's verse form nearly every downbeat features an eighth note tied to the eighth note of the previous measure, the same device we can hear Jamerson employ on "Nowhere to Run" and other well-known lines. The effect created is propulsive, the bass leaning into the downbeat a half-beat before the drummer lands on the one.

Ex. 1: James Jamerson, "Nowhere to Run," opening of first verse[70]



[67] Gould, 294.
[68] Ian MacDonald, 180. McCartney quoted in Barry Miles, *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1997), 277-28.
[69] McCartney told interviewer Barry Miles of "You Won't See Me," "To me it was very Motown-flavoured. It's got a James Jameson [sic] feel. He was the Motown bass player, he was fabulous, the guy who did all those great melodic bass lines." Miles, 271.
[70] Transcriptions of select Jamerson bass lines can be found in the appendix to Slutsky's *Standing in the Shadows of Motown.*

Ex. 2: Paul McCartney, "Nowhere Man," opening of first verse[71]



"Nowhere Man" is often cited as a transitional song in the Beatles' catalogue, its lyric one of John Lennon's earliest forays into writing about a topic other than simple romance. When critics write of the Beatles elevating popular music above simple boy-meets-girl subject matter, songs like "Nowhere Man" are at least the beginnings of what they have in mind: as one critic notes, "[m]ore than any track on the album, 'Nowhere Man' breaks the unstated rules for pop content. Love, cars, parental constraints—'Nowhere Man' leaves these commonplaces behind."[72] And yet to hear "Nowhere Man" as the Beatles separating themselves from other contemporary rock and roll is to indulge biases that elide lyrical content with musical sophistication, and rest upon presumptions of intellectualism always more readily extended to white men than to people of color.

Most importantly, these statements miss the profound influence that black pop music and musicians were continuing to hold on the Beatles' music. That the African American musical overtones of *Rubber Soul* have gone under-acknowledged partly reflects the way that the album was packaged and marketed in the United States. As is well known to American Beatles fans of a certain age and to generations of frustrated vinyl collectors, through 1966 the Beatles' LPs were released in different form in the United States than in the United Kingdom, due to a variety of conditions endemic to the 1960s American music industry, which, upon the Beatles' breakthrough, had proved

[71] Full transcriptions of all McCartney bass lines can be found in *The Beatles: Complete Scores* (New York: Hal Leonard, 1993).
[72] James M. Decker, "*Rubber Soul* and the Transformation of Pop," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles,* Kenneth Womack, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80-81.

remarkably unequipped to deal with widespread American demand for a British musical import.[73] The version of *Rubber Soul* that arrived in American stores in December of 1965 was only twelve tracks long instead of fourteen, and was missing "Drive My Car," "What Goes On," "If I Needed Someone," and, notably, "Nowhere Man."[74] In their places were two tracks that had originally appeared on the UK version of the Beatles' previous album, *Help!*, "I've Just Seen a Face" and "It's Only Love."

Capitol Records, the American counterpart to EMI, had numerous byzantine reasons for revising the track order and selection of the Beatles' American releases, many of which have been traced back to much-vilified Capitol executive Dave Dexter, the man who oversaw the Beatles' American releases.[75] In the case of *Rubber Soul*, though, the bastardization came from a desire to market the Beatles' music as "folk rock," in order to take advantage of the perceived rage for the genre in the wake of "Like a Rolling Stone," the Byrds' version of "Mr. Tambourine Man," Barry Maguire's "Eve of Destruction," and other American hits of that year.[76] As Dave Marsh has written of *Rubber Soul*'s American repackaging, "the Beatles had had an intent, and folk rock wasn't it."[77] But the rebranding worked: a *Los Angeles Times* article on "rock folk" from January of 1966 declared that "even those classics the Beatles have succumbed… and their new album, 'Rubber Soul,' has even more influences of this kind of rock folk."[78]

The American packaging of *Rubber Soul* as folk rock is evident from the first track of the U.S. release, the acoustic-guitar-driven, skiffle-infused "I've Just Seen a Face," which appeared in place of the decidedly un-folk-rock "Drive My Car." "I've Just Seen a Face" had appeared in England

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[73] For a detailed summation of these circumstances, see Dave Marsh, *The Beatles' Second Album* (New York: Rodale, 2007).
[74] "Nowhere Man" was released as a single in the United States on March 5, 1966. The Beatles, "Nowhere Man," Capitol 5587, 1966, 45rpm.
[75] Perhaps the most energetic and thorough excoriation of Dexter can be found in Dave Marsh's *The Beatles' Second Album,* esp. 120-151.
[76] The emergence and implications of folk rock are discussed in depth in the first chapter of this dissertation.
[77] Ibid., 122.
[78] Sylvie Reice, "Why Teens Switched to Folk Rock,"

months earlier, on the UK *Help!* album—an album that, with its Dylan-esque "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away," was probably far closer to "folk rock" than *Rubber Soul*. As described in the first chapter of this dissertation, "folk rock" itself was seen as a break from previous rock and roll, and was seen as more artistically and intellectually serious than its forebears. Of course, this too was also a way of not-so-subtly separating a generation of young white rock and roll musicians from black predecessors and contemporaries, and Capitol's American packaging of *Rubber Soul* as a folk-rock album distanced the band from contemporary black music in the ears and minds of marketers and audiences, a deeply ironic happening given that the central influence of that music was proclaimed in the album's title.

The Beatles had ended 1965 with *Rubber Soul*, and 1966 would be arguably the most momentous year in their career. It was, by the band's own account, the year that Beatlemania turned a darkened corner, from the "more popular than Jesus" controversy to a bizarrely tense standoff with the Marcos regime in the Philippines, and by the year's end the band announced that they would no longer tour. 1966 was also a groundbreaking musical year for the Beatles. In late spring the band released its first new music since *Rubber Soul*, a double-sided single whose A-side, "Paperback Writer," went to Number One in the United States and the United Kingdom. Featuring gnashing, distorted guitars and a driving rhythm track, "Paperback Writer" found the Beatles in a harder and edgier mode than *Rubber Soul*.[79]

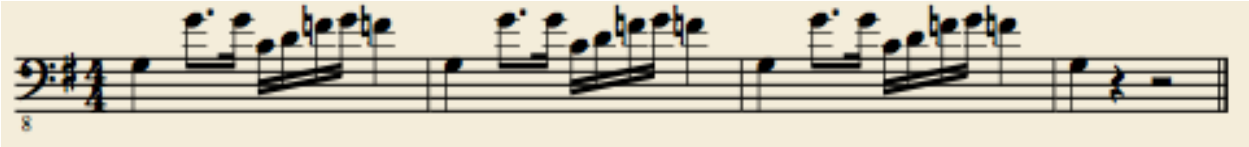
The B-side, a John Lennon composition entitled "Rain," was equally striking. "Rain"'s lyrics were stark and foreboding, and its melody and haunting chord structure bore hints of the drone aesthetics of the Indian ragas that were increasingly preoccupying the band, particularly its bridge, with its densely clustered harmonies and melismatically descending melody. It also featured a number of innovative studio techniques, including backwards vocals on the song's outro, as well as

[79] The Beatles, "Paperback Writer" b/w "Rain" Parlophone R5452 (UK), Capitol 5651 (US), 1966, 45rpm.

Ringo Starr's wildly adventurous drum performance that was then slowed down on tape by engineer Geoff Emerick, giving a dark and loagy texture to the rhythm part.

Nearly as noteworthy as the drum part, though, is McCartney's bass line, which bears the influence of James Jamerson more prominently than any previous Beatles track. The bass on "Rain" is the song's most active melodic instrument, providing a similar sort of galloping, driving low end heard on a track like "Nowhere to Run." As opposed to simply being a rudimentary half of the rhythm section, it is an intricate maker of the song itself. The musical content of McCartney's bass line is also remarkably Jamersonian, full of leaps and tumbles between octaves and rife with grace notes and chromaticisms. Rhythmically McCartney's bass line is a whirl of sixteenth note syncopations and anticipations of the one and three, nimbly sliding and ricocheting off of Starr's drum track behind the vocal and churning layers of guitars.

Ex. 3: Paul McCartney, "Rain," opening bars



The dexterity of McCartney's bass playing on "Rain" shows the extent to which Jamerson's virtuosic style was influencing the young Englishman, although there were of course several differences in style between the two players. For starters, as a converted guitarist, McCartney tended to play bass with a pick whereas Jamerson played with his fingers, a difference in attack that can be heard in the timbre of the instrument and that is also reflected in certain stylistic flourishes. For instance, McCartney's playing occasionally boasted quick bursts of a single note played repeatedly, a quick "strumming" effect that can be heard prominently on the first notes played by the bass on "Paperback Writer." It is in McCartney's pickwork that one hears prominent traces of another major

influence, session bassist Carol Kaye, though Kaye's lines tended to eschew the syncopations and melodic intricacy found in Jamerson's work so clearly mirrored in McCartney's bass playing.

McCartney's playing was also less improvisatory than Jamerson's, his lines tending to be more repetitive cycles of elaborate "riffs" as opposed to Jamerson's more freely-developing opuses that occurred with increasing frequency as the Sixties progressed. "Rain" is among the most varied and free-form of McCartney's lines in this period, but still doesn't begin to approach the expanses of "Standing in the Shadows of Love" or "Bernadette," or later Jamerson lines like "What's Going On" (Marvin Gaye, 1971).[80]

Both of these differences—the pickwork versus the fingerwork, the discrepancy in improvisation—can likely be chalked up to background: Jamerson had started out as a jazz musician and until the end of his life jazz remained his first love, and his idiosyncratic single-finger playing style was an obvious vestige from his time playing upright bass. Still, in McCartney's bass lines from this period we can hear an attempt to forge a low-end aesthetic for the Beatles rooted in the melodic invention and rhythmic intricacy of Jamerson's style. It is also worth noting that "Rain" was recorded in April of 1966, shortly after Jamerson began what Slutsky identifies as his late-1965 stylistic evolution.

In August of 1966 the Beatles released their follow-up LP to *Rubber Soul*, titled *Revolver*.[81] For all of the plaudits garnered that would be garnered by *Sgt. Pepper* a year later, in terms of historical impact *Revolver* was arguably as foundational in creating the idea of rock music as a serious form. In the introduction to an academic volume on the album, the title of which credits it with nothing less than "the Transformation of Rock and Roll," Russell Reising describes *Revolver* as "a haunting, soothing, confusing, grandly complex and ambitious *statement* about the possibilities of popular

[80] The Four Tops, "Standing in the Shadows of Love" Motown 1102, 1966, 45rpm; Marvin Gaye, "What's Going On" (Tamla 54201, 1971, 45rpm.
[81] The Beatles, *Revolver,* Parlophone PMC 7009 (UK); Capitol 2576 (US), 1966, 33rpm.

music."[82] Similarly, *Rolling Stone* has declared that *Revolver* "signaled that in popular music, anything—any theme, any musical idea—could now be realized."[83]

Statements like these indicate *Revolver's* critical and historiographical status as the first major avant-garde rock album. Two tracks in particular, "Eleanor Rigby" and "Tomorrow Never Knows," stood out in this regard. "Eleanor Rigby" was a somber, minor-key meditation on loneliness set to a string octet, the band's most explicit foray yet into the European classical music tradition. "Tomorrow Never Knows" wedded harmonic and instrumental tropes derived from Indian music to tape loops and flangers associated with avant-garde electronic art music, while John Lennon's double-tracked vocal intoned lyrics derived from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* amplified through a rotating Leslie speaker cabinet. Both "Eleanor Rigby" and "Tomorrow Never Knows" showed the Beatles engaging with musical styles—European concert-hall classical and avant-garde electronic music, respectively—that held considerably higher cultural capital than rock and roll, styles whose artistic and intellectual "significance" was taken for granted. For many listeners, the presence of these tracks stood as evidence that the Beatles were separating themselves from the pack of Sixties popular music.

Surrounding these two performances, though, was an album's worth of tracks that found the Beatles engaging with contemporary African American popular music in vigorous and newly adventurous ways. Despite an overwhelming tendency to hear *Revolver* as a groundbreaking avant-garde rock record, it might be just as instructive to hear it as an avant-garde rhythm and blues record. From the angular blues of "Taxman" to the crisp R&B backbeat of "Dr. Robert" to the uptown horn lines of "Got to Get You Into My Life," *Revolver* finds the Beatles engaging with contemporary African American music to even greater degrees than *Rubber Soul*.

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[82] Russell Reising (ed.), *Every Sound There Is: The Beatles'* Revolver *and the Transformation of Rock and Roll* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 1.
[83] "Revolver," *Rolling Stone* 11 Dec. 2003, 86.

In a short essay entitled "Detroit and Memphis: The Soul of *Revolver*," Walter Everett explores the influence of black music on the songwriting and production of *Revolver*, arguing that the album "shows a strong continuing dependence on American R&B."[84] In fact, in April of 1966 both *Billboard* and *Variety* published reports that the Beatles were looking into recording in Memphis, with the latter noting that "[t]he Beatles, according to plans, will cut one album and about sixteen songs at the Stax Recording Studios here."[85] According to Stax historian Rob Bowman, the Beatles had initially hoped to employ Stax songwriters to make a "contemporary rhythm and blues" album, although the idea fell through after Brian Epstein expressed hesitation over the studio's ability to provide adequate security for the band.[86]

I would argue that for all of the counterfactual intrigue of *Revolver*-at-Stax, the album is even more influenced by Motown and, once again, particularly the bass playing of James Jamerson. The sumptuous ballad "Here, There, and Everywhere" has been frequently speculated as having been influenced by the Beach Boys, although Smokey Robinson seems a far more likely influence.[87] The cleanly sparkling rhythm guitar and Paul McCartney's lilting, falsetto-infused tenor distinctly recall the Miracles' "Tracks of My Tears," released the previous year. Everett has also shown that the horn lines on "Got to Get You Into My Life" bear strong resemblances to the lines heard on both the Vandella's "Dancing In The Street" (1964) and Stevie Wonder's "Uptight (Everything's Alright)" (1965).[88]

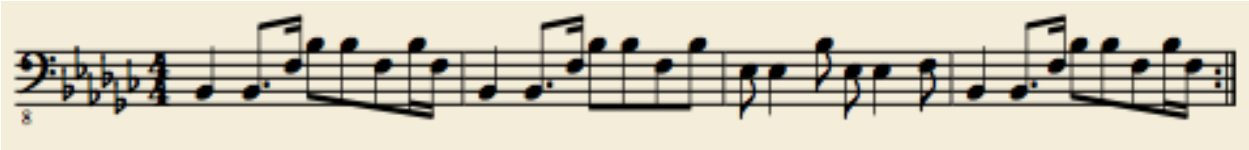
But the strongest Motown influence on *Revolver* is that of James Jamerson, heard in the bass playing of Paul McCartney and, in one instance, that of George Harrison. Everett notes that "active
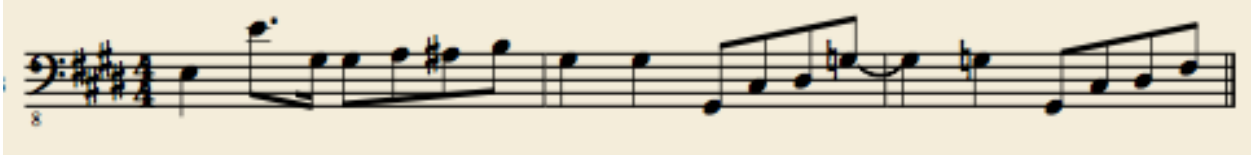
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[84] Walter Everett, "Detroit and Memphis: The Soul of *Revolver*," in Reising, 27.
[85] "Memphis Gears for Beatles Disk Session," *Variety* 6 April 1966, 51. See also "Beatles Will Record in U.S. During Tour," *Billboard* 23 April 1966, 34.
[86] Robert M.J. Bowman, *Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 94.
[87] Ian MacDonald has debunked the frequent claims that "Here, There and Everywhere" was influenced by the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* by pointing out that the album had not been released in the United Kingdom at the time of the track's recording. MacDonald, 210.
[88] Everett, 33.

lines like those on 'Taxman' (particularly on the bridge) and 'And Your Bird Can Sing' owe their existence to Jamerson's example," and yet this only scratches the surface of the Motown bassist's impact on *Revolver*.[89] "I Want to Tell You" is awash in octave leaps and downbeat anticipations, while the intricate syncopations and skipping sixteenth notes of "She Said She Said" (a line played by Harrison) clearly bear the distinct mark of Motown's virtuoso bassist. "And Your Bird Can Sing" might be the most Jamerson-inspired line on *Revolver*, another track on which McCartney's bass emerges as a primary melodic instrument against jangling rhythm guitars and George Harrison's cascading, harmonized lead guitar part, which effectively imitates the role of an R&B horn section. Particularly on the song's bridge, McCartney's bass line outlines the voice-leading harmonic structure (G#m – G#m/G - G#m/F# – C#/F - E) through octave leaps and syncopated melodic runs much as Jamerson does in similar harmonic contexts like the Miracles' hit "Come 'Round Here (I'm the One You Need)" and the Four Tops' 1966 "Reach Out I'll Be There."[90] There is almost no way that McCartney would have heard Jamerson's performance on "Reach Out" prior to recording "And Your Bird Can Sing," which attests to the degree to which the Beatles' bassist had absorbed his Detroit counterpart's stylistic proclivities.

Ex. 4: James Jamerson, "Reach Out I'll Be There" (opening of chorus)



Ex. 5: Paul McCartney, "And Your Bird Can Sing" (opening of bridge)



[89] ibid., 35.
[90] The Miracles, "(Come Round Here) I'm The One You Need," Tamla 54140, 1966, 45rpm. The Four Tops, "Reach Out I'll Be There," Motown 1098, 1966, 45rpm.

In June of 1967 the Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album that, as Michael Frontani has recently argued, marked a sea change in the way people talked about the value of popular music.[91] A sprawling mélange that encompassed Indian ragas, the British music hall tradition, concert-hall orchestras and of course a healthy dose of rock and roll, all melded together through cutting-edge studio technology, in the eyes of most observers the Beatles had effectively shifted the terms of rock and roll music's position as art. In one encomium, literary critic Richard Poirier wrote in the *Partisan Review* that *Sgt. Pepper* represented "an astounding accomplishment for which no one could have been wholly prepared, and it therefore substantially enlarges and modifies all the work that preceded it… gestations of genius that have now come to fruition."[92] The *Washington Post* ran two banner stories on the day of the album's release, one of which described the LP as "a musical infinity through a miraculous metamorphosis of dozens of Eastern and Western musical ideas, some centuries old, others from our own era and more than a few from the future."[93] The other opened with the simple declaration, "Music may never be the same again."[94] Only a few years earlier the notion of anyone saying such things about a rock and roll band would have been inconceivable.

Sgt. Pepper also struck a decisive blow in favor of the LP as a viable medium for rock and roll music: the album was deliberately released without a single, which to that point had been the primary medium of 1960s popular music. In doing so they seemed to embrace a more "adult" medium, and one that came with the trappings of prestige previously afforded to album-oriented forms like classical and jazz. What's more, by retiring from touring and reimagining themselves as a collective that existed solely for the production of recorded music, the Beatles definitively severed

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[91] The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Parlophone PMC 7027 (UK), Capitol 2653 (US), 1967, 33rpm. See Michael Frontani, *The Beatles: Image and the Media* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 148.
[92] Richard Poirier, "Learning from the Beatles," *Partisan Review* 34 (Fall 1967), 526.
[93] Carl Bernstein, "Beatles' 'Band,'" *Washington Post,* 18 Jun 1967, L1.
[94] Jim Hoagland, "Pop Goes On a Trip," 18 Jun 1967, L1.

themselves from screaming hordes of teenagers that had long provoked disbelief and occasional derision from commentators, while also distancing themselves from imaginings of rock and roll as an ephemeral, teenybopper phenomenon.

As Elijah Wald has recently argued, in the late 1960s the Beatles' music became the new benchmark for "serious" white rock music. Writes Wald:

> As rock was vested with more and more importance, both as an art form and as the voice of a young counterculture, its acolytes began to be bothered by the blatantly commercial, dance-hit mentality that had been taken for granted in the music's early days. And, with increasing frequency, that meant that rock was being separated from black music. Or, more accurately, from recent black styles.[95]

It is perhaps ironic that in the years since *Sgt. Pepper,* it is *Revolver* that has come to be heard as the birth of avant-garde rock, and Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc note that "critics have since gradually begun to acknowledge the importance of *Revolver* as the most significant advance in the Beatles' work."[96] But positioning *Revolver* in such a way occludes its connections to the very "recent black styles" whose disappearance Wald laments.

Hearing *Revolver* as the cutting-edge R&B album that the Beatles actually set out to make not only acknowledges the central influence of black music on the band's work, it also places the album within the flow of interracial influence and exchange so obviously heard on *With the Beatles*, rather than as the beginning of a new tradition that distances its connection to black music. What's more, it recognizes the extraordinary contributions of James Jamerson, whose anonymity was forced upon him by his employer but who nonetheless transformed the possibilities of his instrument and inspired musicians who were born an ocean away to push the boundaries of rock and roll music.

As the late 1960s progressed, the Beatles' commercial domination maintained its intensity in new forms, whereas Motown's gradually began to slip. The advances that the Beatles made in

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[95] Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 238-239.
[96] Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc, "Magical Mystery Tours, and Other Trips: Yellow Submarines, Newspaper Taxis, and the Beatles' Psychedelic Years," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*, 97.

popular music may have indirectly contributed to this: in early 1967 Brian Epstein had renegotiated the band's contract with EMI, giving the band new levels of control over their artistic and commercial destinies. The autonomy afforded the Beatles surely did not go unnoticed by other artists, white and black, and soon the top-down, paternalistic "studio" system of labels like Motown would become increasingly obsolete. Motown also began moving to California, and many of the studio musicians responsible for creating the label's iconic sound were unable to make the transition westward, most notably Jamerson, whose alcoholism was slowly destroying his musicianship. But perhaps the most fundamental and inevitable cause of the label's slow decline was its inability to remain on the cutting edge of popular music as it had for so much of the decade. With the emergence of the psychedelic R&B of Sly and the Family Stone, the pioneering funk of James Brown and the insurgent Southern soul of Aretha Franklin (who had grown up in Detroit), black popular music was expanding in new and rapidly changing directions.

No two artists would be more responsible for bridging the gap between the "golden age" of Motown in the 1960s and the changing landscape it would confront in the coming decade than Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. At the end of the decade, on the cusp of massive career transitions for both, Gaye and Wonder each released renditions of songs by the Beatles. Gaye's 1969 cover of "Yesterday," originally recorded by the Beatles in 1965, was little-heard, buried on *That's The Way Love Is,* the last album Gaye would release prior to his landmark 1971 album *What's Going On;* Stevie Wonder's 1970 version of "We Can Work It Out," also recorded by the Beatles in 1965, was released as a single and became a sizable hit at a moment when Wonder was plotting his own career transformation. Much in the way that Motown music informed and enabled a period of profound transition for the Beatles, these two "covers" of Beatles songs by Motown artists can be heard as informing a period of transition for Wonder, Gaye, and Motown itself.

Liverpool to Detroit: Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder at the end of the Sixties

Marvin Gaye was a reluctant rock and roll star; shortly before his death he would tell biographer David Ritz, "[m]y dream was to become Frank Sinatra. I loved his phrasing, especially when he was young and pure… He was the king I longed to be."[97] He was a deeply insecure, torn apart by a fiercely independent and iconoclastic streak on one had, and an equally fierce desire for mainstream acceptance on the other. He was moody and dissatisfied, a private and introspective man who seemed to paradoxically harbor ambitions to be the most famous singer on the planet. Gaye held himself on another plane as other Motown singers—aside from Sinatra he also admired Perry Como, Nat King Cole, and particularly Sam Cooke, adding an "e" to his own name (he was born Marvin Pentz Gay, Jr.) in an early stab at imitation of the singer—and yet was wildly jealous of younger stars like Stevie Wonder and, later, Michael Jackson.[98]

He was also perhaps the most brilliant singer at Berry Gordy's label, bringing a crooner's sense of debonair perfectionism to a voice forged in the Pentecostal Christianity of his father's Washington, D.C. church. In his early career he brought soft charm to confections like "Pride and Joy" and "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)" and gospel edge to show-stoppers like "Stubborn Kind of Fellow" and "Can I Get a Witness." He was handsome, and one of the most virtuosic conveyors of male sexuality in all of popular music: his mid-Sixties duets with Mary Wells and Kim Weston were reliable commercial standbys for Motown, but it wasn't until paired with Tammi Terrell that Gaye found his most incomparable musical partner, as the two recorded hits like "Your Precious Love," "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." In late 1968 Gaye's solo stardom reached new heights, as his recording of Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong's "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" became the biggest hit in

[97] David Ritz, *Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye* (Boston: Da Capo, 2009), 29.
[98] Ritz's *Divided Soul*, originally intended as Gaye's memoir until his untimely death in 1984, is the definitive biographical account of Marvin Gaye; biographical information here comes from Ritz's book.

Motown's history. He followed this up with two more Top Ten hits, "Too Busy Thinking About My Baby" and "That's The Way Love Is."

In a sense Marvin Gaye was a metonym for Motown's ambitions, the music of black America repackaged and re-sold to white America, but on black Americans' own terms. This had been a lucrative proposition for Gaye but also one that left him increasingly torn: as Gaye recalled, "I remember I was listening to a tune of mine playing on the radio, 'Pretty Little Baby,' when the announcer interrupted with news about the Watts riot… I wanted to throw the radio down and burn all the bullshit songs I'd been singing and get out there and kick ass with the rest of the brothers."[99] As the Sixties progressed and black cultural politics grew increasingly strident, Gaye began to chafe against Gordy's deep aversion to political material but also against his own ambitions, how a man whose deepest dream was to "sit on a stool and croon" might begin to intercede into a political world gone increasingly haywire.

Gaye's 1969 album *That's the Way Love Is* was produced by Norman Whitfield, the co-writer and producer of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and a figure widely credited for bringing the cutting-edge sounds of psychedelia—most notably the influence of Sly and the Family Stone—to a label that was increasingly playing musical catch-up.[100] By Whitfield's standards *That's the Way Love Is* comes off as a relatively conservative album: apart from its title track, it is mostly a mix of second-tier Whitfield/Strong compositions, first-tier Whitfield/Strong compositions that had been hits for other artists (such as "I Wish It Would Rain" and "Cloud Nine," both successes for the Temptations), and covers of non-Motown hits, including "Abraham, Martin and John," "Groovin'," and the Beatles' "Yesterday."

Paul McCartney's writing of "Yesterday" is one of the most famous origin stories in all of music: by his own telling, McCartney awoke from a dream with the melody in his head, then

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[99] Ritz, 106-107.
[100] See Flory, 139-143. Marvin Gaye, *That's the Way Love Is,* Tamla 299, 33rpm, 1969.

wandered about for weeks asking people to identify it, not believing that he'd actually written it. For a while the working title of the song was "Scrambled Eggs; after a name change, "Yesterday" had been originally released on the UK version of *Help!* in 1965.[101] In some ways a predecessor to "Eleanor Rigby," the song featured only McCartney, backed by a string quartet, and when the decision was made to release the song as a single in the United States, George Martin suggested crediting it simply to "Paul McCartney," a suggestion that Brian Epstein and McCartney himself quickly dismissed. Credited to "The Beatles," the single went to Number One in the United States.

By the time Marvin Gaye recorded "Yesterday," McCartney's composition was well on its way to becoming, by the *Guinness Book of World Records*' estimate, the most performed song of the twentieth century.[102] The song had been covered by artists ranging from Marianne Faithfull to Ray Charles, and Gaye's idol Frank Sinatra had released his own version in 1969. More than any other "Lennon-McCartney" composition (the actual authorship was entirely McCartney's), by the end of the 1960s "Yesterday" had become a standard in the most classic sense, its melody instantly familiar that McCartney himself could barely believe someone else hadn't written it.

Gaye's version of "Yesterday" takes the song's well-worn familiarity and reworks it into something drastic and unknown. Flory has written of what he calls Gaye's process of "vocal composition," "how the singer assembled and developed a musical work by harnessing his vocal talents in the studio."[103] Flory's analysis of Gaye's work has primarily applied this idea to Gaye's 1970s output, as well as two of Gaye's renditions of the Tin Pan Alley standard "I Wish I Didn't Love You So" that he recorded in 1967, only slightly earlier than "Yesterday" and a moment that Flory cites as Gaye beginning to experiment with and harness this process.

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[101] See Miles, 203.
[102] MacDonald, 157.
[103] Flory, 188.

I suggest that Gaye's rendition of "Yesterday" itself serves as another example of the singer rewriting a pre-existing standard through his vocal technique. Whereas the Beatles' original recording of "Yesterday" was buttoned-down and austere, Gaye's recording of "Yesterday" is sweeping and enormous in its scope and dynamics. The track opens quietly, with gently strummed guitars, then adds a spare rhythm section and xylophone. The drums are a light heartbeat of kick-drum and high-hat; a low electric guitar bubbles underneath, while a second plays sparse fills. Gaye's vocal performance immediately announces itself as something new, beginning with an ad-libbed "mm-mm" that tumbles into the song's opening, "ohh, YES-terday," melancholically accenting the first syllable. Gaye's rendition is also a full fifth higher than the Beatles' version—the original is in the key of F, Gaye's is in C—an extraordinary leap that forces Gaye to essentially re-write the song's melody. This is heard as early as the song's first word: in the Beatles' version, the three syllables of "Yes-ter-day" are melodically mapped as II-I-I, whereas in Gaye's version the phrase is I-I-VI, a small difference that subtly changes the texture of the opening phrase, and anticipates the harmonic move to the relative minor (vi) that occurs in the third bar of the verse.

The drop of two whole steps in Gaye's opening phrase—as opposed to just one in the original version—also foreshadows the immense range that Gaye brings to the melody. One quality of "Yesterday" that has led to its endurance is its relative sing-ability: in the original form the melody for the most part spans a single octave, dropping below the root only once (during the "I believe in yesterday" refrain). Gaye's vocal explodes these parameters: on the song's bridge Gaye's voice breaks into falsetto and soars up to a high D, more than a full octave above the root and nearly an octave and a half above where he lands on the song's opening phrase.

Gaye's vocal pyrotechnics here provide a thrilling display of style and showmanship, but they also transform the meaning of the song. By soaring into falsetto on the "Why" that opens the bridge, elongating the word tonally and temporally, Gaye transforms the "why she had to go / I

don't know" sentiment into something dark and desperate, transforming a song about loss into a song about paranoia and confusion. This can be heard at other moments during the song as well: on the second repetition of the opening verse (which comes on the heels of the bridge), Gaye soars up on "*Now* I need a place to hide away" and puts strain on "need," drawing out the song's wishful fantasies of escape and isolation. And on the last verse, a piercing falsetto marks the word "seemed" in the phrase "all my troubles *seemed* so far away," emphasizing the lyric's themes of destabilization and delusion. And Gaye does all of this against a lush and ornate orchestral backdrop. Indeed, in terms of orchestration, Gaye's version more closely resembles Frank Sinatra's own version from 1969, from his Reprise album *My Way*, than McCartney's original.[104]

Gaye's version of "Yesterday" is an aural fulcrum in the history of Motown at the end of the 1960s: both old-fashioned and new, the middlebrow-orchestral tradition of the mid-century pop crooner brought to bear on a newly-christened standard, a testament to the versatility of Gaye and also Whitfield, who provides sumptuous arrangement and production. By the time Gaye's version of "Yesterday" was recorded, the Beatles were breaking up and Motown was leaving Detroit. In Gaye's rendering the nostalgia embedded in the text of "Yesterday" takes on a vast array of meanings, the sound, to paraphrase another Motown hit of the same period, of whole worlds ending, and others beginning.

Marvin Gaye would not release new music in 1970, a year that found him grappling with the death of Tammi Terrell and questioning his own musical and political directions. During that year Gaye informed Gordy that he wanted to make a protest album. Gordy was hesitant at first: Motown marketed singles, not albums, and Gordy wanted little to do with any music that smacked of protest. Gordy ultimately relented, and in May of 1971, a new Marvin Gaye album was released, an introspective, jazz-laden, deeply political suite of music bearing the title *What's Going On* that

[104] Frank Sinatra, *My Way,* Reprise 1020, 1969, 33rpm.

produced three Top Ten singles and sold over two million copies.[105] *What's Going On* was the last major Motown work recorded in Detroit, and the first Motown LP to credit studio musicians, including a special nod to "the incomparable James Jamerson," whose bass playing on the album is regarded as some of the finest of his career. It was also the clearest sign yet that the hard-handed paternalism of Berry Gordy was in decline. *What's Going On* was a landmark moment, a Motown artist fighting Gordy on the creative end and winning, musically and commercially, a clean blow for the vision and autonomy of the individual artist.

Gaye's victory did not go unnoticed. Eight days before the release of *What's Going On,* after the album's title track and lead single had raced up the Pop singles chart, Stevie Wonder turned twenty-one years old. In a shrewd show of chutzpah Wonder had informed Gordy that, having become an adult, he intended to void the contract with Motown that he had signed as a minor. Gordy, well aware of the young Wonder's increasingly enormous musical gifts and earning potential, agreed to an unprecedented deal with the young singer, instrumentalist, songwriter and producer, granting Wonder total artistic control over his future albums and half the publishing royalties to all his songs. [106]

Stevie Wonder's ascent from child prodigy to the most powerful artist in the history of Motown spanned nearly the entire life of the company. Wonder had signed with the label in 1961, at the age of eleven, and had enjoyed his first Number One hit the following year, a bizarre and thrilling live recording called "Fingertips, Part 2." Many at Motown initially saw Wonder as a gimmick, and Gordy privately worried that he would have to drop the singer once his voice changed.[107] This was dispelled in late 1965 with the success of "Uptight (Everything's Alright)," a song recorded and co-written by Wonder at the age of fifteen, whose transition into his adult voice

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[105] Marvin Gaye, *What's Going On,* Tamla 310, 1971, 33rpm.
[106] For biographical information on Wonder I relied on Craig Werner's *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield and the Rise and Fall of American Soul* (New York: Crown, 2004).
[107] Posner, 156.

only bolstered his effectiveness as a singer. Wonder followed this up with a stirring cover of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind" that also cracked the Top 10 in 1966, a gospel-infused rendition of the folk-revival classic that hinted toward the young performer's versatility, diversity of influences, and growing political awareness. A month after his seventeenth birthday the Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,* and Wonder later recalled being transfixed by the album. "I just dug the effects they got, like echoes and the voice things, the writing, like 'For the Benefit of Mr. Kite.' I just said, 'Why Can't I?' I wanted to do something else, go other places."[108]

Wonder's appetite for non-Motown music did not keep him from becoming one of the label's most consistent hitmakers, with songs like "I Was Made to Love Her," "My Cherie Amour" and "For Once In My Life" all reaching the upper echelons of the *Billboard* Pop charts in the late 1960s. In June of 1970 Wonder released the single, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours," the first song on which he held sole producer credit, and an album called *Signed, Sealed & Delivered* was released two months later, to considerable success.[109] The album's second track was a cover of a 1965 Lennon-McCartney composition, "We Can Work It Out;" released as a single the following spring, Wonder's version reached Number Thirteen on the Pop Charts.[110]

The Beatles' original recording of "We Can Work It Out" was released as a single in December of 1965, only days before the release of *Rubber Soul.*[111] The song was packaged as a "double A-side" with "Day Tripper" and went to Number One on both the US and UK. "We Can Work It Out" was a collaborative piece of songwriting on the part of McCartney and Lennon: McCartney wrote the song's verses, with their breezy, major-key melody, while Lennon contributed the bridge, a minor-key segment that includes a brief shift into a waltzing triple meter on the final bars of each phrase. At its core "We Can Work It Out" is a song about mending a relationship,

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[108] Werner, 148.
[109] Stevie Wonder, *Signed Sealed & Delivered,* Tamla 304, 1970, 33rpm.
[110] Stevie Wonder, "We Can Work It Out," Tamla 54202, 1971, 45rpm.
[111] The Beatles, "We Can Work It Out," Parlophone 5389, 1965, 45rpm

although not without its turns of ambiguity. The song's bridge contains perhaps its most hopeful statement but seems contradicted by its minor, vaguely dirge-like quality, and questions like "do I have to keep on talking till I can't go on?" carry a frustrated exhaustion.

Stevie Wonder's version, recorded five years later, deconstructs and rebuilds the song. Wonder's version is recorded only a half-step higher than the Beatles' original and at a nearly identical tempo, but the energy of his recording is recognizably, even astonishingly different from the original. Wonder's version opens with a distorted clavinet playing three bars of introduction, then explodes into the song's verse as a cluster of voices shout an emphatic "hey!" The song's rhythm section is pure Motown dance-pop: a four-on-the-floor kick-drum, a dancing, elaborate bass line (played by Jamerson acolyte Bob Babbitt), a clean guitar playing staccato chord bursts on the backbeat.[112] Wonder's lead vocal possesses all the firy urgency of "Uptight" but is more controlled and adult, a thrilling combination of commanding precision and flamboyant virtuosity.

Wonder's revision of "We Can Work It Out" differs from the Beatles' original in many ways, but a few stand out. The first is the outsized and almost hyperactive role of backup vocal parts, which punctuate the song with exclamatory "heys," swelling polyphonies and exultant harmonies. The effect achieved is a rollicking, gospel call-and-response, but with a notable twist: through studio multi-tracking Wonder provides all the backing vocals himself, which are then mediated through audio compression, giving the vocals a mechanized, techno-futurist tinge. This is particularly notable in an interlude section that comes on the heels of Wonder's harmonica solo: as the clavinet riff from the song's beginning appears again, Wonder repeats the phrase "work it out with me, baby" as a swell of voices, intoning a wordless "ahhh," rises up around him, until a charging drum fill shoves the song into its final verse and out-chorus. As the gospel tradition of participatory musical

[112] By the late 1960s Jamerson's alcoholism was increasingly affecting his perform, and Babbitt was frequently employed as a substitute. By Babbitt's own account on his website, "We Can Work It Out" was the first Motown session he ever played on. http://www.bobbabbitt.com/about.htm

community is wedded to modern recording technologies, Wonder communes with himself and his own musical gifts through an uncanny but riveting cloning.

A second difference is the song's bridge: as opposed to Beatles' version, where a wheezing pump organ and brief shift into waltz time lend a sense of melancholic lament, Wonder's version dramatically increases in intensity. A tambourine arrives, jangling away on a driving eighth-note pattern, and the backup vocals soar into an upper-register head voice, performing the entire bridge in harmony with Wonder's lead. Wonder's bridge forgoes the transition to triple meter, remaining in 4/4 time and employing a descending eighth-note diatonic walk-down back into the verse, a flourish that sounds distinctly like a self-homage to the famous opening electric sitar riff of "Signed, Sealed, Delivered."

Wonder's vocal performance is also drastically different than McCartney's, particularly at the song's chorus. In the Beatles' version, McCartney swings the word "we" into the word "can," so that the emphasis unmistakably falls on the second word, while the first is more staccato: "we CAN work it out / we CAN work it out." In Wonder's version, both words are sung as straight eighth notes and the emphasis falls on the first word and third words: "WE can WORK it out / WE can WORK it out." Rhythmically, this creates a slight lag on the first word, leaning it back against the propulsive rhythm section in a way that is, for lack of a better term, distinctly funkier than the original rhythm. Furthermore, the emphasis on "we" and "work" alters the meaning of the song's refrain, privileging the suggestion of togetherness over irresolvable differences.

Taken on the whole, this is the greatest accomplishment of Wonder's "We Can Work It Out": with its exuberant energy and revisions of form and phrasing, Wonder transforms the Beatles' song about the ambivalent reparation of a relationship into a statement about community and the unfulfilled possibilities of reconciliation. By wedding the Beatles' song to his own unique blend of rock and roll and techno-gospel, Wonder explodes the song's text and remakes it into unimagined

dimensions. At a time when Wonder's own music was expanding into new and increasingly political directions, he shifts the song's meaning away from being about a star-crossed couple to being about something much larger, an affirmation of resilience and unity. If Marvin Gaye's version of "Yesterday" had brought a dark and piercing introspection to McCartney's composition, Wonder reimagines "We Can Work It Out" as a statement of extroverted generosity.

Much in the sense that "Yesterday" sounds a sort of cusp in the career of Marvin Gaye, the end of his fealty to Gordy's system as he stood on the precipice of *What's Going On*, "We Can Work It Out" sounds a similar moment of transition in the career of Stevie Wonder. In 1972 Wonder would release *Music of My Mind*, an album that he wrote, produced, and performed almost entirely himself, a testament to both his own talent and also to the expanding technological wizardry that can be heard in inchoate form on "We Can Work It Out." The recording contains many technologies that would become staples of Wonder's 1970s music, from the distorted clavinet of the introduction to the densely-tracked, self-recorded backing vocals, whose compressed timbre carries hints of the vocoder or "talkbox" technology employed by Wonder throughout the 1970s.

By the time "We Can Work It Out" hit the Pop charts in 1971 Motown had all but left Detroit. The last act that Gordy personally shepherded to stardom in the manner that he had for so many Motown artists were a quintet of youngsters called the Jackson 5. The Jacksons were not themselves from Detroit but rather Gary, Indiana, and their material was recorded almost exclusively in Los Angeles, with Los Angeles session musicians. The group's lead singer, a prepubescent wunderkind named Michael Jackson who recalled no one so much as Little Stevie Wonder, would become one of the label's biggest stars before leaving with his brothers for Epic Records in 1975. Wonder, for his part, has remained on Motown for his entire career.

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As Stevie Wonder himself suggests in the epigram to this chapter, it is impossible to imagine the history of Sixties popular music without the Beatles and Motown. The revolutions that they wrought on the music industry—commercially, artistically, sociologically—were the product of extraordinary vision and extraordinary circumstances: both took the loose and amorphous strands of rock and roll music into directions no one could have foreseen. The musical and commercial dominance of Motown and the Beatles pointed to something like a "sound of Young America" that exceed the limits of America itself. The imaginations that enabled both were rooted in a similar vision: that four white men from a British port city could play American rock and roll music and become more popular than Elvis Presley; that white teenagers who'd long been accustomed to pale imitations of black music might hand over their allowances and radio dials to black music and musicians directly, if given the chance.

By connecting "Money (That's What I Want)" from the literal beginnings of Motown to its appearance as the closing track on *With the Beatles* at the dawn of Beatlemania, by tracing the influence of James Jamerson through *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver,* and by hearing the Motown transitions of Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye at the dawn of the 1970s through a pair of Lennon-McCartney hits from 1965, a web of musical commonality is revealed that fractures the racially-hermetic discourses surrounding these artists, in which the Beatles are held to have invented a white avant-garde rock and in which Motown is judged to be overly assimilationist and comparably inauthentic to other Sixties black music. Both of these evaluations are narrow and in crucial senses ahistorical, positioning these entities into presentist contexts and comparisons that are determined more by ideology than actual musical activity.

In a 1970 interview John Lennon remarked of the Beatles, "We were just a band that made it very, very, big, that's all. Our best work was never recorded."[113] It is a remark that has since become

[113] Jann Wenner, "John Lennon: The Rolling Stone Interview," *Rolling Stone* 21 Jan. 1971, 35.

famous for its irony, as if anyone could look back upon the 1960s and declared the Beatles to be "just a band." But it is also quite true, and while the "best work" literally refers to what an embittered Lennon had come to see as the band's idyllic, pre-fame years, it also speaks to the mysteries and ineffabilities that attend music of this magnitude. While Motown and the Beatles remain so ubiquitous and familiar that to speak of their importance feels like an empty syllogism, hearing them together suggests that they are differently important, and perhaps even more important, than we have previously realized. The next chapter explores the new landscape of rock and roll music left in their wake, when another singer from Detroit and a singer from Texas further changed the way listeners heard and thought about white and black music in the 1960s, while another singer from England sought a stateside invasion of her own.

- Chapter 4 -
"Being Good Isn't Always Easy": Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin, Dusty Springfield, and the Color of Soul

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What does *Webster*'s say about soul?
-Gil Scott-Heron, "Comment No. 1" (1970)[1]

On June 6, 1965, the Rolling Stones released a single entitled "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." Clocking in at three minutes and forty-seven seconds, "Satisfaction" was a breakthrough hit for the Stones that finally proved singer Mick Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards could produce songwriting of both quality and commercial viability to rival anything in pop. The fuzzed-out Keith Richards guitar riff that opened the song was instantly iconic—Richards himself later remarked that he had envisioned it as a horn line—and the band had never sounded better, with drummer Charlie Watts holding down a driving R&B backbeat, complemented by an incessant tambourine smacking out three eighth-notes on the back end of every measure, as Richards and Brian Jones snaked lithe and sinewy guitar parts within and around the rhythm section.[2] The lyrics, sung by twenty-two-year-old Jagger with swaggering confidence, were funny and edgy, worthy of the Stones' songwriting heroes such as Willie Dixon and Chuck Berry while irrepressibly pushing the boundaries of propriety. The song even managed to further the air of controversy that had long been the band's trademark, as its final verse, in which Jagger laments that he "can't get no girlie action" and cryptically refers to a "losing streak," was initially deemed too risqué by radio programmers. Taken altogether, the song's sneering anti-conformist critique of celebrity and advertising culture fit snugly with the Stones' carefully-marketed scofflaw image.[3]

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[1] Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, Flying Dutchman 10143 (1970).
[2] Keith Richards with James Fox, *Life* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2010), 177.
[3] Stephen Davis, *Old Gods Almost Dead: The 40-Year Odyssey of the Rolling Stones* (New York: Random House, 2001), 129.

"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" shot up the American charts. On July 10, 1965 it knocked the Four Tops' "I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch)" from the top slot on the *Billboard* Pop charts and held the top position for four straight weeks, making it the Rolling Stones' first American Number One single.[4] After nearly two years of toiling in the shadow of the Beatles, who by July of 1965 had already enjoyed eight U.S. Number Ones, "Satisfaction" gave the Rolling Stones a decisive stateside breakthrough. Over the next year the Stones would place five more songs in the *Billboard* Top 10, including two more Number Ones.[5]

So popular was "Satisfaction" that it even achieved a rare sort of "reverse" crossover, reaching Number Nineteen on *Billboard*'s R&B charts, indicating that the song's success in African American markets was so pronounced that it forced *Billboard* to reconsider its practice of policing of its R&B charts along racial lines. "Satisfaction" also became the first original Rolling Stones composition to be widely covered by the very black American rhythm and blues artists whom the Stones idolized. Otis Redding had a hit with his own version of the song in 1965, a fitting exchange given that the Stones had covered a song popularized by Redding, "That's How Strong My Love Is," on *Out of Our Heads*, the same album that contained "Satisfaction."[6] Redding's version moved Richards' famous guitar riff to the horn section as originally intended and ratcheted up the tempo, and the singer's own vocal performance brought a frenetic exuberance to the material. Redding's version hit number thirty-one on the Pop charts and went all the way to number four on the R&B charts.

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[4] "Hot 100," *Billboard* 10 Jul. 1965, 26.
[5] All *Billboard* chart information, unless otherwise noted, is from Joel Whitburn's *Billboard Top 10 Singles Charts, 1955-2000* (Menonomee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2001) and Whitburn's *Billboard Top R&B Singles 1942-1995* (Menonomee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2001).
[6] The Rolling Stones, *Out of Our Heads,* Decca/London 429, 1965, 33rpm.

By 1967, when a cover of "Satisfaction" appeared as the opening track on *Aretha Arrives*, the second album recorded by vocal sensation Aretha Franklin for Atlantic Records, "Satisfaction" had become one of the most famous rock and roll songs ever written.[7] Released in early August of 1967, at the height of what *Ebony* writer David Llorens would soon famously describe as the "summer of 'Retha, revolt and Rap," *Aretha Arrives* featured what would become Franklin's third consecutive Top Ten hit, "Baby, I Love You."[8] By the end of 1967 Franklin had placed two more singles in the Top Ten, leaving the album's title less an alliterative marketing boast than a vast understatement.

Never released as a single, the version of "Satisfaction" that opens *Aretha Arrives* is exciting and original, boasting a driving four-on-the-floor kick-drum groove surrounded by swirling, churchy organ, pounding piano (played by Franklin herself), and piercing horn bursts. Franklin's vocal carries all of the commanding composure found on her more famous Atlantic sides, her performance a blend of the bluesy complaint of Mick Jagger's original and the excitable energy of Redding's cover. The musicians on Franklin's version hint around the song's iconic riff but never explicitly play it, probably because they don't really need to, as Richards' simple two-bar guitar figure had already become one of the most familiar sounds in rock and roll music. Franklin avoids the song's final verse entirely, choosing to riff extemporaneously on her inability to get "satisfaction" as opposed to Jagger's more specific griping over sexual frustration.

This is not a chapter about the Rolling Stones, but it is a chapter about Aretha Franklin, and about the transmission of songs and the power of repertoire, two topics central to popular music that are often under-examined. More specifically, it is a chapter about how three female singers—Franklin, white American blues-rock singer Janis Joplin,

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[7] Aretha Franklin, *Aretha Arrives,* Atlantic Records 8150, 1967, 33rpm.
[8] David Llorens, "Miracle in Milwaukee," *Ebony,* Nov. 1967, 29.

and British pop star Dusty Springfield—used musical materials that were rarely of their own devising to navigate an historical moment during which conversations about race and musical authenticity reached peculiar levels of intensity. This chapter roughly spans the period of 1967 to 1970, beginning with the meteoric emergences of Franklin and Joplin—two singers born within a year of each other—and approximately ending at Joplin's death from a heroin overdose in October 1970. During this period Dusty Springfield would travel to the United States and record the album *Dusty In Memphis* for Atlantic Records, a unique landmark in Southern rhythm and blues that found Springfield collaborating with many of the same musicians and producers that were collaborating with Aretha Franklin.[9]

During these years American critics, readers and listeners became increasingly consumed with a strange subject of debate: "soul." For a word that conjures timelessness, the emergence of "soul" as a discursive subject was in fact extremely timely, loosely tied to burgeoning discourses of black cultural nationalism, and often specifically to the rising success of Aretha Franklin herself. The vague metaphysicality embedded in the word's far-flung implications made it an ideal Trojan horse for a host of complex discussions about cultural ownership versus cultural availability, racial essence versus racial transcendence, music as a sphere of unraced democracy versus music as a sphere of transhistorical racial authenticity.

Who "had" soul and who didn't were questions that found their way into high-profile national publications, with figures such as Franklin and Janis Joplin serving as straw figures in discussions of the power of black music on the one hand and the proclivities of white performers trying their hand at said music on the other. Dusty Springfield, renowned for facility within black musical styles in her native England, maintained only a side presence

[9] Dusty Springfield, *Dusty in Memphis,* Atlantic 8214, 1969, 33rpm.

in the "soul" debates in the United States, her marginal position due mostly to a relative lack of commercial success and mainstream stardom in comparison to Franklin and Joplin.

This chapter examines the discourse of "soul," and the ways these artists functioned within and without these conversations, both in a historically specific context and in relation to larger constellations of ideas about black and white music-making. In doing so I will expose the ideological pressures exerted by and upon the discourse of "soul" within a larger landscape of Sixties music, while aiming to separating these pressures from the music they were purportedly attempting to explain.

In the late 1960s ideas about soul gestured toward music while carrying claims that were distinctly extra-musical: "soul" was a way to use music to talk about race, and vice versa. In the years since this has largely remained the case, as the majority of histories of 1960s rhythm and blues music have concerned themselves with the social conditions of race and the essential relation of these conditions to musical performance. From a political standpoint such historiography has a long and important intellectual lineage, stretching back at least to LeRoi Jones' pathbreaking *Blues People* (1963), a broad-scope history of African American music that causally linked black musical practice to the material legacies of slavery and emancipation.[10] Arguments for a definitive and singularly black essence in African American music have long been a powerful way of guarding said music against a white dominant culture that has repeatedly exploited and pillaged it, as well as a way of celebrating black cultural autonomy in the face of ongoing racism and degradation.

That said, one problem with such scholarship is its tendency to view musical performance and practice as determined by or reducible to the lived experience of race itself. In the case of soul music, this tends to manifest itself in two ways. The first views 1960s

[10] Amiri Baraka (as LeRoi Jones), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963; New York: Perennial, 2002).

rhythm and blues music as a hermetically black undertaking, resistant to and endangered by the influence of a white music industry; the second views the music predominantly in its relation to black politics, specifically the civil rights movement.[11] It's also not uncommon for both to emerge side-by-side in a sort of self-corroboration: for instance, one critic writes that "soul music represented the conflation of polytonal vocal expression, over a layered musical landscape of rhythm and blues and gospel," then goes on to argue that "the soul singer emerges as the popular representation of an emerging postcolonial sensibility among the black community, despite the perpetual constraints placed on black public expression that could be deemed as expressions of resistance."[12]

While this description isn't necessarily inaccurate, its first part ignores the significant influences of country music and mainstream pop on Southern soul music, while the second reduces the soul musician to a primarily symbolic position. This move to transform the soul singer into a metonymic stand-in for "the black community" neglects real concerns such as technique, repertoire, and commerce: in other words, the agency of individual musicians, and the lived practice of music itself. Before it was anything else soul music was pop music, performed by professional musicians and marketed by record labels. The foremost goal of most soul music was to make black *and* white people buy it, and dance to it, in either order.

While both the material realities and imaginary capacities of race and its relation to musical performance receive extensive attention in this chapter, I will also take up a subject that is too often neglected in discussions of soul music, and popular music generally: namely, the question of repertoire, the creation, selection, and performance of songs themselves.

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[11] For the former, see Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988); for the latter, see Brian Ward's *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[12] Mark Anthony Neal, *What The Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 40.

Who was singing whose songs, for whom, and what does "whose songs" actually signify? How might Aretha Franklin's performance of "Satisfaction," a song originated by a band sometimes categorized by the somatically-disingenuous sub-genre "blue-eyed soul," complicate or otherwise alter our understanding of "soul," in both its ontology and its aesthetic character? In a discourse preoccupied with the relationship of racial category to authentic musical performance, what happens when we examine specific musical material itself?

Racially-determined ideas about musical practice almost always take root at the level of *performance,* while ignoring the specific materials and motivations behind these performances—important issues, particularly within the context of commercial popular music. By focusing on repertoire I aim to subvert and problematize this tendency, and follow the work of Karl Hagstrom Miller, who has taken a similar approach in his study on race and its relation to the folk music industry in the early 20th century. Miller writes of the benefits of looking at repertoire as a way "to identify interracial and transregional conversations" and to "avoid the potential dangers of overstating the differences between black and white performance styles."[13] Indeed, focusing on performance at the expense of repertoire naturalizes musical production, leaving the act of music-making conveniently susceptible to preconceived ideas about innate musical proclivities and tendencies.

Focusing on repertoire also allows us to privilege the performance of specific songs as a creative act that is independent of but no less powerful than writing them, and in doing so we might begin to undo a tendency in popular music discourse to elevate the allegedly self-contained artist to the highest plane of significance. As Richard Middleton has argued, rock ideology often searches for a literal ideal of the artistic self, in which the narrative voice

[13] Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 15.

of the song and the actual embodied voice of the singer are somehow related.[14] Simon Frith suggests that this "originalism" is tied to anxieties over popular music's proximity to market capitalism, and the critical tendency that "equates bad music with imitative music" carries a "critical assumption… that this reflects a cynical or pathetic production decision."[15] In other words, going outside oneself for one's material implies a level of calculation a bit too cozy with blatant commercialism.

This emphasis on originalism misunderstands the complexities of songcraft and discredits artists who do not often write the material they perform, and has been particularly damaging to female rock and roll and pop performers of the 1960s, who were neither expected to nor usually encouraged to write their own material. Its powerful persistence is just one reason that by the mid-1970s feminist rock critic Ellen Willis could confidently and accurately accuse rock and roll music as "basically a male club,"[16] while in a seminal essay on music and sexuality, Angela McRobbie and Simon Frith could state that "in terms of control and production, rock is a male form… Female creative roles are limited and mediated through male notions of female availability."[17]

In an ideology in which authorship is imagined as an index of authenticity, artists who performed songs written by others are implicitly denigrated. Neither Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin nor Dusty Springfield wrote the majority of their own songs in this period, and for the most part, they sang either "cover" versions of songs originated by other artists or songs produced by an industry of professional songwriting that considerably predates the birth of rock and roll. Of the nine singles that Franklin placed in the Top 10 of the *Billboard*

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[14] See Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2006), esp. 200-201.
[15] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996), 69.
[16] Ellen Willis, "Janis Joplin," in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll,* eds. Anthony DeCurtis, James Henke, Holly George-Warren, Jim Miller (New York: Random House, 1992), 383.
[17] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Music and Sexuality," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, & The Written Word*, eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Routledge, 1990), 373.

Pop chart during this span, none were written by the singer; similarly, the vast majority of Joplin's recorded output during her brief career originated from sources other than herself. Dusty Springfield rarely wrote her own material, and *Dusty in Memphis* is made up entirely of compositions by professional songwriters.

Paying attention to repertoire and its relation to performance, therefore, gives agency to performers who have been devalued by the cult of the autonomous (male) creator while also problematizing and unraveling racially-determined ideas of musical authenticity. Both of these ideas rely on an idea of music as individuated practice, and are thus fundamentally unequipped the murkier realities of a popular music landscape in which no musician or musical community existed in hermetic isolation. Particularly in rhythm and blues during this period, most of the singers were black but many session musicians and songwriters were not, and by examining songs and recordings as opposed to elevating the singer to the exclusive center of soul music's ontology we might better understand the extraordinary interracialism at the heart of this music. During a period in which "rock" music was becoming increasingly the province of white men, Southern rhythm and blues was, by far and perhaps ironically, the most integrated corner of 1960s popular music.

The word "ironically" gestures in a few directions here. Aside from the irony that a large majority of music held to be the pinnacle of black expressive purity was in fact deeply interracial in origin, there was also a deeper irony that the discourse of soul often did disservices to the very music and musicians it ostensibly venerated. As I will show, by insisting upon a view of musical performance and musical authenticity that was rooted in ideas of racial difference, the concept of "soul" redrew lines of musical segregation even as the composers, producers and performers associated with the genre were a study in the potentials of musical integration.

The emergence of soul as an object of concern, controversy, and celebration also provided a way for the genre of "rock" to further consolidate itself as "white;" after all, if what Aretha Franklin was doing was a definitively "black" thing, why wouldn't the mirror image apply to the Beatles, Bob Dylan, or, for that matter, Janis Joplin? Finally, I argue that all of these factors had real and longstanding material effects on African American performers reluctant to have their music categorized—and, crucially, marketed—along race-based lines. A partial consequence of the discourse of "soul" was to once again nudge African American performers from the mainstream of American music after a period of unprecedented interracial crossover on the American pop charts.

This chapter now turns to a historical overview of the "soul" debates in this period, and will close by examining a number of recorded performances that offer musical counternarratives to what I will argue are extra-musical discourses. These include Erma Franklin's, Dusty Springfield's, and Janis Joplin's performances of Bert Berns and Jerry Ragovoy's composition "Piece of My Heart;" Dusty Springfield's and Aretha Franklin's performances of Ronnie Wilkins and John Hurley's composition "Son of a Preacher Man;" and Aretha Franklin's performance "Eleanor Rigby," written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. I will examine these recordings on the level of both composition and performance, keeping the two separate while privileging neither. In doing so I hope to show that, even in a period in which ideas about innate black and white musical difference reached peculiar heights of intensity, black and white musicians shared enough commonality to render such claims highly suspect, even if only a dwindling minority were inclined to notice.

Writing the Sound of Soul

The cover of *Time* magazine's June 28, 1968 issue bore a painting of singer Aretha Franklin and the simple title "The Sound of Soul."[18] "Soul" was a concept that had long floated around African American culture but had recently enjoyed its own "crossover" into the white mainstream, to sometimes embarrassing degrees—in February of 1968, Vice President and Presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey was widely ridiculed in the media after referring to himself as a "soul brother" to an audience of black students.[19] The April, 1968 issue of *Esquire* had featured its own report on "soul," complete with a chart seeking to answer the question "Who's Got Soul?" (Lou Rawls, Muhammad Ali and Jackie Kennedy were deemed to have it; Richard Nixon, Norman Mailer, and Humphrey himself were less fortunate).[20]

With regards to *Time,* arguably the nation's most famous weekly newsmagazine, the choice of Franklin's image for its cover and the focus title confirmed that Franklin was a figure of significance, "soul" was significant, and that Franklin and "soul" were in fact one and the same, a conflation was born out in the article: "In all its power, lyricism and ecstatic anguish, soul is a chunky, 5-ft. 5-in. girl of 26 named Aretha Franklin singing from the stage of a packed Philharmonic Hall in Manhattan."[21] Of course, the question of what soul exactly soul *was* proved more complicated. *Time* argued that:

> The force radiates from a sense of selfhood, a sense of knowing where you've been and what it means. Soul is a way of life—but it is always the hard way…. Where soul is really at today is pop music. It emanates from the rumble of gospel chords and the plaintive cry of the blues. It is compounded of raw emotion, pulsing rhythm and spare, earthy lyrics—all suffused with

[18] Chris Porterfield, "Lady Soul, Singing It Like It Is," *Time* 28 June 1968, 62-66.
[19] "Democrats: Soul Brother Humphrey," *Time* 10 May 1968,
[20] "Who's Got Soul?" *Esquire* Apr. 1968, 89.
[21] Porterfield, 62.

> the sensual, somewhat melancholy vibrations of the Negro idiom. Always the Negro idiom.[22]

In *Esquire,* writer Claude Brown had seemed to agree, in more colorful language:

> Soul is sass, man. Soul is arrogance. Soul is walkin' down the street in a way that says, "This is me, muh-fuh!" Soul is that nigger whore comin' along… ja… ja… ja, and walkin' like she's sayin', "Here it is, baby. Come an' git it." Soul is bein' true to yourself, to what is *you*. Now, hold on: soul is… that… uninhibited… no, *extremely* uninhibited self… expression that goes into practically every Negro endeavor. And there's swagger in it, man. It's exhibitionism, and it's effortless. Effortless.[23]

The March 29, 1968 issue of the Atlanta *Daily World,* an African American newspaper, included an article called "This is 'Soul'" in which the author, Thaddeus T. Stokes, proclaimed that "Soul is a poor-paying job where "white" is the only color respected for upgrading and job-promotion. It is a smuty joke [sic] and loud laughter to destroy the black picture facing most of the unlearned."[24] Al Rutledge of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, in an article from July of 1968 entitled "The Root of All Soul," was quick to tie the concept of soul to black Christianity, although noted that "[y]oung British musicians were the first whites to express enough musical genius and guts to venture into the blues idiom with any sense of real dedication," and praised the Rolling Stones and Beatles for their crediting of African American influences.[25] And in June the Chicago *Tribune* published a playful essay by Albert Murray entitled "'Soul: 32 Meanings Not Given In Your Dictionary;" number seventeen of which read, pointedly, "Any Negro 'thing' imitated by white people."[26]

Nearly all commentators on the nature of "soul" agreed that it derived in a deeply significant, and often irreducible way, from the African American experience. The particulars of that derivation varied in the telling—in her 1969 book *The Sound of Soul,*

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[22] Porterfield, 62.
[23] "An Introduction to Soul," *Esquire* April 1968, 79.
[24] Thaddeus T. Stokes, "This is 'Soul'," *Atlanta Daily World* 29 Mar 1968, 6.
[25] Al Rutledge, "The Root of All Soul," *Baltimore Afro-American* 20 July 1968, A1.
[26] Albert Murray, "'Soul': 32 Meanings Not In Your Dictionary," *Chicago Tribune* 23 June 1968, J6.

perhaps the first full-length treatise on the subject, journalist Phyl Garland went so far as to tie it to slavery—but it was widely agreed that soul was fundamentally the province of African Americans.[27] But was it exclusively such? Could whites, with some proper combination of study, self-possession, enlightenment and panache, accrue the mysteries of soul?

The question of who had soul, who didn't and how this correlated to one's racial identity arose in nearly every discussion of the subject. For every Al Rutledge who seemed to hold soul as a relatively democratic proposition, there were other commentators who saw it as an exclusive resource to be protected, lest it be corrupted or pillaged. The writer Clayton Riley, in a polemical essay also published in the *Times* entitled, "If Aretha's Around, Who Needs Janis?" declared:

> In order to write of whites who sing and play Black, it is first necessary to call the imitators by their rightful names. Thieves. Bandits. That way. Just like this. Don't have to say the thing too loud, don't haveta lean on the truth. Crooks. Say it long but eeeeasy, so that *evvy*-body knows. Because you begin and end any description of white rock musicians by correctly categorizing them. They are good thieves or they are bad thieves.[28]

And of course there was LeRoi Jones, whose 1963 book *Blues People* had already become a classic of black music history and who argued in a 1967 essay that

> R&B is straight on and from straight back out of traditional black spirit feeling… Even so, as the arrangements get more complicated in a useless sense, or whitened, this spontaneity and mastery is reduced. The R&B presents expression and spontaneity, but can be taken off by the same subjection to whitening influences.[29]

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[27] Wrote Garland, "[i]ts essence is indisputably black; for in the long and dismal decades that must have seem like eons to those forced to endure them, chants and hollers not markedly unlike those to be heard in the popular music of today were sent up from rural Dixie's cotton fields by sackcloth-clad black men and women who labored under a relentless sun from predawn to postdusk knowing that no matter *how* hard they worked or how many bales they picked, tomorrow would be no better than today and might well be far worse." Phyl Garland, *The Sound of Soul* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1969), 2.

[28] Clayton Riley, "If Aretha's Around, Who Needs Janis," *New York Times* 8 March 1970, M1.

[29] Amiri Baraka (as Leroi Jones), *Black Music* (New York: Akashic, 2010), 230.

A few pages later Jones put the matter more bluntly: "the more intelligent the white, the more the realization he has to steal from niggers. They take from us all the way down the line."[30]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, white writers often felt differently. One of the most controversial defenses of whites' access to soul came from the *provocateur* pop critic of the *New York Times*, Albert Goldman. In late 1969, Goldman penned an article with the title, "Why Do Whites Sing Black?" "There is," wrote Goldman

> something providential about the occurrence of this musical miscegenation just at the moment when the races seem most dangerously sundered… black and white are attaining within the hot embrace of Soul music a harmony never dreamed of in earlier days… They [whites] are *not* trying to pass. They are trying to save their souls. Adopting as a tentative identity the firmly set, powerfully expressive mask of the black man, the confused, conflicted and frequently self-doubting and self-loathing offspring of Mr. and Mrs. America are released in to an emotional and spiritual freedom denied them by their own inherited culture.[31]

For Goldman, white access to soul music had emancipatory potential, and the white practice of "singing black" held an ethical, even spiritual component. Black music was the path to white racial transcendence and redemption. His column was met with a flurry of letters, some supportive and others indignant. The most stinging response came from a group of female African American students at Smith College, who wrote in a letter published by the *Times*:

> We wish to inform you and Albert Goldman that no white can *ever* sing black… The thing you white people always get mixed up over is that black music can not be dissected into meters and patterns. For every black song there are a hundred ways a black person can sing and play it. The music is his soul expressed… The white man is like a child. As soon as he sees a black man enjoying anything, despite all he (the white man) has done to destroy blacks, he decides he is going to take it away and keep it for himself.[32]

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[30] Ibid., 235.
[31] Albert Goldman, "Why Do Whites Sing Black?" *New York Times* 14 Dec. 1969, D25.
[32] "Music Mailbag: 'No Matter How Whites Sing, It's Not Black.'" *New York Times* 18 Jan. 1970, 113.

This letter in turn brought its own wave of aggrieved responses from the *Times'* white readership, with one correspondent comparing the Smith students to Nazis and declaring that "[i]t is particularly depressing that a group of people who presumably have seen the worst side of racism should use racist arguments to deny the universality of musical expression."[33]

From a musical standpoint discussions of the viability of white soul or "blue-eyed soul"—a term widely believed to be coined by black Philadelphia disc jockey Georgie Woods in 1964, to describe the Righteous Brothers—were invariably overdetermined, and at their core boiled down to arguments over whether whites had the talent or even simply the right to play black music.[34] Adding to the density of these questions was the historical reality of an American music industry that had long seen white artists disproportionately compensated in comparison to their black counterparts, even—indeed, especially—when the forms being performed were African American in origin. The discourse of "thievery" found in Jones, Riley and other black critics of white appropriation in this period is multivalent, the broad accusations of cultural theft hardly separable from the concrete reality of economic inequity, and it was understandable if some of the more proprietary definitions of "soul" derived from the fact that it was one of the rare things that whites looked at blacks, saw, wanted, and were unable to take for themselves.

Most interesting about white writers', readers' and performers' envious relationship to soul is that the concept was almost always framed not just in terms of blackness but oppression and hardship. To have "soul" was to have suffered at the hands of an oppressive

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[33] "Music Mailbag," *New York Times* 15 Feb 1970, 108.

[34] Bill Millar's article on "Blue-Eyed Soul" for *The History of Rock* (1983, archived online at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=783) credits Woods with the term, as do a number of other sources, including Woods' online biography at the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia Hall of Fame (http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/georgiewoods.html). A 1965 article from *Billboard* on "blue-eyed soul" also quotes Woods extensively. Claude Hall, "R&B Stations Open Airplay Gates to 'Blue-Eyed Soulists'" *Billboard* 9 Oct. 1965, 1, 49.

white society; if this was the case, how, then, could whites have soul, and wasn't there something deeply ironic about them wanting it? Perhaps Goldman was right that an envious, aspirational white relationship to soul was in fact an initial step towards redressing racial guilt; or, perhaps Baraka was right that it was simply another iteration of white exploitation that extended back to slavery.

In its cover story on Aretha Franklin *Time* went out of its way to tie soul to hardship, to degrees that would prove problematic, as Franklin's husband ultimately brought a libel suit against the magazine that was settled out of court. "Her mother deserted the family when Aretha was six and died four years later, two shocks that deeply scarred the shy, withdrawn girl," wrote *Time*, a deeply personal revelation of questionable veracity.[35] The article went on to argue that "[p]ersonally, she remains cloaked in a brooding sadness, all the more achingly impenetrable because she rarely talks about it—except when she sings," a strange statement given that the piece was largely based around extensive interviews with the singer. "Negroes," the author finally observed, "have been singing their sorrows in songs like this for centuries."[36]

Time insisted upon an intermingling of musical and racial imagination in which Franklin's blackness—signified by various imagined torments—and her enormous musical gifts are bundled together under this vague idea of "soul." Franklin's music becomes so magical that the source of its power is quite literally unknowable for *Time*'s white readership. As Michael Awkward has written recently of the critical and biographical tendencies to focus on Franklin and other black female singers as somehow dysfunctional or damaged, "[t]he cultural significance of these female artists involves their capacity both to endure deeply troubled blues lives and to transform the resultant pain into great, highly emotional

[35] Porterfield, 63.
[36] Ibid., 64.

singing."[37] With regards to herself, in her 1999 autobiography Franklin traced the origins of this conflation to the *Time* article, and complained of its persistence throughout her career.[38]

Time also went to great lengths to obscure the fact that Franklin in fact grew up in rather extraordinary privilege.[39] Franklin's father, the Reverend C.L. Franklin, was the most successful African American preacher in America, and thanks in no small part to her father's influence Franklin had made her first commercial recordings as a young teenager. In 1960, at the age of eighteen, she had been signed to Columbia Records by the legendary talent scout John Hammond. While *Time* presented Franklin as a hardscrabble success story—and she had indeed endured her share professional hardships and disappointments in the eight years between her signing with Columbia and the publication of the *Time* article—such characterizations were at best incomplete. Franklin's musical exploits had received coverage in the national African American press since as early as 1957, and she'd first attracted the attention of the *New York Times* shortly after signing her Columbia deal.[40] In 1961, at the age of 19, she won "New Female Vocal Star of the Year" in the *Down Beat* magazine critic's poll, and "Best New Vocalist" in the *Playboy* jazz poll the same year.[41] Franklin was, to a

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[37] Michael Awkward, *Soul Covers: Rhythm and Blues Remakes and the Struggle for Artistic Identity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 46.

[38] Writes Franklin, "The article also painted me as a woman trapped by the blues, like Bessie Smith or Billie Holiday. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am Aretha, upbeat, straight-ahead, and not to be worn out by men and left singing the blues… Due to the stature of *Time*, the mistakes were picked up by countless writers in the years ahead." Aretha Franklin and David Ritz, *Aretha: From These Roots* (New York: Crown, 1999), 123.

[39] For basic biographical information on Aretha Franklin I relied on Mark Bego's *Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), Matt Dobkin's *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You: Aretha Franklin, Respect, and the Making of a Soul Music Masterpiece* (New York: St. Martin's, 2004), and Franklin's own autobiography, *Aretha: From These Roots*.

[40] An article in the March 30, 1957 Norfolk, VA *New Journal and Guide,* "Capacity Audience Hears Rev. Franklin at Newport," mentions the reverend's daughter Aretha being "accorded a great ovation" for her performance, p. B11. Robert Shelton mentions the singer in a July 25, 1961 *New York Times* article ("Wandering Minstrel is in Town," p. 19): "A recent gospel graduate, 18-year-old Aretha Franklin, is winning ovations at the Village Gate with the sort of entertainment genius that makes her something of a female Ray Charles."

[41] "Aretha Wins New Honors," *Pittsburgh Courier* 25 Nov 1961, 15.

significant degree, a show business child who'd benefited from her father's influence at least as much as she'd suffered through adversity.

The six albums that Franklin released on Columbia between 1961 and 1966 had not sold commensurate to the label's expectations, and when she and the label parted ways at the end of 1966, Atlantic Records Vice President Jerry Wexler was eagerly waiting in the wings. Wexler had long admired Franklin from afar, and imagined her as a singer with pop-chart potential the likes of which Atlantic had never seen; for all of Atlantic's R&B successes in the 1960s they were a distant second to Motown in terms of pop crossover. The details of Franklin's first (and only) recording session at Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama are legendary and have been recounted elsewhere, but it was a day fraught with a distinctly Southern mixture of musical ingenuity and racial antipathy.[42] All of the musicians on the session aside from Franklin herself were white, including a trumpet player, Ken Laxton, who made a pass at Franklin after sharing copious amounts of alcohol with her husband, Ted White. Unsurprisingly, the incident led to a fierce conflict between White and Laxton that transformed into a conflict between White and Fame's owner, Rick Hall. The session ended acrimoniously with Franklin having completed only one song; the singer would never record at Fame Studios again.

Luckily for Atlantic, that song was "I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)," written by a friend of White's named Ronnie Shannon and transformed by the Muscle Shoals House band into a landmark of Sixties music. "I Never Loved a Man" established Franklin as a star, and the single's follow-up, a dramatic re-working of Otis Redding's "Respect" reached Number One on the Pop charts and propelled her to superstar status. Between the release of "I Never Loved a Man" in January of 1967 and her *Time* magazine

[42] For details on this incident, see Chapter 7 of Matt Dobkin's *I Never Loved A Man The Way I Love You,* esp. pp. 136-154.

cover story less than eighteen months later, Aretha Franklin released a total of seven Top Ten Pop singles, three Top Ten albums, and won two Grammy awards. The same year that the Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and a guitar virtuoso named Jimi Hendrix would gain notoriety for setting fire to his instrument at the Monterey Pop Festival—a year that would end with the tragic death of Otis Redding, author of "Respect"—Franklin established herself seemingly overnight as the most successful female performer of the rock and roll era, and the process garnered a nickname that remains with her to this day: the "Queen of Soul."

Franklin was not the only momentous talent to emerge in American pop music in 1967. The same Monterey Pop Festival that occasioned Hendrix's breakthrough included a band from San Francisco called Big Brother and the Holding Company, featuring a lead singer named Janis Joplin. Joplin was born to middle-class parents in Port Arthur, Texas on January 19, 1943.[43] Port Arthur was a conservative and fiercely segregated community, its forty percent African American population kept at a legal if not always physical remove from its white population. In a 1969 interview with the *New York Times*, Joplin recalled Port Arthur thusly:

> Port Arthur people thought I was a beatnik, and they didn't like beatniks, though they'd never seen one and neither had I. I read, I painted, I thought, I didn't hate niggers. There was nobody like me in Port Arthur. It was lonely, those feelings welling up and nobody to talk to. I was just "silly crazy Janis." Man, those people hurt me.[44]

Although Joplin is most commonly associated with the late-1960s San Francisco music scene that produced such bands as the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead, she

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[43] Unless otherwise noted for basic biographical information on Janis Joplin I relied primarily on Alice Echols' excellent biography *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), as well as Laura Joplin's *Love, Janis* (New York: Villard, 1992) and Ellen Willis' essay "Janis Joplin" in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll.*

[44] Michael Lydon, "The Janis Joplin Philosophy: Every Moment Is What She Feels," *New York Times Magazine* 23 Feb 1969, SM41.

was, much like Bob Dylan before her, a product of the 1960s folk revival. In fact, much in the way that Sam Cooke's crossover from gospel to pop music paved the way for Franklin to make the same transition in a later context, Joplin's earliest musical experiences came in an Austin, Texas college folk scene not dissimilar to that which Dylan frequented in Minneapolis, and it was only after her permanent move to San Francisco in 1966 that Joplin would reinvent herself as the most influential white female rock singer of her era.

Like many young folk revivalists, the young Joplin and her friends in Texas were drawn to music seemingly untrammeled by modernity. By her own account Joplin's first formative musical moment came from hearing the music of Huddie Ledbetter, or Leadbelly, the famed singer and songwriter who'd become an icon of the second stage of the folk revival before his death in 1949. "I heard Leadbelly," Joplin told *Newsweek* in 1969, "and it was like a flash. It *mattered* to me."[45] Indeed, the only singer whose influence was more profound on Joplin as an aspiring young singer was Bessie Smith, the great female blues queen of the 1920s, whom Joplin incessantly credited in interviews and revered to the point of helping finance a new tombstone for Smith shortly before Joplin's own death in 1970.

The peculiar racial politics of the folk revival have been previously discussed in this dissertation, but these dimensions assumed a more complex significance amidst the context of the rigidly enforced segregation found in Texas. For starters, unlike the Northern folk scenes of a Cambridge or Greenwich Village, many of the venues where Joplin performed in Texas were whites-only. Threadgill's, the famed Austin restaurant and music venue where Joplin first drew audiences as a student at the University of Texas, was not integrated until 1966, after Joplin had departed for San Francisco.[46] The spectacle of young white people performing black music on stages where African Americans themselves were not allowed

[45] "Rebirth of the Blues," *Newsweek* 26 May 1969,
[46] Echols, 57.

contains echoes of what Michael Rogin calls the "exclusionary" element of the historical practice of blackface minstrelsy; in minstrelsy, notes Rogin, the color line was always "only permeable in one direction."[47] Although Joplin herself never performed in blackface (a crucial distinction), for a singer who would come to be a flashpoint in debates over the viability of white soul as the decade of the 1960s progressed, as well as frequent target of allegations of cultural theft, this peculiar aspect of Joplin's musical upbringing in the segregated South ought not be overlooked.

After several extended trips to California in the mid-1960s, Joplin re-located to San Francisco in 1966, convinced to move there by her friend Chet Helms, who told her that an up-and-coming band he was managing called Big Brother and the Holding Company were looking for a lead singer. Joplin's incendiary performances quickly brought Big Brother a strong local following in the Bay Area, and after their triumphant performance at Monterey Pop in June of 1967 Big Brother and the Holding Company began receiving national media attention. Their five-song set at Monterey, which culminated in an extended rendition of "Ball and Chain," garnered the group, and particularly its frontwoman, widespread acclaim (although a prominent *Los Angeles Times* lead photo of Big Brother and the Holding Company referred to the band's lead singer as "Janice" Joplin).[48] In another parallel to the career of Bob Dylan, the Monterey Pop performance garnered the interest of Albert Grossman (Dylan's manager), who quickly signed the band and secured them a recording contract from Columbia Records (Dylan's label).

As Joplin rapidly ascended into stardom, her audacious renditions of blues-as-spectacle would make her an intensely polarizing figure and a counterbalance to Aretha

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[47] Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 37.
[48] Pete Johnson, "Hippies At Their Happiest at Monterey Pop Festival," *Los Angeles Times* 20 Jun 1967, D1.

Franklin in debates over who did or did not have "soul." Much in the way that Aretha Franklin's musical abilities were often conflated with personal difficulties, interviews and profiles during Joplin's meteoric rise to stardom frequently focused on her "outsider" status, an image that the singer clearly in some part cultivated, as evidenced by the quote from the *New York Times* profile above. In a 1968 interview the singer told Nat Hentoff:

> I never seemed to be able to control my feelings, to keep them down. When I was young, my mother would try to get me to be like everybody else… before getting into this band, it tore my life apart. When you feel that much, you have superhorrible downs…. Now, though, I've made feeling work for me, through music, instead of destroying me. It's superfortunate. Man, if it hadn't been for the music, I probably would have done myself in.[49]

The language of exceptionalism was constant in coverage of Joplin, from both the singer herself and from fans and critics, at least those in the singer's corner. A profile in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1968 described her as "[s]outhern mean mama, bitch, suffering woman, little girl—and now not woman at all but energy incarnate."[50] Robb Baker of the *Chicago Tribune*, one of Joplin's most vocal admirers, declared that Joplin was "the first [woman] to have complete control off the blues since Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday" and went on to compare her favorably against Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone.[51] Hentoff himself, one of the most respected music critics in the country, declared her "the first white blues singer (female) I'd heard since Teddy Grace who sang the blues out of black influences but had developed her own sound and phrasing."[52]

Franklin and Joplin were often compared in discussions of soul. For every Baker who compared the two singers favorably, there were others who saw Joplin as a musical counterfeit and cultural thief. The *Time* cover story quoted Joplin extensively and

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[49] Nat Hentoff, "We Look at Our Parents and…" *New York Times* 21 Apr 1968, D19.
[50] Rasa Gustaitis, "Janis Joplin," *Los Angeles Times* 24 Nov. 1968, O42.
[51] Robb Baker, "The Sound," *Chicago Tribune* 31 Mar 1968, G16.
[52] Hentoff, D19.

foregrounded her in its brief discussion of "blue-eyed soul" but seemed disinclined to weigh in on the singer's authenticity one way or the other, perhaps balancing its explicitly race-based definition of "soul" with a desire to avoid alienating its predominantly white readership.

Regardless of venue, Aretha Franklin's access to soul was invariably deemed authentic and unimpeachable. Joplin's performances, on the other hand, were rarely afforded such terms even by the singer's champions, who often described the singer's performances with rapturous disbelief, as though watching a parlor trick. *Rolling Stone,* a publication generally friendly to the singer, suggested in a 1969 cover story that her music belonged "more to the realm of carnival exhibition than musical performance."[53]

For her part, Joplin saw blues and soul music as a democratic proposition. In *Time* Joplin was quoted as the counterpoint to voices such as LeRoi Jones who claimed that soulfulness was the providence of blacks. ""There's no patent on it," said Joplin, "it's just feeling things. A housewife in Nebraska has soul, but she represses it, makes it conform to a lot of rules like marriage, or sugar-coats it."[54] Elsewhere, in response to accusations of stylistic theft, Joplin replied, "I don't sing black. I just sing. I don't think I copy at all. And anyway no one has a monopoly on soul."[55] And yet, in one of Joplin's most provocative answers to the question of why she worked "in vocal black face" (to use the phrasing of her interviewer, Albert Goldman), she stated her hope that "being black for a while will make me a better white."[56]

This last response is perhaps the most interesting response to such a question that Joplin ever gave, carrying traces of the intertwining of music and racial politics found in the

[53] Paul Nelson, "Janis: The Judy Garland of Rock and Roll?" *Rolling Stone* 15 Mar. 1969, 6.
[54] Porterfield, 66.
[55] Robb Baker, "The Sound," *Chicago Tribune* 31 Mar. 1968, G16.
[56] Goldman, D25.

earlier years of the folk revival, where the performance of black music was thought to be a way into a more robust political consciousness, and by extension a form of self-actualization. Joplin's phrasing is curious as well, suggesting a belief in racial identity transcendence that was genuine if wishful.[57]

The national African American press barely covered Joplin, and when they did their valuations were often dismissive.[58] The *Los Angeles Sentinel*'s Stanley G. Robertson, reviewing Big Brother and the Holding Company's performance at the Monterey Jazz Festival, wrote that "Miss Joplin, a very bad imitation of a Negro blues singer (She is Caucasian.) only made the band, which played much, much too loud, only seem more ridiculous than it was."[59] Such remarks would have undoubtedly stung Joplin, who sought the favor of African American audiences and was wounded when her music failed to connect. In late 1968 Joplin performed in Memphis at a concert covered by Stanley Booth for a *Rolling Stone* cover story; the performance was a bomb, three songs met with tepid applause and no encore, and Booth noted that "about half the audience, the black people, had no idea who Joplin was."[60]

Joplin's insecurity among black audiences and certain black artists was presumably worsened by attacks she suffered from certain black critics over her brief career, but the attacks themselves may have in turn been fed in part by Joplin's own outspokenness. Joplin was a committed anti-racist whose insistence on race as inconsequential led her to overlook her own whiteness in ways that were sometimes presumptuous and naïve. She was prone to broad statements on the nature of African American music: in 1970, she told an interviewer

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[57] According to Joplin's sister, the singer frequently expressed a desire to become "the world's first white-black person." Joplin, 124.

[58] A search of the *Atlanta Daily World, Baltimore Afro-American, Los Angeles Sentinel, New York Amsterdam News, Norfolk Journal and Guide, Philadelphia Tribune, Pittsburgh Courier, Cleveland Call and Post,* and *Chicago Defender* from 1967 through 1970 yields a mere 55 results combined, and most of these articles mention the singer only in passing.

[59] Stanley G. Robertson, "L.A. Confidential," *Los Angeles Sentinel* 28 Sept. 1967, A7.

[60] Stanley Booth, "The Memphis Debut of the Janis Joplin Revue," *Rolling Stone* 1 Feb. 1969, 4.

that "[y]oung white kids have taken the groove and the soul from black people and added intensity. Black music is understated. I like to fill it full of feeling."[61]

Joplin also did not shy away from dropping the word "nigger" into her speech, as evidenced in her description of Port Arthur above, and the casual entitlement with which she wielded the word carried an air of provocation. In yet another cover story on Joplin for *Rolling Stone,* writer Paul Nelson (formerly of the *Little Sandy Review*), quoted the singer as stating her intention to add "a great big ugly spade cat" to her band (Joplin never played alongside an African American musician with any degree of regularity).[62] While it is tempting to excuse remarks as relics of a different era, a year earlier Jerry Wexler had declared to the same magazine, "One of my pet peeves is this noxious hippy use of this word 'Spade.' It's just disgusting to me the way they cavalierly throw it around… I don't think this word is sanctioned, accepted or condoned by any Negro people."[63]

On account of her commercial success, spectacular performance style and high-profile outspokenness, from the moment of her emergence Joplin became a catalyst for controversies over what it meant for whites to sing in styles that were imagined to be black. Reviewing *Cheap Thrills* in the *New York Times* in 1968, William Kloman called the album "a stereophonic minstrel show, and probably the most insulting album of the year" and called the group "the embodiment of the hippie fantasy: middle-class kids with long blond hair pretending to be black."[64] African American columnist Hollie West of the *Washington Post* declared that "Miss Joplin is a poor excuse for a blues singer. She is probably well on her

[61] Julie Smith, "Janis Joplin and the Saturday Night Swindle," *Chicago Tribune* 12 Jul 1970, J2.
[62] Paul Nelson, "Janis: The Judy Garland of Rock and Roll?" *Rolling Stone* 15 Mar 1969, 6.
[63] Sue C. Clark, "Wexler: A Man of Dedication," *Rolling Stone* 9 Sep 1968, 8-10.
[64] William Kloman, "Rock: The 50s Come Back," *New York Times* 1 Sept 1968, D18.

way toward ruining her voice under the strain of trying for the harsh, raucous sounds that black performers use naturally."[65]

The criticisms were not limited to writers, either: Miles Davis told an interviewer in 1969 that the record industry "don't sell no black folks… The sell nothing but white skin, blond hair and blues eyes. They sell that rock by Janis Joplin… is sounds like a Xerox copy of Otis Redding."[66] Even Aretha Franklin's producer, Jerry Wexler, weighed in: "I don't really believe her. When a person truly sings the blues, there's no strain, no trying to make it sound right. I can always hear Janis straining. I don't know. There are people who think she's almost an unwitting parodist." He then conceded to his interviewer, "but I'd give anything to produce her."[67]

While Joplin sold far more records than Big Mama Thornton, Bessie Smith or many other of her African American blues forebears, the suggestion that white performers of black music in the late 1960a were guaranteed success—that blue-eyed soul was invariably more lucrative than brown-eyed soul—was not always accurate. For evidence of this one need look no farther than Dusty Springfield, a British pop star who was renowned in her home country for her fluency in American rhythm and blues and who spent the latter part of the 1960s in a quixotic and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to infiltrate the landscape of American soul music.

Springfield never achieved suitable success in the United States to warrant consistent inclusion in debates over "soul" and "blue-eyed soul." In England, however, she had long been known as a singer of tremendous versatility and a tireless evangelist for African American music. Born Mary O'Brien on April 16, 1939, Springfield first rose to stardom as

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65 Hollie I. West, "Blacks and Whites and the Blues," *Washington Post*, 22 Jun 1969, 131.
66 Hollie I. West, "Black Tune," *Washington Post* 13 Mar 1969, L1.
67 Robb Baker, "Groovin' With Janis," *Chicago Tribune* 11 May 1969, K27.

a member of the folk-pop group The Springfields, who were formed in 1960 and enjoyed a Top 20 hit in the United States in 1962 with "Silver Threads and Golden Needles," making them the rare pre-Beatles British group to find American chart success.[68] She left the group in 1963 and embarked on a solo career that would make her one of the most famous singers in England. By 1967 Springfield had enjoyed eight Top 10 hits in the UK, three of which had crossed the Atlantic to reach the US Top 20, "I Only Want to Be With You" (1963), "Wishin' and Hopin'" (1964), and "You Don't Have To Say You Love Me" (1967), which reached Number Four on the *Billboard* Pop charts and gave Springfield the biggest hit of her American career to date.

Springfield's success in the United States had come through sugary pop songs and melodramatic ballads—what Springfield scholar Annie Randall has named the "Sixties pop aria"—and early in her career American audiences would have likely been unaware of the degree to which Springfield was associated with American rhythm and blues in her native UK.[69] British pop star Cliff Richard referred to Springfield as the "White Negress" as early as 1963, and Springfield's 1964 solo debut album, *A Girl Called Dusty,* contained seven covers of songs originally performed by African American artists.[70]

Like Janis Joplin, Springfield mixed a love of black music with a fierce personal anti-racism, though Springfield was far more politically active. In late 1964 she was expelled from South Africa for refusing to play before segregated crowds; her expulsion was widely publicized in the U.K., and even gained her the attention of African American newspapers in

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[68] Unless otherwise noted, for basic biographical information on Dusty Springfield I relied upon Penny Valentine and Vicki Whickham's *Dancing with Demons: The Authorised Biography of Dusty Springfield* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), Annie Randall's *Dusty!: Queen of the Postmods* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), and Laurence Cole's *Dusty Springfield: In The Middle of Nowhere* (Middlesex: Middlesex University Press, 2008).
[69] Randall, 71.
[70] Ibid, 19. Dusty Springfield, *A Girl Called Dusty,* Philips Records BF 7594, 1964, 33rpm.

the U.S.[71] In 1965 she was instrumental in spearheading the landmark *Ready, Steady, Go: Sound of Motown* television special, which brought artists such as the Supremes, the Miracles, the Vandellas and the Temptations to prime-time British television. Springfield herself hosted the special and performed alongside the artists, even dueting with Martha Reeves on "Wishin' and Hopin'." The *Sound of Motown* special has been credited with making Berry Gordy's label a household name in the U.K.[72]

Like many young people who came of age in post-War England of the 1950s, Springfield had long been a fan of American rock and roll music, but her interest in other African American musical traditions was dramatically heightened by an encounter with Newark-born gospel singer Madeline Bell at a New Year's Eve party in late 1964. Springfield and Bell became close friends and collaborators, and the middle-class, Catholic-raised Springfield, African American gospel music was a vast departure from the world, musical and otherwise, in which she had been raised.

In November of 1964 Springfield told a *Melody Maker* interviewer that "I have a real bond with the music of the coloured artists in the States. I feel more at ease with them than I do with many white people." In the same interview, she remarked that "I Wish I'd been born coloured. When it comes to singing and feeling, I just want to be one of them and not me. Then again, I see how some of them are treated and I thank God I'm white."[73]

The frankness and honesty with which Springfield discussed her own racial identity and insecurities is striking. One recent Springfield scholar, Laurence Cole, has written that "Dusty Springfield is likely to have her skin colour alluded to more than any other British

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[71] "Dusty Ordered 'Hit The Road,'" *Chicago Defender* 17 Dec. 1964, 2.
[72] See Randall, 51-52.
[73] Ray Coleman, "Pop Probe: Dusty," *Melody Maker* 21 Nov. 1964, 3.

white cultural figure," an unverifiable and probably hyperbolic statement that nonetheless indicates the extent to which race factored into discussions of the singer.[74]

Much in the way that Janis Joplin's musical production was often overwhelmed by discussions of her race, Springfield's music was subject to a similar sort of scrutiny, although much of it was generated by the singer herself. If Joplin often sought to deny race's salience to singing ability and general musical authenticity, Springfield often rendered it paramount to a point of profound insecurity.

In 1968 Springfield's contract with England's Philips Records expired; craving Stateside success, Springfield signed with Atlantic Records, arguably the most illustrious rhythm and blues label in American music. Atlantic Vice President Jerry Wexler had long admired Springfield's talents, and saw in her a way into tapping both the lucrative British import business and the burgeoning market of "blue-eyed soul." 1968 saw the release of Springfield's last album for Philips, *Dusty… Definitely* (released only in the UK), as well as the recording sessions that would beget the singer's most famous album for Atlantic Records, *Dusty in Memphis*, recorded in fall of 1968 and released in January of 1969.

During this period Springfield crossed musical paths with both Janis Joplin and Aretha Franklin, while never successfully inserting herself into the polarized discourse of "soul" that these performers tended to dominate. In the end every discussion of "soul" came down to vague ideals of musical performance that dovetailed with equally vague of innate black and white character and expressive capacity. In short, they were discussions that sought to deny the elements of craft and practice to the performance of popular music, instead abstracting these elements into indecipherability through race-based naturalization. The remainder of this chapter looks at some of the songs these three artists sang, and in

[74] Cole, 4.

doing so shows that the issue of "soul"—who may or may not have had it, what it may or may not have been—was never a black-and-white issue. "Soul" may have been a black utopia, or it may have been a white utopia, or it may have been both, or more likely neither, but it was always music first and foremost.

"Piece of My Heart": (Erma) Franklin to Springfield to Joplin

In 1967, the same year Aretha Franklin burst into superstardom, her older sister Erma Franklin enjoyed the first and only hit of her career with a song called "Piece of My Heart."[75] "Piece of My Heart" was written by Jerry Ragovoy and Bert Berns, white northerners who were well-established songwriters before Erma Franklin brought "Piece of My Heart" into the world. Berns had already written a classic in "Twist and Shout" (popularized by the Isley Brothers and later the Beatles), and had written a Number One Pop hit, "Hang on Sloopy," for the McCoys in 1965.[76] Ragovoy was perhaps best known for his composition "Time Is On My Side," an R&B standard popularized by Irma Thomas that also became the Rolling Stones' first Top 10 Pop hit in late 1964.[77] After Franklin enjoyed success with the song, it would recorded the following year by both Dusty Springfield and Janis Joplin.

In both the composition and the specific performances of "Piece of My Heart" we can hear the versatility, fluidity and capacious heterogeneity of rhythm and blues music in the late 1960s. The song's history in this period also serves as a study in both the racial complexities of "soul" in this period, and the far-reaching power of its racial imagination.

"Piece of My Heart" is a straightforward and unadorned composition, its harmonic structure generally based around a I-IV-V chord progression. Like most good pop songs its

[75] Erma Franklin, "Piece of My Heart," Shout Records 221, 1967, 45rpm.
[76] Both of these songs were written under the pseudonym "Bert Russell."
[77] Ragovoy wrote "Time Is On My Side" under the pseudonym "Norman Meade."

chorus is its most memorable part, its "come on, come on, come on, come on" building into its "take another little piece of my heart now, baby" refrain. The song's lyrical text is strikingly masochistic, reveling in the pain of surrendering oneself to someone who may not have one's best interests at heart. "You know you've got it / if it makes you feel good," is the chorus' final line, and the declaration carries a potential double meaning: is the singer merely surrendering to a situation out of her control, or actually willingly offering herself up to her antagonist, out of a desire to "make [him] feel good?" "Piece of My Heart" is a song about pain that is not necessarily about powerlessness, its major-key fervent suggesting that perhaps the singer's tormentor is not the only who "feels good" about this couple's arrangement.

Erma Franklin's version of the song is relatively sparse and restrained; aside from Franklin's vocal, the dominant instrument heard in the song's verse is a piano, playing straight chords peppered with occasional gospel inflections while drums and bass play an understated, mid-tempo 4/4 groove with behind her. As Franklin hits the chorus a horn section arrives, and her backup singers punctuate "take another piece of my heart" and "break another little piece of my heart" lines with staccato "take it!" and "break it!," recalling the girl-group pop of the Shirelles or Crystals earlier in the 1960s. The bass also assumes a more prominent role on the song's chorus, playing eighth-note and sixteenth-note runs that lift the song out of the slow ballad feel suggested by its opening verse. The song moves from its first verse to its chorus, then to the second verse into the second repetition of the chorus, then fades out on a final chorus.

Erma Franklin's "Piece of My Heart" is an effective, if conventional, piece of mid-1960s R&B. Franklin herself is a capable vocalist who nonetheless pales in comparison to her younger sister, already a star by the time Erma Franklin had her brief moment with

"Piece of My Heart." Franklin's recording of "Piece of My Heart" performed well on the R&B charts and even managed to cross over to the Pop charts, reaching number sixty-two. The song was by far the biggest hit of Franklin's career.

"Piece of My Heart" would become an iconic piece of Sixties pop music thanks to Janis Joplin, who performed the song in 1968 on Big Brother and the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills* album, but the song also received a notable 1968 re-working at the hands of Dusty Springfield. Springfield's version of the song, re-titled "Take Another Little Piece of My Heart," appeared on her 1968 album *Dusty… Definitely*, her final album recorded for Philips Records in England.[78]

For the most part the instrumentation and arrangement mirror Erma Franklin's original, but with an intensity in both the vocal performance and musical backdrop that exceeds Franklin's by a number of degrees. Springfield's rendition opens with a similar piano figure to Franklin's but the piano is overdriven and drenched in reverb, reminiscent of Phil Spector's famed "Wall of Sound" productions of the early 1960s with groups like the Crystals and Ronettes. The tempo is quicker, and the bassist plays with an incessant busy-ness that borders on excess. The bass is also mixed extraordinarily high in the track, louder than both the drums and guitar, and the prominence of both the instrument and the bass player's stylistic proclivities give the track an upbeat relentlessness from its opening moments that is missing from Franklin's original, lending a pop breeziness to what had previously been imagined as a mid-tempo soul ballad.

Springfield performs the song a half-step lower than Franklin (her version is in D, whereas Franklin's is in E-flat), and she sings the first verse in a smoky, sultry voice, playing with phrasing and singing with a relaxed nonchalance. Springfield's greatest gifts as a singer

[78] Dusty Springfield, *Dusty… Definitely*, Philips Records SBL 7864, 1968, 33rpm.

were her senses of time and phrasing, her ability to not simply intone a lyric but cozily inhabit it, and in the case of "Piece of My Heart" this measured ease amplifies the paradox at the heart of the song: Springfield is singing a song about pain in a style that evokes nothing if not pleasure. Lines such as "didn't I give you everything a woman possibly can?" are sung with such casual certitude that they answer their own question, and there is a sense of empowerment at the heart of the performance, that the "piece" is being given as opposed to taken, and if there is a dysfunction or pathos in this relationship it is a mutually-agreed-upon proposition.

Dusty… Definitely was not released in the United States, and most American listeners in 1968 would not have heard the singer's inspired take on Ragovoy and Berns' composition. It is also highly unlikely that, when recording *Dusty… Definitely* in August of 1968, Springfield would have yet encountered another version of "Piece of My Heart" that would soon be burning up American airwaves. Big Brother and the Holding Company's version of the song, featuring an explosive vocal performance by the band's increasingly famous lead singer, Janis Joplin, reached number twelve on the *Billboard* Pop charts in late 1968, making it the most successful single from *Cheap Thrills* and one of the biggest hits of Joplin's short career.[79]

Big Brother and the Holding Company's rendition of "Piece of My Heart" is drastically different than either Franklin's or Springfield's. The track opens with loud, distorted electric guitar, and the vocal begins on the "come on, come on, come on" repetition that normally precedes the song's chorus, only here it leads into the first verse. Big Brother and the Holding Company were a famously haphazard musical outfit, and according to biographer Alice Echols it was partly frustrations over this that caused Joplin to

[79] Big Brother and the Holding Company, *Cheap Thrills,* Columbia Records 9700, 1968, 33rpm.

leave the band shortly after the release of *Cheap Thrills*.[80] John Simon, the producer of *Cheap Thrills*, even refused to put his name on the album, and as *Rolling Stone* reported at the time, Simon "feels that this album is as good as the band and that's about it."[81]

"Piece of My Heart" would seem to reflect this; the guitars are only modestly in tune, and the rhythm section is alternately chaotic and plodding. Changes in dynamic often sound suspiciously like the result of studio punch-ins rather than organic crescendos and decrescendos. By his own account, while producing the album Simon relied heavily on studio edits to cover up the band's mistakes, an ironic state of affairs since the record was also deliberately recorded with a murky, low-fi mix intended to simulate the experience of a live concert, widely agreed to be optimal setting in which to enjoy Big Brother's music.[82]

For all of the musical and technical troubles of the production, however, Joplin's vocal performance is arresting. She throws herself into the song, and there is a desperate ferocity that is entirely absent from Springfield and Franklin's versions. While Springfield's easy restraint subverts the lyric's themes of heartbreak and agony, Joplin's version attacks the text at its most literal, eschewing the potential pleasure that might lurk behind the pain in favor of exploring pain on its own terms. Joplin's voice is ravaged and pushed to its limits, giving the sense that the singer is in fact inflicting physical pain on herself, a common sensation while listening to the singer's music that would later cause a *Rolling Stone* writer to remark that "Janis doesn't so much sing a song as to strangle it to death right in front of you. It's an exciting, albeit grisly, event to behold."[83] Or, as Joplin herself once noted to an interviewer, "[m]aybe they can enjoy my music more if they think I'm destroying myself."[84]

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[80] Echols, 197.
[81] John Hardin, "Cheap Thrills," *Rolling Stone* 14 Sept. 1968, 21.
[82] For information on the recording of *Cheap Thrills* see Echols, 202-210.
[83] Nelson, 6.
[84] Robert Hilburn, "Janis Joplin: Rock 'n' Roll's Biggest Female Star," *Los Angeles Times* 12 Oct. 1969, V16.

In Joplin's rendition of "Piece of My Heart" we can hear almost every aspect of the controversy swirling around the singer. Her performance is stunning but its reliance on spectacle raises the question of whether Joplin's performance is a genuine catharsis for both the singer and her audience, or an exaggerated parody of what a (white) audience might expect from musical "feeling," or, in the parlance of the times, "soul." Heard next to both Erma Franklin and Dusty Springfield's versions, Joplin's version of "Piece of My Heart" seems to substitute emotiveness for controlled expression and technique, and there is a literalism to Joplin's performance missing from previous versions. Alice Echols writes that "[p]rofessionalism was frowned on among the new San Francisco bands," and that "spontaneity was a virtue and expertise suspect."[85]

Joplin's recording of "Piece of My Heart" is thus a strange apotheosis of the naturalist overtones of the "soul" concept, the idea that musical proficiency was most directly linked not to practice or craft but simply one's proximity to "feeling." Most negative reviews of *Cheap Thrills* derided the album for this very amateurism. "Among other problems, the musicians in the group have some very peculiar ideas about rhythm," wrote the *New York Times*, which complained of the band's "screeches and arbitrary twangs geared to listeners who can't distinguish between sexual yearning and prickly heat."[86] *Rolling Stone* described the album as "a real disappointment" and sarcastically noted that *Cheap Thrills* was "a good representation of Big Brother and the Holding Company, as good a one as could have been expected and as good a one as there ever will be."[87] Still, *Cheap Thrills* shot to top of the *Billboard* album charts in the summer of 1968.

"Son of a Preacher Man": Franklin to Springfield to Franklin

[85] Echols, 126-127,
[86] Kloman, D18.
[87] John Hardin, "Cheap Thrills," *Rolling Stone* 14 Sept. 1968, 21.

As previously noted, the American audience so enthusiastic for Joplin's rendition of "Piece of My Heart" would not have been familiar with Dusty Springfield's version of the song, . However, only a few months after Big Brother and the Holding Company brought "Piece of My Heart" back to the Pop charts, Springfield would enjoy her final brush with Stateside success in the 1960s, when her rendition of a peculiar song called "Son of a Preacher Man" broke into the top ten of the *Billboard* Pop Charts. It was a song that had originally been written for Aretha Franklin, who first rejected it, then returned to it in 1970 after Springfield's success convinced her of its worth.

The following section will show that "Son of a Preacher Man" is an extraordinarily odd song, one whose origins and content are unique to Southern soul music but whose history defies expectations at all turns. Written by two white Southerners (John Hurley and Ronnie Wilkins) for a black Northerner (Aretha Franklin), only to be made a hit by a white Englishwoman (Springfield), the song shows, even more than "Piece of My Heart," that "soul" as a combination of musical and racial imagination and "soul" as a practical musical movement were often widely divergent. "Son of a Preacher Man" also shows soul music's resistance to the stories that listeners, and in Springfield's case even the artists themselves, told about it, sometimes to enormously productive degrees. Finally, its history also reveals the impact of racial imagination on musical production and marketing practices, and the ways that racialized notions of "genre" and "authenticity" can drown out the music they are attempting to regulate.

"Son of a Preacher Man" is a song so direct that its strangeness can elude one on first listen. The vast majority of pop songs are sung to someone—there is usually an object of address, sometimes a named person but more often simply "you," and most are addressed to someone who is inspiring either affection or heartbreak. "Son of a Preacher Man" is a

song about "Billy Ray," a preacher's son, and sung by a woman, about the past, although exactly when and to whom is unclear. It's a story song, but its indeterminacies of temporality and address lend a hazy ambiguity: it's really a song about memory. The first verse establishes that Billy Ray would accompany his preacher father to the narrator's house, and "when they gathered round and started talking / that's when Billy would take me walking," the song's heroine too demure at first to offer details of what happens next, even if the chorus's revelation that Bill Ray was "the only boy who could ever reach" her fills in some of the blanks.

The second verse heightens the level of suggestion. "Being good isn't always easy / no matter how hard I try" is the opening line, an eloquent statement on the struggle between propriety and desire, and one of the more memorably disingenuous protests in popular music. The rest of the verse establishes Billy Ray as sexual initiator, and when we reach the second iteration of the chorus, this physicality has infused the seemingly simple statements that Billy Ray was both "the only one who could ever teach me" and "the only one who can ever reach me" with carnal overtones. As we approach the bridge, "Son of a Preacher Man" is now unmistakably a song about a sexual awakening.

And then the bridge arrives, and changes everything, again. "How well I remember / the look that was in his eyes," is the first line, and the entire narrative frame is shifted. This is now a song that is being told much later, about something that presumably once was but is no longer. Suddenly a song about memory has become a song about loss, and the couplet "taking time to make time / telling me that he's all mine" reveals the betrayal of a false promise. This was a love rooted in the physical that disappeared long ago, and on the final repetition of the chorus the suggestion that this was the "only one" takes on a sadness and also a defiance, and the very act of recounting the tale an assertion of selfhood.

"Son of a Preacher Man" belongs to the genre of the forbidden love song, and such songs were not uncommon to Southern rhythm and blues in this period: James Carr's "The Dark End of the Street," Clarence Carter's "Slip Away" and Wilson Pickett's "In the Midnight Hour" all stand as classic explorations of the illicit and unattainable. And yet "Son of a Preacher Man" departs from these in its invocation of religion, and it is here that it strays into the most peculiar territory of all. In one sense this can be seen as an indictment of Southern social mores, a suggestion that underneath genteel morality all is not as it seems; or, perhaps, a celebration of the more sensual and erotic aspects of Southern religiosity, evident to anyone who'd ever heard a particularly impassioned Holiness sermon or gospel performance.

Whatever it was, it was too much for the woman for whom it was written. When Atlantic brought Hurley and Wilkins' composition to Aretha Franklin she rejected it, finding its subject matter too risqué. For all of the sexual undertones of Franklin's Atlantic work—with songs such as "Respect," "Dr. Feelgood" and "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman" often heard as anthems of female sexual empowerment—the open combination of religion and sex in "Son of a Preacher Man" was too much for Franklin, a preacher's daughter herself, at least initially. Recalled Jerry Wexler, "I brought it to her, and she said, 'I'm not gonna do this song.' And I think, 'Well, it's got something to do with the church,' and I will always respect that."[88]

Franklin's loss was Springfield's gain. Along with American Studios' formidable session musicians, Springfield turned "Son of a Preacher Man" into one of the more unique moments in Southern soul music.[89] Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" is its use of quiet. The song's opening guitar riff is spacy and

[88] Bego, 129.
[89] Dusty Springfield, "Son of a Preacher Man," 1968, Atlantic 2580, 45rpm.

surreal, so cleanly played that it almost chimes, while a tremolo-laden Wurlitzer electric piano hums beneath it. Gene Chrisman's drum track is delicately understated, his hi-hat and cymbals played almost at a whisper, his fills sparse and laconic. Tommy Cogbill's bass is the most melodically active instrument on the record, busily bubbling underneath Chrisman's drumming.

This quiet has several effects. From a thematic standpoint it heightens the song's undercurrents of illicit suggestion while evoking a setting of thick, slow Southern evenings. Musically, the quiet directs our attention to even the slightest moments of dynamic emphasis, such as Chrisman hitting a snare-drum backbeat just slightly harder than the previous bar, or Cogbill's bass line providing a particularly lyrical flourish. Even Springfield's vocal begins with careful breathiness, as though confessing a secret, a British pop chanteuse in a parody of a Southern belle.

The arrival of the bridge following on the heels of the second chorus transforms the song. Horns play sustained pads, while the electric guitar plays chopping rhythm chords for the first time in the song. Even more significantly, the song's bridge modulates up an entire fourth, an unusually wide interval that forces Springfield into the upper registers of her vocal range, where she remains for the song's final chorus. We hear ad-libbing from Springfield, as "Son of a Preacher Man" becomes "sweet-talking son of a preacher man," then "sweet-lovin' son of a preacher man," as her backup singers take on their fullest role yet, essentially filling out the entirety of the chorus. Chrisman's drum part moves to polyrhythms on the cymbals, and as the song soars towards its fade the listener is swept away in the mixture of exuberance and lament that haunts the song's text.

The success of "Son of a Preacher Man," both commercial and artistic, almost certainly resulted from the tremendous influence of the composition's inspiration, Aretha

Franklin. Not only does the recording feature numerous musicians who were veterans of Franklin's sessions—including Tommy Cogbill on bass, and the horn section of Andrew Love and Wayne Jackson—it also boasts Franklin's backup singers, the Sweet Inspirations. "Son of a Preacher Man" is an Aretha Franklin track without Aretha Franklin; it is impossible to imagine the song being recorded in quite this way prior to Franklin's emergence. Of course, Springfield's vocal range and capacity were nowhere near the equal of Franklin's, and the production and arrangement is tailored around this. By placing the white British Springfield in a recording studio with a song written for Aretha Franklin and musicians who backed up Aretha Franklin, what emerged was one of the great R&B records of the 1960s, a recording whose peculiar, atmospheric power is truly unique to itself.

Franklin would return to "Son of a Preacher Man," after the success of Springfield's version convinced her of the song's worth. Recorded in Miami during the sessions for Franklin's 1970 album *This Girl's in Love with You*, from a stylistic standpoint her recording is a stark departure from Springfield's, abandoning the latter's the ambient sparseness for a full-on, gospel-rock aesthetic.[90] An electric guitar plays fills behind Aretha's vocal as her piano churns, and Barry Beckett's organ playing more directly evokes the song's religious underpinnings. Jerry Jemott's bass playing is more insistently rhythmic and less melodic than Tommy Cogbill's, and drummer Roger Hawkins brings a funky, driving backbeat to the proceedings. Perhaps the most striking difference between the two recordings is the role of the backup singers—again, the same voices heard on Springfield's recording—who intone the chorus in syncopated, staccato bursts, then move to a "hallelujah" in response to "oh yes he was" rejoinder.

[90] Aretha Franklin, *This Girl's In Love with You,* Atlantic 8248, 1970, 33rpm.

The "hallelujah" is a clear indication of the foregrounding of religion in Franklin's version, but Franklin's own vocal is powerfully church-infused as well. Franklin improvises around the song's melody far more than Springfield, and the most striking example of this is heard in the song's bridge, which is a stark departure from Springfield's. In opposition to Springfield's bridge, where the intensity of the track is dramatically heightened in terms of both dynamics and arrangement, in Franklin's version the entirety of the backup track drops out behind her, save for her own piano playing and, later, an organ. The entire bridge is out of time, with Franklin guiding the chord changes along with her vocal in an almost theatrical variation on the gospel tradition of "testifying." The band crashes back in behind her as the final chorus arrives, and like Springfield's version, the song fades.

Franklin's version is louder, more assertive, and more bombastic than Springfield's. The religious undertones of the song are heightened, and by calling such explicit attention to rollicking sexuality, Franklin's production loses the haunting hesitation of Springfield's, its sense of dilemma and ambiguity of awakening. By explicitly foregrounding the connection between religion and sex that is only cautiously hinted by its predecessor, Franklin's version skirts over the complexities of both sex and religion in favor of an exaggerated performance of both. Much in the way that the influence of Franklin looms over *Dusty in Memphis*, Springfield's rendition of "Preacher Man" leaves Franklin's version in a stunted state, and Franklin and her producers may have felt the same way, as her version of "Son of a Preacher Man" was never released as a single.

It is hard to know what accounts for this discrepancy. It is possible that Franklin was still uncomfortable with the song, as many of the other performances on *This Girl's In Love With You* are brilliant. It is also quite possible that Franklin was not used to performing a rendition of a song previously performed by another female singer, so recently and with

such success. As Matt Dobkin has noted, beginning with her hit version of Otis Redding's "Respect" in 1967, Franklin overwhelmingly gravitated towards songs first performed by male artists in when it came to choosing covers in this period.[91] *This Girl's in Love with You* alone features five such songs.[92]

A more intriguing possibility lies in the question of genre. As Jerry Wexler has acknowledged, Atlantic was looking for inroads into the white rock market and saw Aretha as a talent so monumental that she might be capable of bridging the rapidly-solidifying boundaries between black and white music. The first single released from *This Girl's in Love with You* was a cover of the Band's "The Weight," featuring a young session guitarist named Duane Allman on slide guitar, which Jerry Wexler later expressed remorse over. "I was trying to make a bridge over to the 'flower children,' and it was a mistake," recalled Wexler.[93] Although Franklin's cover of "The Weight" is original and inspired, it failed to find the success Atlantic had come to expect from her.

I suggest that the arrangement choices on Franklin's version of "Son of a Preacher Man" reflect this concern with trans-racial appeal: the song has a louder, more aggressive feel than Springfield's original version, and Franklin's version exaggerates the black gospel elements of the song to stereotypical extremes. Jerry Wexler's visions of Springfield as the British blue-eyed soulstress who would bring Atlantic the coveted crossover demographic was never realized, much in the way that Aretha never quite became the "rock" star the label hoped she would in the early 1970s. Ironically, the British band that would finally give Atlantic the rock foothold it craved was recommended to the label by Springfield herself,

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[91] Dobkin, 174.
[92] These would be "Share Your Love With Me" (originally performed by Bobby Bland); "Eleanor Rigby" and "Let It Be" (both by the Beatles, the latter version of which Franklin actually released first but had heard a demo sent by Paul McCartney); "The Weight" (the Band), and "The Dark End of the Street" (James Carr).
[93] Bego, 130.

during the sessions to *Dusty in Memphis*, when she pointed Atlantic executives in the direction of an up-and-coming quartet called Led Zeppelin, a band whose relationship to African American musical performance bore considerable resemblance to Janis Joplin's, frequently marked by feverish bombast and excess.[94]

For her part, Springfield was never able to hear "Son of a Preacher Man" the same way after Franklin's version and was perpetually convinced that Franklin had "done it better."[95] A self-conscious performer perpetually aware of her own whiteness and mistrustful of her own "soul"-ful authenticity, Springfield was mortified at the thought of being compared to Franklin, even if their moment of overlap had produced arguably the most brilliant performance of her career.

"Eleanor Rigby": Lennon/McCartney to Aretha Franklin

Franklin's own career was in a state of flux at the time of *This Girl's in Love with You*. She had recently ended her marriage to Ted White, and recorded *This Girl's in Love with You* in Miami instead of New York, where she had made her earlier Atlantic recordings. She had not had a Top 10 hit since late 1968, and *This Girl's in Love with You* is a peculiar album, one that finds Franklin working with a wide array of material, much of it originated by other artist and among which are two songs written by two British musicians far more well-known to American audiences than Dusty Springfield: John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The fourth and fifth tracks on *This Girl's in Love with You* are Franklin's renditions of "Let It Be" and "Eleanor Rigby," the first of which was in fact released before the Beatles' version—McCartney sent Franklin a demo of the song in hopes that she would record it—and the

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[94] Jerry Wexler and David Ritz, *Rhythm and the Blues: A Life in American Music* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 221. Alice Echols has pointed out the vocal similarities between Led Zeppelin frontman Robert Plant and Janis Joplin. Echols, xvi.

[95] Penny Valentine and Vicki Whickham, *Dancing with Demons: The Authorised Biography of Dusty Springfield* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), 87.

second of which re-imagined of one of the most famous tracks from the Beatles' 1966 album *Revolver*.

Aretha Franklin's recording of "Eleanor Rigby," recorded at the dawn of the 1970s, is a compelling and provocative study in the vestigial interracialism of 1960s music, a reclamation of rhythm and blues in a Beatles song that originated at a moment when the band were widely heard as moving away from the music, as the previous chapter addressed. Whereas "Piece of My Heart" and "Son of a Preacher Man" were songs written by professional songwriters for other artists, "Eleanor Rigby" shows the agency of a singer tackling one of the most famous songs of the 1960s and making it unmistakably her own, and in doing so offering up a counter to constrictive ideologies of originalism, gender potential, and racial hermeticism.

The version of "Eleanor Rigby" on *Revolver* features Paul McCartney on lead vocal backed by a double string quartet arrangement in E minor; the song moves between E minor and C major chords on the verses, then proceeds to a chromatically descending Em7/D - Em6/C# - C - Em pattern on the song's chorus ("all the lonely people / where do they all come from?").[96] "Eleanor Rigby" is unusual among Beatles songs of this era in that it is told entirely in the third person, McCartney's narrator delivering a story of "lonely people," such as the titular heroine and "Father McKenzie." The Beatles' version is notable both for its chamber music backdrop—although both John Lennon and George Harrison sing backup vocals on the track, none of the four Beatles play instruments—and for its themes of loneliness and isolation, more somber than anything the Beatles had previously released. As critic Ian MacDonald has argued, "Death is a subject normally avoided in pop music… Consequently the downbeat demise of a lonely spinster in 'Eleanor Rigby—not to mention

[96] The Beatles, *Revolver,* Capitol 2576, 1966, 33rpm.

the brutal image of the priest 'wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave'—came as quite a shock to pop listeners in 1966."[97]

Franklin's version of "Eleanor Rigby" reimagines the song on nearly every level. The song is played with a full band, including a driving, R&B rhythm section, and played as an up-tempo, 4/4 dance tune. The recording opens with a rumbling minor-pentatonic piano introduction before going into the first verse. Franklin's version does away with the Beatles' harmonic structure as well, instead sticking to a two-chord vamp throughout the entire song, moving from two bars of D7 to two bars of G7 (I to IV), then repeating this progression through the entirety of the song.

Most notably, Franklin's version discards the third-person narrative structure entirely. "*I'm* Eleanor Rigby," sings Franklin in the song's opening line, and sings the entire song in the person of McCartney's main character. Suddenly the text is turned from a story-like elegy to a bluesy, personal complaint. On the song's chorus Franklin's backup singers come in behind her, singing in tightly syncopated staccato bursts, and a warm electric piano plays fills around Franklin's vocal. After the song's second chorus the entire band drops out save the drums, electric piano, Franklin and her backup vocalists for an eight-bar "breakdown" section that essentially serves the purpose of a bridge, although the two-chord, I-IV vamp stays the same as drummer Bernard Purdie takes a short drum solo. As the song moves towards its fade Franklin goes into a shout chorus, with Franklin improvising around the song's lyrics—recalling the end of the version of "Satisfaction" that opens this chapter—as her backup singers intone variations of "Eleanor Rigby" and "all the lonely people," and the electric piano solos behind the vocalists.

[97] Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (London: Pimlico, 2005), 203.

Franklin's "Eleanor Rigby" resituates Paul McCartney's quasi-classical rumination as an up-tempo rhythm-and-blues dance number. More than that, by moving the lyrics from the third person to the first person, Franklin essentially turns the song into a blues, and by inhabiting the character of Eleanor Rigby invests her with a feminist defiance. It is an audacious revision of what was already by 1970 a canonical popular musical text, and as bold a genre-bending exercise as the Beatles' original version.

As the previous chapter has argued, much of the Beatles' *Revolver* can be heard as an avant-garde R&B album. "Eleanor Rigby" would seem to be an exception to this, but Franklin's rendition suggests this needn't be the case, and that the musical commonalities between the Beatles and Ray Charles—indeed, there's no performer whom Franklin's version of "Eleanor Rigby" more distinctly recalls, down to the rolling Wurlitzer piano—remain far thicker than the musical commonalities between the Beatles and Johann Sebastian Bach. Franklin's "Eleanor Rigby" stands as a tribute to soul music's resistance to the rigidities of racialized genre discourses, a potent statement that ideas about what white and black musicians can and cannot do rarely hold up to musical practice. Most potently, it stands as proof that when a song the quality of "Eleanor Rigby" and a singer the quality of Aretha Franklin find one another, the musical possibilities of the exchange are boundless.

* * * * *

The discourse of "soul" that percolated so feverishly in the late 1960s was a strange one. It was a deeply ideological concept, and while it often derived most immediately from black critics and commentators seeking cultural recognition and autonomy, its terms drew from long-standing beliefs about innate black musical ability, beliefs that that were rooted in the oppressions and injustices of a racist society.

By using music to make arguments about race and race to make arguments about music, the actual music that celebrations of "soul" were supposedly lauding was often obfuscated or obscured. There were, of course, numerous ironies to this. First, and most importantly, the emergence of "soul" as a musical boundary to be policed created real problems for many of the artists it was ostensibly celebrating. Through suggestions that white and black music, white and black musicians and white and black audiences were inherently *different* from one another, the popular music industry redrew the very lines of market segmentation and segregation that the emergence of rock and roll had challenged.

In 1970, the African American singer Wilson Pickett angrily noted to an interviewer, "as I travel around the country I listen to what is being played and find that *only on the soul stations* is our music heard. A few years back it wasn't uncommon to find that on any radio station featuring the top pop artists we made up at least 40 per cent of the sounds they played."[98] Through the racialized category of "soul," under the auspices of celebration pop ideology had in fact built a new black musical ghetto, marginalizing African American performers and pushing them from the commercial mainstream of a popular music landscape they had disproportionately shaped.

Secondly, the discourse of "soul" provided a backdoor opening for white "rock" music to further stake itself as inextricably different than black music. Although it almost certainly not her intent, this is clearly embodied in the figure of Janis Joplin. Recall Joplin's statement that "[y]oung white kids have taken the groove and the soul from black people and added intensity. Black music is understated. I like to fill it full of feeling." The extremity of emotion and pathos of Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart" marks many of Joplin's most iconic performances, and Joplin's ideal of blues and soul performance was

[98] "Wilson Pickett Blasts Afro Records Boycott," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 14 May 1970, B. Emphasis added.

theatrical in almost every sense of the word, a deliberately exaggerated rendering of what she, and presumably large segments of her audience, believed to be black musical expression.

As Gayle Wald writes, "in Joplin's rock performance we can detect an emulation of black female blues artists that borders on a reactionary romanticization of their artistic achievement and a reification of racial difference."[99] Perhaps the strongest trace of Joplin's folk-revival roots in her move to rock music was this very romanticization, which exalted black music to an impossible position, peopled by figures such as Bessie Smith and Robert Johnson who were themselves irrevocably lost to the past but whose imagined tormented authenticity was carried forward by musicians like Joplin. It is not outlandish to suggest that Joplin's pursuit of this notion of black musical authenticity—and its fantasies of lived hardship that were even found in *Time*'s 1968 cover story—ultimately contributed to her own tragic self-destruction.

But perhaps the most troublesome legacy of the idea of "soul" is that it caused, and continues to cause, audiences and commentators to miss musical connections where connections are plentiful, and invent differences when differences are minimal. The story of Dusty Springfield, Aretha Franklin, and "Son of a Preacher Man" is a particularly potent example of this: a song written by two white men for a black woman, performed by a white Englishwoman in the black woman's stead with musicians from the black woman's band, many of whom happened themselves to be white; then re-recorded by the black woman for an album for which she was explicitly courting a white audience, an album featuring a mixed-race band that included one member—Allman—who would become a rock icon in his own right. Through their shared encounter around "Son of a Preacher Man" and also through their shared status as talented and ambitious women performing R&B music and attempting

[99] Gayle Wald, "One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies," in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader,* ed. Mike Hill (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 158.

find success among white *and* black audiences, Springfield and Franklin had far more in common with one another than they had differences.

In her 1969 book *The Sound of Soul*, Phyl Garland conceded upon a visit to Stax Studios in Memphis that "I found it difficult if not impossible to distinguish a white sound from what was supposedly a black sound," and Al Jackson, the African American drummer for the interracial Stax house band Booker T. and the MGs, told Garland that, "in today's white market, the general market that uses the term soul, they think of Negroes only…. I'd say that soul has no *color*. It's a matter of exposure."[100]

Still, the persistent discussions about "soul" in this period were a way of using music to talk about race, and vice versa, in a way that sought to artificially stabilize the instabilities created by the conflation of racial and musical ideology. "Soul" was not so much a way for Americans to talk about the music they were making and consuming as it was a way for them to talk about themselves. The problem with "soul" was that it abstracted musical practice to a magical realm: instead of music becoming something people did, or something people enjoyed, music became something people *were*. And as the next and final chapter of this dissertation will show, through similar mixtures of musical and racial imagination, hard-dying ideologies of racial difference and cultural unavailability were rapidly finding a snug new home in the increasingly white landscape of rock music.

[100] Garland, 162.

- Chapter 5 -
Just Around Midnight: Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, and the End of Sixties Music

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> People should see more violence on the stage, maybe they'd get it out of their system—wouldn't have to fight wars.[1]
>
> -Jimi Hendrix

> There is at the heart of this music a deep strain of mysterious insurrection, and the music dies without it.[2]
>
> -Stanley Booth, *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones*

> Paint it black, you devils![3]
>
> -Unknown female Rolling Stones fan, November 1969

One of the most important rock and roll records of the late 1960s came out of nowhere, even though it was recorded by the second-most famous band in world. "Jumpin' Jack Flash," released by the Rolling Stones in May of 1968, opened with an overdriven and distorted acoustic guitar, pummeled by guitarist Keith Richards into a riff that sounded a bit like "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" in reverse, but which come from somewhere harsher and more desolate.[4] After eight bars of introduction, singer Mick Jagger grunted "watch it!" as the track exploded into a quagmire of guitars, bass and drums. "I was born in a crossfire hurricane / and I howled at my ma in the drivin' rain," was the entirety of the first verse, as though the song itself could barely wait for its own chorus: "Jumpin' jack flash / it's a gas, gas, gas." The pithy geniality of the refrain belied a text that was stalked by images of violent chaos, "I fell down to my feet and I saw they bled," sang Jagger; "I was crowned with a spike right through my head." The musical backdrop only added to the song's atmosphere, a

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[1] Henry Mitchell, "The Death of Jimi Hendrix," *Washington Post* 19 Sept. 1970, C1.
[2] Stanley Booth, *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones* (Chicago: A Cappella, 1984), 394.
[3] This memorable exclamation can be heard prior to the start of "Sympathy for the Devil" on the Rolling Stones' live concert album *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* (ABKCO 8005, 1970, 33rpm.
[4] The Rolling Stones, "Jumpin' Jack Flash," London 908, 1968, 45rpm

propulsive machine of driving rhythm and angry distortion, all clinging to Richards' churning guitars.

The lyrics to "Jumpin' Jack Flash" were grim and opaque, but when Jagger slurred "I was drowned / I was washed up and left for dead" at the top of the song's last verse the lyric was strangely fitting, as only a few months earlier the Rolling Stones had been in a state of crisis that threatened their very existence. While 1967 had been an extraordinary year in popular music—one that saw, among other things, the release of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and the rises of Aretha Franklin and Janis Joplin—for the Rolling Stones it had been little short of disastrous. In February singer Mick Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards had been arrested in a widely-publicized drug bust at Redlands, Richards' estate in Sussex, and the attendant trial would draw international scrutiny for much of the year. During the same period Richards began having an affair with Anita Pallenberg, the girlfriend of the Stones' other guitarist, Brian Jones, exacerbating already-strained relations between Jones and his bandmates. By the end of 1967 the group would part ways with its longtime manager and producer, Andrew Loog Oldham, who had overseen the Stones' rise from London club act to international stars.

The pressures wrought by the Redlands trial, together with personal and professional tensions, caused the band's creative pace to slow, but finally, in December, a new album arrived. Adorned with an ornate hologram cover and the bizarre title *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, the LP found the Stones venturing curiously far down the newly-paved pathways of psychedelia.[5] *Satanic Majesties* was clearly influenced by *Sgt. Pepper* and suggested that for all their successes the Stones remained daunted by the enormous shadow of their countrymen. Musically, *Satanic Majesties* presented a bold departure from the ramshackle R&B that had

[5]The Rolling Stones, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, London 2., 1967, 33rpm

gained the group its biggest successes; all else aside, it was undoubtedly the Rolling Stones' most musically adventurous project to date.

It was also a critical and commercial disaster. *Their Satanic Majesties Request* was the band's first album that failed to yield a Top 10 hit in either the UK or the US. *Rolling Stone* magazine called it "insecure" and "embarrassing," the *Los Angeles Times* lamented its "excesses of gimmickry," and England's *New Musical Express* later referred to it as "an electric holocaust" marked by "complete confusion and derangement."[6] The Rolling Stones had capped a year of turmoil and upheaval—one in which the artistic landscape of popular music had profoundly shifted—with an album that was widely viewed as the worst they'd ever made.

When "Jumpin' Jack Flash" reached number three on the American charts and number one in the United Kingdom in the early summer of 1968 it revived and transformed the Rolling Stones.[7] After the disaster of *Their Satanic Majesties Request* the Stones had made a musical rebuttal to the entire ethos that spawned it, the first great "answer record" to psychedelia. It was, in some senses, a return to the band's roots—upon its release the *Chicago Tribune* described it as "back in the old blues-hard rock vein of 'Satisfaction' and 'Get Off of My Cloud'"—but it was also a single that looked askance at the receding Summer of Love and decided it wanted none of it.[8]

"Jumpin' Jack Flash" did all this through an aesthetic that embraced a loud, and explosive vision of musical violence, one that would carry the Rolling Stones through the

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[6] Jon Landau, "Stones," *Rolling Stone* 10 February 1968, 18; Pete Johnson, "Can't Tell An Album By Its Cover," *Los Angeles Times* 3 Dec. 1967, D24. Keith Altham, "The Year of the Stones' New Heart," *New Musical Express*, NME *Annual*, 1969. Archived online at http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=8862

[7] All chart position information from Joel Whitburn's *The Billboard Albums, Sixth Edition* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, 2006), Joel Whitburn's *Top Pop Singles, 1955-2006* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, 2007), and Neil Wawick, Jon Kutner and Tony Brown, *The Complete Book of the British Charts* (London: Omnibus Press, 2004).

[8] Robb Baker, "The Sound," *Chicago Tribune* 28 May 1968, B17.

end of the 1960s and beyond. This chapter explores the theme of violence in the music of the Rolling Stones and of another musician whose 1967 emergence transformed popular music: the guitarist, singer and songwriter Jimi Hendrix. Both Hendrix and the Stones persistently engaged themes of violence and destruction in this period, and in the years since both have come to uniquely symbolize violence in popular-cultural settings as well, with songs like "All Along the Watchtower" and "Gimme Shelter" serving as audible markers of violence in films, television and other media.

I will argue that for both of these artists, preoccupations with violence can be heard as a partial but significant response to hardening racial ideologies in popular music that left each in an embattled and precarious position in the late 1960s. Hendrix and the Rolling Stones were among the most racially complicated musicians of their era: Hendrix a black man playing a music that was fast coming to be imagined as a whites-only enterprise, the Rolling Stones a white band obsessed with black music to degrees that left them in a dwindling minority of white rock acts still engaging with black music as a living tradition.

As I will show, all of this was happening at a time when broader audience and critical discourses were increasingly framing rock and roll music as a segregated form. To return to a persistently recurring theme in this dissertation, these conversations coalesced around ideas of authenticity. As the last chapter demonstrated, the celebratory discourse of "soul" during this period often had the effect of both policing white access to African American music, while also subtly confining African American musical identity. While the "soul" debates seemed often driven by black writers, white writers were also rigorously enforcing racial and musical boundaries during this period, through the increasingly influential discourse of rock criticism.

I will begin by providing a brief overview of critical and historiographical discussions of violence in rock music, and illustrate the ways that Hendrix and the Rolling Stones complicate these conversations. I will then provide a broad overview of the racial discourses of white rock music in the late 1960s, and place the music of first Hendrix and then the Rolling Stones within their context. I will show that Hendrix and the Stones were often in strange and impossible positions with relation to these conversations: they were objects of intense fixation who were also strangely resistant to newly-articulated racial and musical logics. Through all of this, I will argue that explorations of violence became a vehicle for Hendrix and the Stones to make claims on the future of rock and roll music while carving a space of musical authenticity that was ungoverned by racial strictures, if only temporarily, and incompletely.

Violence in Rock Music

The subject of violence in rock music in rock music is an enormous one, but particularly in the context of the late 1960s it is most often discussed in two ways. One perspective views rock music of this period as an offshoot of the revolutionary political ideologies circulating through the disintegrating New Left. As Jeremy Varon has shown, as the 1960s progressed New Left factions in both the United States and Europe became increasingly preoccupied with violence, and to no small degree this was reflected in popular music.[9] This was discussed at the time through a proliferation of commentary linking rock music to "revolution," and it has since become a common claim for a certain strain of politically-minded popular music historiography.[10]

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[9] Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[10] The most prominent recent example of this is Peter Doggett's *There's A Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars, and the Rise and Fall of the '60s* (New York: Canongate, 2009). Other examples include Dick Weissman's *Talkin' About a Revolution: Music and Social Change* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2010), and this tends to be a

While there's certainly truth to this—both white and black musicians surely responded to the political culture around them in this period—such a vision of popular music often draws too direct a correlation between musical content—too often reduced to lyrical content—and political ideology. While pop stars such as John Lennon and Marvin Gaye were explicitly concerned with political issues during this period, they remained musicians first and foremost, and their political commitments were often incomplete and not fully coherent.

What's more, this correlative explanation doesn't adequately explain the violence in the music of the Rolling Stones or Jimi Hendrix, artists whose political ideologies tended toward opacity. Hendrix often explicitly denied the existence of political agendas in his music, even when discussing works such as his famed rendition of the "The Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock, and for the most part the expansive musical output of the Rolling Stones has been politically vague at best, with this period being no exception.

The second way that violence in rock and roll has been discussed is through its relationship to a hyper-aggressive masculinism that came to proliferate certain sub-genres of the music in the 1970s and beyond. In a famous 1978 essay, sociologists Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie wrote of a genre they called "cock rock" which they described as "music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality," and in doing so identified Mick Jagger as one of its central progenitors. The hard rock scene of the 1970s and 1980s was widely populated by such bands, from AC/DC to Aerosmith to Van Halen to Mötley Crüe. Jimi Hendrix's highly sexualized performance style, in which the guitar became a theatrically exaggerated phallic symbol, was hugely influential to the development of this musical ethos as well, so much so that critic Greg Tate

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common trait in broader cultural/political surveys of the 1960s, such as Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1993).

calls cock rock "largely, and inadvertently, a Hendrix invention."[11] Violence is also a common trope in heavy metal music: *Kill 'Em All* is the name of one of Metallica's most beloved albums, while Slayer's name speaks for itself. In his study of the genre, musicologist Robert Walser argues that while some of the violence and aggression of heavy metal is misogynistic, much of it traffics in what Walser calls "exscription," the use of an exaggerated masculinity to create a world in which women simply do not exist.[12] As Walser also points out, Hendrix remains one of heavy metal's most revered figures.[13]

Still, to categorize the Stones and Hendrix in this period as simply promulgating an aggressively sexualized and hegemonic masculinism risks defining their music in terms of that which came after it. For all of his suggestive performance styles Jimi Hendrix rarely sang about sex with any degree of explicitness—indeed, critic Charles Shaar Murray has argued that Hendrix's music is unique in the sensitivity with which it portrays women, in comparison to other popular music in this period.[14] The Rolling Stones sang about sex incessantly but often in ways that were slightly off-kilter: as Simon Reynolds and Joy Press have noted, the Stones' music and image has often been marked by homoeroticism, androgyny, transvestism, and "sexual nomadism," all of which suggest an ambivalent relationship to a conventional, normative male sexuality.[15] This is not to deny or excuse the male posturing and outright sexism in the music of these artists, particularly the Rolling Stones, who are no strangers to notorious moments of misogyny. But focusing on musical

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[11] Greg Tate, *Midnight Lightning: Jimi Hendrix and the Black Experience* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003), 66.
[12] Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1993), 110.
[13] Ibid., 17.
[14] Charles Shaar Murray, *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and the Rock 'n' Roll Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 74.
[15] See Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion, and Rock 'n' Roll* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996), esp. 15-21, 51-54.

violence exclusively in terms of sexual symbolism can cause one to ignore other potential concerns and imaginative uses.

Instead I suggest that violence in the music of Hendrix and the Rolling Stones during this period was a space in which to articulate visions of where rock and roll music was headed. Both artists foresaw an interracial future for the music, but in drastically different ways. In a moment during which rock and roll music was exploding in any number of direction, the Rolling Stones, a white British rhythm and blues band, presented a vision of the music obsessively rooted in tradition, and specifically black musical tradition. Hendrix, an African American rock guitarist who had immigrated to England to become famous—a strange reversal of the "British Invasion" narrative—presented a vision of the music as untethered from the past, reaching only to a boundless future. As Paul Gilroy has recently suggested, "the substantive issue is not that Hendrix was ahead, but rather that he was able to pronounce another time—sculpting temporality itself so that his listeners could, in effect, be transported from one time to another."[16]

The Rolling Stones saw a future for rock and roll music in which black music and musicians continued to matter, deeply. Hendrix saw a future for rock and roll music in which the very concept of race did not. Both stances were radical, and by the end of the 1960s were increasingly untenable. The Stones and Hendrix's flirtations with musical violence were creatively invigorating but soon exceeded the realms of imagination into lived realities—the murder of Meredith Hunter at a free Rolling Stones concert in late 1969, followed by the Stones' own descent into turmoil and drug abuse; Hendrix's own self-destruction at the age of 27.

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[16] Paul Gilroy, *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010), 132.

The challenges that the Stones and Hendrix offered to a racially-hegemonic vision of rock and roll in the late 1960s were corrupted and absorbed by the music. The Stones would go on to become perhaps the archetypal white rock and roll band for all time, Jagger's performance style so naturalized that it would soon become remarkable when a rock star didn't sneer, slur and strut. The Stones' dedication to black music and black musicians simply became part of the Rolling Stones, the band who'd wanted to sound like Muddy Waters now surrounded by a world of white musicians that wanted to sound like them. As for Hendrix, he became the exception that proved the rule, a situation where his race is viewed not so much as evidence of rock's problematic whiteness, but simply more evidence of Hendrix's own exceptional uniqueness. By turning Hendrix into the lone black hero of a "white" genre in the years since his death, white rock ideology has been able to outwardly deny race's salience while foreclosing discussion of its own exclusivity; as Maureen Mahon suggests, he has become, "not black, not white, just Jimi."[17]

This chapter now turns to 1966, the year that a young rock critic named Richard Goldstein began writing his influential "Pop Eye" column in the *Village Voice* and that Jimi Hendrix arrived in London and took England by storm; it will end in 1971, when, in the wake of Altamont, Hendrix's death and the 1970 opening of the film *Gimme Shelter,* the Rolling Stones released one of the most shocking and strange explorations of race and violence in all of popular music. I will first move to an overview of racial imagination in the nascent landscape of rock criticism during this period, then to a discussion of Hendrix and the guitarist's position within this landscape, including extended examination of three of the guitarists' more famous performances, "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," his cover of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," and his 1970 recording of "Machine Gun" from the

[17] Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004), 235.

live *Band of Gypsys* album. From there I will turn my attention to the curious racial position of the Rolling Stones in the cultural imagination of the 1960s, a position that I will argue was itself strangely and powerfully racialized. I will also consider tropes of racialized musical violence in three of their most well-known compositions, including "Street Fighting Man," "Gimme Shelter" and "Brown Sugar." The visions of an interracial future of rock and roll music put forth by the Stones and Hendrix in this period may have been undone, largely through the very violence that fascinated them, but this chapter seeks to recover their possibilities.

Race and the Rise of Rock Writing

There are any number of reasons why rock criticism exploded in the mid-to-late 1960s: a generation of intellectuals raised on Elvis and Little Richard and later the Beatles and Bob Dylan came of age and had increased access to various media; the discursive atmosphere surrounding the New Left counterculture found an artistic form that it could seize as its own; an older, more established generation of critics, including Albert Goldman in New York, Kenneth Tynan in England, and Ralph Gleason in San Francisco began to take the music more seriously and use their podia to trumpet its virtues. But perhaps the simplest reason is also the most obvious: in the wake of all that has been discussed in the previous chapters, there was really quite a lot to write about.

Simon Frith has characterized popular music criticism as "not just producing a version of the music for the reader but also a version of the listener for the music," and the rise of rock criticism in the late 1960s helped consolidate ideologies about what rock music should be.[18] In doing so it produced ideas about what and who rock fans should be, what they should value and the sorts of conversations they should have. Rock criticism and the

[18] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996), 67,

discourses it spawned presented powerful new ways to fashion music and listening practices into expressions of identity. Crucially attendant to this, of course, were discussions about race, and the position of black music and musicians within new modes of musical thinking.

By the time he was twenty-three years old Richard Goldstein was arguably the most influential rock and roll critic of his generation. On June 16, 1966, just shy of his twenty-second birthday, Goldstein's first "Pop Eye" column appeared in the *Village Voice*.[19] Goldstein wasn't simply a "pop" writer, a profession that earlier in the 1960s had previously often existed as a subset of celebrity or gossip journalism; he was deeply intellectual and a remarkably gifted stylist, passionate, funny and opinionated. He was also a fierce advocate that rock and roll be taken seriously as a cultural form; in an early article on Bob Dylan from 1966, he attacked the singer's "parochial critics," who, he declared

> face a practically insurmountable obstacle in their unwillingness to accept the fact that a poet can work in a medium such as rock 'n' roll… Just as reprehensible as the widespread ignorance of the classics among the youth is the widespread ignorance of the current among adults.[20]

Such statements, along with his youth and visibility, made Goldstein a premier rock-critical voice of the late 1960s. He was voraciously curious—aside from writing thoughtful profiles and reviews of current artists and records, he was also known for thorough investigations into aspects of the pop music industry itself: its charting politics, its radio practices, and its various modes of censorship. So respected was Goldstein that he maintained his credibility even after infamously panning *Sgt. Peppers' Lonely Hearts Club Band* ("fraudulent") in the *New York Times* in 1967.[21] Though he would depart the *Voice* in 1968,

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[19] Richard Goldstein, "Pop Eye," *Village Voice* 16 June 1966, 16.
[20] Richard Goldstein, "Pop Eye: Evaluating Media," *Village Voice* 14 July 1966, 6.
[21] Richard Goldstein, "We Still Need the Beatles, But…" *New York Times* 18 June 1967, 104.

by 1970 *Rolling Stone* magazine was prepared to credit Goldstein with bringing "literacy, the first sign of civilization" to rock discourse.[22]

Goldstein was not shy about addressing race in his writing, and like many other white critics of his era, Goldstein also felt strongly that white performers had access to "soul." "Soul is intimately tied to sorrow, and sorrow is not a racially exclusive enterprise," he noted in an early "Pop Eye" column, and he would later explicitly attack "the myth that soul and gospel wailing has to be all black to be good."[23] As the Sixties progressed, Goldstein and other critical voices grew increasingly interested in the intersection of rock music and the concept of "revolution," particularly after the tumultuous spring and summer of 1968. In November of 1968, Goldstein wrote a column in the *New York Times* discussing the revolutionary language sweeping through rock and roll, citing the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man" as an example, and argued that "rock contains in its live performance an implicit statement of rebellion against restraint."[24] He then connected this to rock's roots in black music:

> To do away with revolution in rock, one would have to ban the music itself, since revolt is inherent in its nature as a charged version of blues… rhythm and blues was an agent of liberation in a climate of crippling repression. It grew in the ghettos with the zeal of a political movement, and it was as certain a sign of impending revolt as the first sit-in.

He went on to write that "[t]he contact between folk and rock musicians on both sides of the Atlantic has produced a hybrid music which is as vital to the restive youth of the sixties, as R. and B. was a generation before."

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[22] Jon Landau, "Rock 1970: It's Too Late to Stop Now," *Rolling Stone* 10 Dec. 1970, 41.
[23] Richard Goldstein, "Pop Eye: The Soul Sound from Sheepshead Bay," *Village Voice* 23 June 1966, 7; Goldstein, "Pop Eye: Phillers," *Village Voice* 23 Feb. 1967, 14.
[24] Richard Goldstein, "Why Do the Kids Dig Rock…" *New York Times* 24 Nov. 1968, H1, H14. Two months earlier the *Chicago Tribune* had run an extensive article on the same theme: Robb Baker, "Revolutionary, Satanic Imagery Sweeping the Rock World, *Chicago Tribune,* 8 Sept. 1968, SC1.

Cultural historian Bryan Wagner has recently written of cultural imaginings of the itinerant blues singer as a paradigm of authenticity in African American music, and has compellingly argued that this fantasy is rooted in ideas of black threat that have long circulated in black Atlantic cultural discourses. "This equation," writes Wagner, "does not put the outlaw in the singer's place; it conjoins outlaw and singer without dissolving one into the other, yielding a common sense."[25] We can see strong traces of this formulation in Goldstein's passage above, in which he ties rock's emerging aggression and rebellion to black music's "impending revolt," but Goldstein also crucially implies that this connection is essentially *past*: note the telling phrase, "a generation before." Also, nearly every artist discussed in his article—from the Beatles to the Stones to the MC5—is white. Black music provides the imaginative basis of rock's rebellion, but it is something for an earlier generation: it is not something of a piece with rock, but rather something that enables it.

Following this idea, two months after Goldstein's column the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article by Mike Gershman entitled "The Blues, Once Black, Now a Shade Whiter" that echoed Goldstein's thesis that white musicians had taken successfully appropriated aggression and danger from black musical traditions. Gershman added a twist, though, excoriating contemporary black music for not living up to the his idea of the blues tradition. He complained of "denatured Negroes" who "have learned only too well… the value of getting Top 40 airplay," and ended his article with the following statement:

> The thrust of writing message songs has passed from Negroes to whites. We are getting a kind of musical integration, but at the expense of Negro blues, the most honest and meaningful contribution of black people. Blues fans can be thankful that young musicians like John Kay and Stevie Winwood are keeping the faith. Even though they are white.[26]

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[25] Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009), 57.

[26] Mike Gershman, "The Blues, Once Black, Now a Shade Whiter," *Los Angeles Times* 19 Jan. 1969, Q37.

In Gershman's words we see an even more pointed argument than Goldstein's: that by chasing commercial success black artists were losing authenticity, which was in turn being snatched up by white artists. Gershman argued that white artists were bearing the philosophical and political torch of black music, that white men had taken the blues tradition and made it their own, while black musicians had lost it while attempting to "integrate."

In essence Gershman suggested that by trying on black music whites had become politically and spiritually authentic, but by courting a white audience, black musicians had become spiritually degraded and politically suspect. Why would a white writer take to the pages of national newspaper and confidently level such claims? In fact, Gershman was neither the first nor the most prominent voice to do so. In Autumn 1967 *The American Scholar* published a lengthy essay by the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s music critic Ralph J. Gleason, who later that year would become a founding editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, entitled "Like a Rolling Stone" that extolled the musical contributions of the 1960s counterculture. "I daresay that with the inspiration of the Beatles and Dylan we have more poetry being produced and more poets being made than ever before in the history of the world," Gleason grandly declared, and went on to suggest that "the new music is a new way of looking at things," one marked by "the sacred importance of love and truth and beauty and interpersonal relationships."[27]

Gleason did not stop there, however, and soon launched into a lengthy rumination on the relationship between white and black music in contemporary times. He lamented the "Ed Sullivan TV-trip to middle class America" that he saw James Brown, the Supremes, the Four Tops and other African American performers pursuing, and then declared that "the only true American Negro music is that which abandons the concepts of European musical

[27]Ralph J. Gleason, "Like a Rolling Stone," *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1967), 557.

thought, abandons the systems of scales and keys and notes, for a music whose roots are in the culture of the colored peoples of the world."[28]

Leaving aside that one must go back quite far indeed to find an "American Negro music" that was entirely divorced from "the concepts of European musical thought," Gleason's endorsement of musical segregation is strikingly brazen: in fact, he is so explicit in this that he claims inspiration from Stokely Carmichael. Gleason then goes on to praise recent white rock music for effectively banishing its African American influences. "Today's new youth, beginning with the rock musician… is not ashamed of being white," wrote Gleason.

> He is remarkably free from prejudice, but he is not attempting to join the Negro culture or to become part of it… For the very first time in decades, as far as I know, something important and new is happening artistically and musically in this society that is distinct from the Negro and to which the Negro will have to come, if he is interested in it at all…[29]

Gleason goes on to cite the Beatles' 1967 single "Strawberry Fields Forever" as "one of the more easily observed manifestations" of music that "exists somewhere else from and independent of the Negro."[30] Such statements reveal the ease with which racial essentialisms slip into tautology; in one breath he assails the authenticity of Motown for aspiring to middle-class respectability; in the next he praises "Strawberry Fields Forever" precisely because it partakes in the trappings of bourgeois art music. Gleason characterizes the "new music" as defined by its *distance* from black culture, and even champions it for being so.

Such appraisals were not limited to the American side of the Atlantic, either. In the spring of 1968 a twenty-two-year-old British writer named Nik Cohn spent seven weeks at a rented cottage in Connemara, Ireland, endeavoring to write the history of rock and roll

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[28] Ibid., 559.
[29]Ibid., 559.
[30] Ibid.

through a series of short, interconnected essays. In 1969 he published his findings under the title *Awopbopalaloobop Alopbamboom*, subtitled "The Golden Age of Rock." *Awopbopaloobop* is argumentative, romantic and deeply nostalgic—Cohn later recalled writing the book as a series of "farewells" to the music he loved, feeling that increasing corporatization was destroying the music he'd loved as a youth.[31] The heroes of *Awopbopaloobop* are figures such as Eddie Cochrane ("pure rock") and Little Richard ("the most exciting live performer I ever saw in my life"); even the Beatles and Bob Dylan are treated ambivalently ("with their followers, there was nothing beyond pretension").[32]

Awopbopaloobop is a potent mix of hagiography and declension narrative, a construction of tradition that simultaneously laments said tradition's passing. Its cast of characters is remarkably white—while early African American rock and roll artists receive generous treatment in the book's early chapters, no black artist is the subject of a stand-alone chapter, as Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Dylan and other white artists are afforded. Contemporary African American music is only extensively considered once in the book, in a chapter entitled "Soul." Like Ralph Gleason, Cohn found the current state of black music lacking:

> Most soul singers come on like windup dolls, they almost sleep-walk and they smirk, leer and grimace like so many nigger minstrels. They don't act like people and they don't treat their audience like people either. It's all depressingly Tom.[33]

Cohn, too, saw Motown as a primary problem in all this, complaining of Berry Gordy's tendency to put his acts into white markets, which "is fine for the acts themselves,

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[31] From the "Preface" to the 2001 edition, Nik Cohn, *Awopbopalaloobop Alopbamboom* (1969; New York: Grove Press, 2001, 5.
[32] Ibid., 58; 33; 146. For evidence of *Awopbopaloobop*'s influence, Greil Marcus considers the book extensively in his well-known book *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989).
[33] Ibid., 115.

because they make more money, but a bit rough on their long-time followers, because the music turns lousy."[34]

Again, such critiques contain an almost incoherent double-standard. Black artists are seen as "Toms" for aspiring to make money, but they also castigated for conforming to expectations of musical blackness on the part of white listeners, of which Cohn is certainly one. Cohn then proceeded to make his own assertions on black musical character:

> The thing about soul is that a quite astonishing number of American Negroes are good at it. They tend to have naturally strong voices and they sing in tune, keep time and are loud. Usually, they have no individuality whatever but they're at least competent.[35]

Beside the fact that accusing "Negroes" as having "no individuality whatever" is the literal definition of racism, this passage denigrates black musical accomplishment with the well-worn saw that music comes easier to black performers than white.

In all of these examples we see white critics relegating black music and musicians to an impossible position. To court mainstream success and a white audience is to sacrifice one's blackness, particularly if one does so by conforming to white expectations of musical blackness—expectations that these white writers are all too happy to articulate. The only "real" black music becomes that which has no contact with white styles and white listeners, even though the entire history of American music is made of such encounters, including rock and roll itself. It was an endorsement of musical segregation, but one that was disproportionately constrictive to black artists: white musicians were celebrated for pursuing musical styles that were associated with their race (such as the Beatles' experimentations with Western art music) and outside of it (such as white blues musicians playing the blues), while

[34] Ibid., 117.
[35] Ibid., 122.

black musicians were castigated as fraudulent for not adhering to standards seen as properly "black," which definitively entailed staying as far as possible from anything deemed "white."

House Burning Down: The Problem of Jimi Hendrix

It was into this discursive climate that James Marshall Hendrix emerged as one of the most controversial performers rock and roll music had yet seen.[36] The Seattle-born Hendrix was twenty-four years old when his performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in June of 1967 made him a global icon, but he had been toiling as a professional musician since being discharged from a one-year army stint in 1962, working as a sideman and session musician for a variety of R&B acts. In 1964 he moved to Harlem and by 1966 had secured a residency at the Café Wha? in Greenwich Village. During this period he attracted the attention of Chas Chandler, the former bassist from the British band the Animals, who convinced the guitarist to move to London and would soon become his manager. Upon his arrival in England Hendrix formed the Jimi Hendrix Experience, with drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding (both white Englishmen), and by the end of 1966 was the hottest name in British music. The *New Musical Express* called him "a one-man guitar explosion," and *Melody Maker* put him on its cover in February of 1967, noting that the guitarist had "broken box office records up and down the country."[37]

From his London days the guitarist's race was a topic of endless fascination. *Melody Maker*'s first profile of Hendrix contained the following description:

> He possesses the aura of a man who has seen and been through a lot of life. His own started in Seattle, Washington, in 1945, and took off from there. Tenements, rats and cockroaches, poverty, colour prejudice, hitching around

[36] For basic biographical information on Hendrix I relied primarily on Charles Cross' *Room Full of Mirrors* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), David Henderson's *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky* (New York: Atria 1978 [2008]), and Charles Shaar Murray's *Crosstown Traffic.*

[37] Keith Altham, "New to the Charts: Wild Jimi Hendrix," *New Musical Express* 14 Jan. 1967, 26. "It's Jumping Jimi!" *Melody Maker* 4 Feb. 1967, 1.

> the South, the occasional gig. Eventually he joined a blues tour but was soon penniless again.[38]

Leaving aside that this description contains numerous inaccuracies (including the year of the singer's birth), it seeks to position Hendrix into the mythic lineage of premodern, itinerant bluesmen, and by extension the longstanding fantasy of threatening black authenticity described by Bryan Wagner above. Hendrix had surely paid his dues as an aspiring musician, but he'd grown up in the north, attended an integrated high school and served as a paratrooper in the U.S. military: in other words, he was hardly Robert Johnson.

Still, many British music fans held steadfast preconceptions of black musical authenticity, and Hendrix represented a physical encounter with an imagining of black music that was both powerful and problematic. In a 1968 interview Eric Clapton, a friend of Hendrix, remarked:

> When he first came to England, you know English people have a very big thing towards a spade. They really love that magic thing, the sexual thing. They all fall for that sort of thing. Everybody and his brother in England still sort of think that spades have big dicks. And Jimi came over and exploited that to the limit, the fucking tee. Everybody fell for it.[39]

While Clapton's language hasn't aged well, his sentiment speaks frankly to an entwinement of musical and racial imagination with which he himself was surely familiar. After years of British emulation of and fascination with black American music, the 1960s had seen an explosion of young British musicians onto the international musical scene: while the specific backgrounds and styles of these musicians varied widely, the vast majority were explicitly and profoundly indebted to African American musical traditions. Years after Hendrix's death, guitarist Pete Townshend of the Who told writer Charles Shaar Murray:

> … there was a tremendous sense of him choosing to play in the white arena, that he was coming along and saying, "You've taken this, Eric Clapton, and

[38] Nick Jones, "Hendrix—On the Crest of a Fave Rave," *Melody Maker* 21 Jan. 1967, 8,
[39] "Rolling Stone Interview: Eric Clapton," *Rolling Stone* 11 May 1968, 12.

> Mr. Townshend, you think you're a showman. This is how *we* do it. This is how we can do it when we take back what you've borrowed, if not stolen…" There was a real vengeance there.[40]

While it is entirely possible that Townshend is projecting some of his own confessed discomfort with Hendrix onto his interactions with the guitarist, this passage indicates the complex economy of exchange that these musicians found themselves operating within, and the precarious racial dynamics of that economy.

In England Hendrix's blackness became an unstable commodity, a marker of authenticity, desire, envy, and always difference, and the guitarist's race would become the topic of even more commentary and controversy upon his breakthrough into international stardom. The Jimi Hendrix Experience's performance at the Monterey Pop Festival—preserved in D.A. Pennebaker's documentary film of the concert, *Monterey Pop*—remains one of the most famous in the history of rock and roll. The set included an assortment of the guitarist's British hits as well as a litany of covers, including Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor," Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone." The most widely discussed number was a rendition of the Troggs' "Wild Thing," which closed the set and culminated in Hendrix smashing and setting fire to his guitar onstage after an extended solo of noise experimentation that even featured a playful quotation of Frank Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night."[41]

Hendrix's music was loud and virtuosic; while the guitar had long held obvious potential as a phallic symbol, Hendrix also seemed to knowingly play upon myths of black male sexual potency, a practice that produced a complex and occasionally tense relationship between the guitarist and his overwhelmingly white concert audiences. The *Washington Post* wrote that "[i]t is entirely necessary, in fact, that Hendrix is a Negro. His music is Chuck

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[40] Murray, 91.

[41] In 1986 Reprise Records released Hendrix's entire performance from Monterey on the album *Jimi Plays Monterey,* Reprise 25358, 1986, CD.

Berry filtered through the Beatles and the West Coast electronic freak-out, back through a black man to a 99 per cent white audience."[42] This was summarized more caustically by Richard Goldstein, who remarked in his writeup of Hendrix's Monterey performance, "his major asset seems to be his hue."[43]

Three years later feminist critic Germaine Greer elaborated on this dynamic in a an obituary for the guitarist, in which she described Hendrix's audience at the Isle of Wight Festival three weeks before he passed away:

> They wanted him to give head to the guitar and rub it over his cock. They didn't want to hear him play, but Jimi wanted, as he always wanted, to play it sweet and high. So he did it, and he fucked with his guitar, and they moaned and swayed about, and he looked at them heavily and knew that they couldn't hear what he was trying to do and they never would.[44]

Hendrix's race produced a crisis in popular music discourse. He was a mix of stereotype and subversion, seemingly playing to stereotypes of black menace and sexuality while performing in a musical style that counteracted contemporary expectations of black music-making. Indeed, it was not uncommon for white and black critics to accuse Hendrix of racial inauthenticity, even race treachery. After Monterey, Robert Christgau, then a young writer, wrote a scathing appraisal of Hendrix's performance in the pages of *Esquire*, describing Hendrix as "terrible" and accusing the guitarist of being a "just an Uncle Tom," adding that "[h]e had tailored a caricature to [the audience's] mythic standards and apparently didn't even overdo it a shade."[45]

The "Uncle Tom" accusation is startling for its vitriol, and because of Christgau's later fame as a longtime rock critic for the *Village Voice*, it has had a long and probably unfair

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[42] Jim Hoagland, "Jimi Hendrix Socks It To 'Em," *Washington Post* 11 March 1968, C12.
[43] Richard Goldstein, "Pop Eye: The Hip Homunculus," *Village Voice* 29 June 1967, 17.
[44] Germaine Greer, *The Madwoman's Underclothes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 41.
[45] Robert Christgau, "Anatomy of a Love Festival," *Esquire* Jan. 1970, 153; 154.

afterlife. In context, Christgau's critique is as much a response to the audience's reaction to Hendrix as it is to the guitarist himself, and Christgau was often highly critical of racial attitudes in the white rock counterculture; in fact, he spends a significant portion of this same article rightfully decrying the "paucity of Negro acts" at Monterey. Christgau was also by no means the only critic to make "Uncle Tom" statements about Hendrix in this period.[46] The *Washington Post* wrote that "Jimi Hendrix is the P.T. Barnum of rock. He assesses, and fills, the needs of his crowd. His blackness is an Uncle Tom blackness."[47] The same year *Rolling Stone* magazine eschewed the Uncle Tom epithet, but wondered to its readers if Hendrix was simply a "psychedelic superspade."[48]

These accusations contain several layers of attacks on Hendrix's authenticity. By playing to white audiences in a "white" style Hendrix was being inauthentically black; by calculatedly playing to his audience's fantasies he was being an inauthentic performer; by virtue of his race he was an inauthentic rock musician and merely a curiosity. It is impossible to conceive of an equivalent epithet to "psychedelic superspade" being applied to John Lennon or Jim Morrison during this period—its entire function is to mark racial difference. It is also difficult to imagine anyone calling Little Richard, Chuck Berry or countless other black rock and roll stars from an only slightly earlier era "Uncle Toms"; if anything their blackness was viewed as an integral essence of their music, evidenced by the infamous "Help Save the Youth of America – Don't Buy Negro Records" flyers distributed by White Citizens' Councils in the 1950s.[49]

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[46] Ibid., 147.
[47] Hoagland, C12.
[48] Tony Glover, "Electric Ladyland," *Rolling Stone* 9 Nov. 1968, 20.
[49] See Sacha Jenkins, Elliott Wilson, Chairman Jefferson Mao, Gabriel Alvarez and Brent Rollins, *Ego Trip's Big Book of Racism!* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 91.

What enabled such attacks against Hendrix was a discursive atmosphere in which the possibilities of black music and white music were increasingly circumscribed. African American writers and critics were also deeply ambivalent towards Hendrix, similarly preoccupied over his authenticity as a "black" artist. One of the earliest mentions of Hendrix in the African American media came in an article in the *Chicago Defender* that compared Hendrix to the Young Rascals (a white soul group) in making the argument that traditional race-based distinctions between white and black music no longer applied; while the article was positive towards Hendrix, the clear implication was that the white Rascals were making "black" music while the African American Hendrix was not.[50] Other black critics were far less charitable toward him. Writing in the *Washington Post*, African American columnist Hollie West complained of Hendrix's "watered down black sexual imagery" and "absurd mélange of electronic sound and guitar burnings."[51] In a 1968 interview LeRoi Jones seemed to suggest that Hendrix was calculatedly making music for a white market:

> As black people get more and more into themselves, they will likewise alienate those who once identified with them… the music that drips on to the open eyes of the white market will be constructed out of the need for the money that must be gotten: Eartha Kitt coming out against the war in front of the Whores of the East, or Jimi Hendrix getting a new set of teeth.[52]

For his own part, throughout his brief career Hendrix deflected attempts at categorization from all sides. He characterized his music in extraterrestrial, supernatural terms, telling *Melody Maker* in 1967 that "I want to write mythology stories set to music, based on a planetary thing and my imagination in general. It wouldn't be similar to classical music but I'd use strings and harps, with extreme and opposite musical textures."[53] In one memorable remark he told the *Los Angeles Times* that ""What I don't like is this business of

[50] Lee Ivory, "Among the Stars," *Chicago Defender* 21 Dec. 1967, 17.
[51] Hollie I. West, "Blacks and Whites and the Blues," *Washington Post* 22 June 1969, 131.
[52] Heywood Haut, "LeRoi Jones," *Rolling Stone* 11 May 1968, 18.
[53] B.P. Fallon, "Jimi Hendrix—The Pop Sound of the Year," *Melody Maker* 23 Dec. 1967, 14.

trying to classify people… It's like shooting at a flying saucer as it tries to land without giving the occupants a chance to identify themselves."[54]

The Jimi Hendrix Experience's first album, *Are You Experienced?*, released in August of 1967, was a psychedelic landmark: tracks such as "Purple Haze," "May This Be Love" and "The Wind Cries Mary" linked the opaque lyrical style of Bob Dylan to a musical experimentalism that chased after noisy futurism, cutting-edge studio trickery, and remarkable guitar virtuosity.[55] His second album, *Axis: Bold As Love,* found the guitarist embracing quieter and more lyrical styles on tracks such as "Little Wing," "Wait Until Tomorrow" and "Castles Made of Sand," each of which bore the strong influence of R&B star Curtis Mayfield, particularly in terms of their guitar work.[56]

By the time of the Experience's third album, a double LP entitled *Electric Ladyland* and released in October of 1968, Hendrix was moving in still new directions.[57] While officially credited to the Jimi Hendrix Experience, large portions of *Electric Ladyland* featured guest artists, or simply Hendrix overdubbing parts himself. The album opened with a one-minute-and-twenty-second introduction, cryptically titled "… And the Gods Made Love," then burst into its sumptuous title track, "Have You Ever Been (to Electric Ladyland)." The album boasted crisp rhythm and blues ("Crosstown Traffic," "Long Hot Summer Night"), dreamy psychedelic pop ("Burning of the Midnight Lamp"), and a cover of Earl King's New Orleans standard "Come On (Let the Good Times Roll)."

Electric Ladyland also contained an air of violence and ominousness that was stronger and starker than his first two "psychedelic" albums. Perhaps the two most striking tracks in this regard, and arguably the two most memorable tracks on the album in general, came at

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[54] Ritchie York, "'I'm Into Different Things,' Says Jimi Hendrix," *Los Angeles Times* 7 Sept. 1969, Q20.
[55] The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Are You Experienced?*, Reprise 6261, 1967, 33rpm.
[56] The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Axis: Bold as Love,* Reprise 6281, 1968, 33rpm.
[57] The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Electric Ladyland*, Reprise 6307, 1968, 33rpm.

the LP's end, a cover of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" that became a hit in the summer of 1968, and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," a ravaging sprawl of blues-infused mayhem.

Described by critic John Morthland as "galactic Muddy Waters," the verse structure of "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" is twelve bars long and resembles a classic twelve-bar blues, with a strophic, A-A-B lyrical scheme.[58] "Well I stand up next to a mountain / chop it down, with the edge of my hand," is the first line of the opening verse, then repeated its melody doubled on guitar; "Well I'll pick up all the pieces and make an island / might even raise a little sand" is its rejoinder. Harmonically, the verse hangs on the tonic chord for eight bars, then moves to a standard V-IV turnaround in the ninth and tenth bars, followed by two more bars of I. The song's chorus is only four bars long and comes on the heels of each twelve-bar verse, with Hendrix singing "Well, I'm a voodoo child / Lord knows I'm a voodoo child" over an ascending bVI-bVII-I progression.

"Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" is a tour de force of guitar playing, and Hendrix's instrument effectively dominates the track. The album's stereo mix makes the sound of Hendrix's guitar swoop between channels, savage and snarling, saturating sonic space. The instrument itself becomes an intricate tapestry of sound: we can hear the bending of strings, the attack of his pick, the pop and hiss of the pickups. "Voodoo Child" also plays with the blues tradition in deep and evocative ways, both in terms of both form and its lyrics. "Raise a little sand" is a slang expression that connotes dancing, and is just one example of a number of blues idioms found in the song. The lyrical content of "Voodoo Child" is distinctly tumultuous, even apocalyptic, down to the song's final line, "I don't need you know more in this world / I'll meet you on the next one, so don't be late."

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[58] John Morthland, "Jimi Hendrix," in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, eds. Anthony DeCurtis, James Henke and Holly George-Warren (New York: Random House, 1992), 415.

Since Hendrix's emergence, violence had been a recurring fixation in discussions of his music. In its review of *Are You Experienced? The New York Times* described the album as ""a serious nightmare show, with genuine lust and misery."[59] Reporting from Monterey for the *Voice*, Richard Goldstein had characterized Hendrix's performance as "a strange moment for the love generation, aroused by all that violent sexuality into a mesmerized ovation."[60] The *Los Angeles Times* wrote that "[h]is appearance, with wildly backcombed hair and a fantastically colored wardrobe of embroidered satin gear, is violent and his guitar-smashing, musically-crashing act is even more violent."[61] The *Washington Post* described Hendrix as "more evil than Elvis ever dreamed of being," and the *Chicago Tribune* wrote that Hendrix's music "lets you know there is a war in Viet Nam and there will be more big city riots next summer… there are things like sex and drugs and violence which people are afraid to talk about but maybe should."[62]

"Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" took this to new levels, both lyrically and musically: the world-destroying imagery, the pounding drums, the overdriven distortion, the swaying, thrashing Fender Stratocaster. In fact, the mood of violence is established before the song even begins, during its famous introduction. The track opens with Hendrix employing a pick-scratching technique to his guitar strings—rhythmically running his pick across the strings with his left hand while using his right to mute the fretboard (Hendrix was left-handed), almost like one would play a washboard, so that conventional tones are not produced—then playing a two-bar, minor-pentatonic riff on a guitar run through a wah-wah pedal. Hendrix plays the riff four times in total, with a pounding kick-drum complementing

[59] Tom Phillips, "A Genuine Nightmare," *New York Times* 12 Nov. 1967, 160.
[60] Richard Goldstein, "Pop Eye: The Hip Homunculus," *Village Voice* 29 June 1967, 17.
[61] Joan Deppa, "British Pop Grows to Stupefying Bang," *Los Angeles Times* 11 Nov. 1967,17.
[62] Hoagland, C12; Robb Baker, "The Shattering Hendrix Experience," 26 Feb. 1968, B12.

him on the last two iterations, until the track bursts open into a sprawl of distorted guitar, bass, and drums.

While it's impossible to know who the first guitar player was to rhythmically scratch a pick across strings while muting a fretboard, for Hendrix's purposes it's likely that his most immediate influence for the technique was Jimmy Nolen, guitarist in James Brown's band, who employed the technique—often referred to in his use as the "chicken scratch"—on many of Brown's mid-to-late 1960s recordings, including "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," "Cold Sweat" and "Sex Machine," tracks widely credited with laying the foundations for funk music.[63]

Jimmy Nolen used the "chicken scratch" primarily as a rhythm guitar technique; when Hendrix brought the device to his music, it was more often a sort of flourish or recurring trope, one that I would argue often signified violence. The most direct example of this is "Machine Gun," which will be discussed shortly and in which the scratching is actually used to aurally imitate the sound of a weapon, but the effect can also be heard in Hendrix's cover of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," the track that precedes "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" on *Electric Ladyland* and which became Hendrix's biggest hit in the United States, reaching the Top 20 on the *Billboard* Pop Charts in fall of 1968.[64]

At the level of both musical style and recording technique "All Along the Watchtower" shares little in common with "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)." "Watchtower" is centered around a two-bar, three-chord vamp that repeats throughout the song and boasts a driving performance on drums by Mitch Mitchell.[65] "Watchtower" is lushly ornate in its sonic palette, with layers upon layers of guitar, acoustic and electric, and a dancing, highly

[63] Nolen's "chicken scratch" innovation has been widely acknowledged, and is referenced in Michael Veal's *Fela: The Life & Times of an African Musical Icon* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000), 269.
[64] "All Along the Watchtower" was released as a 45RPM single in 1968, Reprise 0767.
[65] The chord structure is Im – bVII | bVI – bVII

melodic bass line played by Hendrix himself. As opposed to the electric tumult and bombast of "Voodoo Child," Hendrix's guitar playing here is carefully lyrical, full of fills and flourishes, the song's various solo sections a dazzling array of textures and techniques, from reverb-drenched slide guitar to trembling wah-wah passages to screaming Stratocaster runs.

The lyrical content of "Watchtower" is all ominous portent, its text a litany of cryptic Dylanisms: "'There must be some kind of way out of here,' / said the joker to the thief," is the song's opening couplet, its language evoking both general paranoia and the Animals' 1965 hit "We Gotta Get Out of This Place." Hendrix claimed that hearing Dylan's voice was what convinced him that he could sing in public—indeed, the influence of Dylan on Hendrix's vocal style is remarkable—and in addition to "Watchtower" Hendrix was also known to cover Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" in live shows (most famously at the Monterey Pop Festival), and in 2010 a recording surfaced of the Hendrix playing a demo version of Dylan's "Tears of Rage," the opening track on the Band's 1968 debut, *Music From Big Pink*.[66]

Dylan's original version of "Watchtower" is spare and hauntingly ambiguous; Hendrix takes the text's latent dread and explodes it.[67] As musicologist Albin Zak has written, "Dylan's arrangement imparts an air of detachment, while Hendrix, in deepening the musical problem both sonically and syntactically, situates himself firmly at the center of the song."[68] Again, I would add to this that a crucial device in accomplishing this effect is the same scratching technique heard in the beginning of "Voodoo Child," which is here performed on an overdriven twelve-string acoustic guitar: the sound is first heard in between

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[66] This recording can be heard on the 2010 Sony compilation *West Coast Seattle Boy: The Jimi Hendrix Anthology* (Legacy 76297, CD). Dylan's influence on Hendrix's singing is discussed in Steven Roby and Brad Schreiber's *Becoming Jimi Hendrix* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2010), 152.

[67] Dylan's version of "All Along The Watchtower" can be heard on Bob Dylan, *John Wesley Harding*, Columbia 2804, 1968, 33rpm.

[68] Albin Zak, "Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix: Juxtaposition and Transformation in 'All Along the Watchtower,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57:3 (Fall 2004), 600-601.

the lines "there's too much confusion / I can't get no relief" during the first verse, then throughout the song, always in short, staccato bursts; Hendrix also employs the technique on the electric guitar, in the fourth chorus of his extended guitar solo in between the song's second and third verses. Again we hear the scratching technique employed as a marker of violence and turmoil. Such moments abound in "Watchtower," perhaps most notably following the song's final line—"two riders were approaching / and the wind began to howl"—when Hendrix plays an ascending tremolo guitar line that resembles nothing more than howling wind itself, a variation on the classical music technique of "word painting."

Electric Ladyland was the final studio album that Hendrix would see released in his lifetime. For all of Hendrix's fame as a live performer, "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" and "All Along the Watchtower" are extraordinary displays of recording technique and studio invention. As Steve Waksman has argued, the recording studio was "a sonic sanctuary where Hendrix could escape the burdens of performing according to a set of expectations that he had helped to foster and yet had no ability to manage, expectations that came with the position of being a black hipster artist playing amidst the predominantly white counterculture of the late 1960s."[69] In a sense, the recording studio was the only location where Hendrix's race was rendered invisible, and he was free to explore sound entirely on its own terms. "Voodoo Child" and "Watchtower" exemplify these explorations, and also demonstrate that Hendrix's sonic explorations were growing increasingly violent.

1969 was a year of transition for Hendrix; early in the year he replaced Noel Redding, bass player in the Experience, with Billy Cox, an African American rhythm and blues player who was a friend of the guitarist's from his army days. Hendrix became more reclusive, spending extensive amounts of time with blues and jazz musicians at a rented

[69] Steve Waksman, "Black Sound, Black Body: Jimi Hendrix, the Electric Guitar, and Musical Blackness," *Popular Music and Society* 23:1 (Spring 1999), 76.

mansion in upstate New York. He was clearly searching for new musical directions, and in interviews spoke of his ambitions for "electric sky church music," or a "sky church sort of thing."[70]

Attendant to these shifting musical and professional ambitions was an increased interest in reaching out to the African American community. Hendrix's popularity among black listeners—or lack thereof—has long been a subject of controversy, and Hendrix received far more coverage in the mainstream white press and more airplay on white radio stations than he did in the African American press or on black radio stations. He never appeared on the *Billboard* R&B charts, although this may have had more to do with *Billboard*'s charting practices than actual sales: as Charles Shaar Murray notes, the fact that Hendrix's music first appeared on the "Pop" charts made it unlikely that *Billboard* would consider tracking his music in terms of R&B numbers.[71] Greg Tate has a less sanguine view of the situation, writing that "[a] profound irony of Hendrix's career is that even after shredding racial shibboleths by the dozens he discovered a gate at the country's color-obsessed edge he was not able to bust wide… the gate that has kept Black people from embracing him as one of their own to this day."[72]

As 1969 wore on, Hendrix seemed to be exploring new and more explicit racial politics in both his musical practice and his personal dealings. He was increasingly drawn to the Black Power movement, and had even begun introducing "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" as the "Black Panthers' national anthem" during live performances.[73] In September 1969 Hendrix played a benefit for the United Block Association in Harlem; in its coverage of the event, the *New York Amsterdam News* (an African American publication) pointedly noted

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[70] "Jimi Hendrix Has a Brand New Bass," *Rolling Stone* 12 July 1969, 10.
[71] Murray, 82.
[72] Tate, 11.
[73] This introduction can be heard on Jimi Hendrix, *Live at the Fillmore East,* MCA 11931, 1999, CD.

that "[m]any people in the black community are unaware of Hendrix as being an entertainer," although the 2,000 audience members that the newspaper reported in attendance suggest otherwise.[74]

That said, Hendrix still remained steadfastly resistant to allowing racial concerns and politics to determine his creative output. At the Harlem UBA benefit he told an interviewer: "Sometimes when I come here people say, 'he plays white rock for white people. What's he doing up here?' Well, I want to show them that music is universal—that there is no white rock or black rock."[75] Asked by *Rolling Stone* about rumors that he was exploring the idea of starting an "all-black recording enterprise," Hendrix dismissed the idea, describing it as "like being Catholic or something," a remark that suggests a view of race as an entirely ideological proposition, to be accepted or rejected, believed or disbelieved.[76]

On December 31, 1969 and January 1, 1970, Hendrix, Cox, and drummer Buddy Miles united to play four shows over two nights at New York City's Fillmore East, under the name "Band of Gypsys." The shows were recorded, and March of 1970 the album *Band of Gypsys* was released on Capitol Records.[77] The six-song album featured five compositions written by Hendrix and one by Buddy Miles, and the performances were long, loose, and jam-heavy.

Band of Gypsys was the only band that Hendrix ever fronted that featured an all-black lineup, and some have argued that Hendrix's manager Mike Jeffery was against the project for fears the band's racial makeup would alienate white audiences.[78] The group ended up playing together for less than a month, their final show a disastrous benefit concert

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[74] William K. De Fossett Jr., "Jimi Hendrix at UBA Block Party," *New York Amsterdam News,* 13 Sept. 1969, 1.
[75] "Jimi Hendrix Sings at Harlem Benefit," *New York Times* 6 Sept. 1969, 18.
[76] John Burks, "Hendrix: The End of a Beginning Maybe," *Rolling Stone* 19 March 1970, 40.
[77] Jimi Hendrix, *Band of Gypsys,* Capitol 472, 1970, 33rpm.
[78] Murray, 54.

for the Vietnam Moratorium Committee at Madison Square Garden in which Hendrix, allegedly under the influence of bad acid, got in a verbal altercation with an audience member and left the stage after two aborted songs.[79] Miles was fired after the late-January benefit, and shortly thereafter Hendrix rehired Mitch Mitchell, with whom he would play, alongside Billy Cox, until the end of his life.

Band of Gypsys is the only authorized live recording released of Hendrix during his lifetime, and is probably best known for its second track, a twelve-minute opus entitled "Machine Gun." "Machine Gun" is a searing meditation on violence and war, a sprawling piece of music that features some of the most inventive guitar work of Hendrix's recorded catalogue. The track opens with the following spoken introduction by Hendrix:

> Happy New Year, first of all. I hope we have about a million or two million more of them. If we can get over this summer. We'd like to dedicate this one to—it's such a draggy scene that's going on, all the soldiers that are fighting in Chicago, and Milwaukee, and New York. Oh yes, and all the soldiers fighting in Vietnam. I'd like to do a thing called "Machine Gun."

Hendrix then begins playing his guitar, alone, four bars of wah-wah blues guitar. At the beginning of the fifth bar he returns to the pick-scratching technique heard at the beginning of "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" and throughout "All Along the Watchtower," and the rapid-fire sixteenth notes are clearly imitative of a machine gun. After four more bars the drums come in, playing the same rhythmic device, and the effect is unmistakable, Hendrix using his instrument and band to create direct invocation of war through music.

"Machine Gun" is essentially a modal piece of music: the song is in D dorian, and contains no real chord changes to speak of. The lyrical text is sparse and almost impressionistic—"Machine gun, tearing my body all apart" is the song's first line, repeated twice, then "Evil man make me kill you / Evil man make you kill me / Evil man make me

[79] An account of this incident can be found in Henderson, 346-347.

kill you / Even though we're only families apart." Hendrix doubles his vocal melody on the guitar, obscuring the lyrics, which are pointedly vague, occasional references to "farmers" and "bombs" suggesting Vietnam while the "only families apart" sentiment implies something domestic.

At the time of *Band of Gypsys* much had already been written of Hendrix's famous rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in the early morning hours of the Woodstock Music & Art Festival in 1969, a performance that found the guitarist radically re-imagining America's most famous song at one of the most iconic events of the decade.[80] Al Aronowitz gushed in the *New York Post* that the performance was "the single greatest moment of the sixties," and in the years since Greil Marcus has called the performance "the greatest protest song of all time."[81] Hendrix's rendition of the national anthem is difficult to pin down, though: for all of the speculation that the quoting of "Taps" near the song's end suggests that it is a statement about Vietnam, Hendrix biographer Charles Cross points out that Hendrix himself never said that it was, and a few weeks later Hendrix even suggested that the performance may have been given in the spirit of patriotism: "We're all Americans… it was like, 'Go America!'"[82] Hendrix's "Star-Spangled Banner" is a deeply ambiguous statement, arguably as much musical experiment as a clear statement of protest: after all, only a few years earlier Hendrix had himself served in the U.S. military.

"Machine Gun" shares some commonalities to "The Star-Spangled Banner"—again, Hendrix uses the song as a free-form sonic canvas—but "Machine Gun" is a far more explicit and darker meditation on violence, war, and its relation to human kinship. One of

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[80] Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner" can be heard on Jimi Hendrix, *Live at Woodstock*, Experience Hendrix 11987, 1999, CD.
[81] Aronowitz qtd. in Cross, 271. Greil Marcus, *Bob Dylan by Greil Marcus: Writings 1968-2010* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 419.
[82] Cross, 271.

the most interesting facets of the song's lyric text is its preoccupation with technology: "I pick up my axe and fight like a farmer… and your bullets keep knocking me down," sings Hendrix, a metaphor rooted in a vision of a world upended by progress, and that carries a knowing nod to the weaponized potential of Hendrix's own instrument ("axe" being a common slang word for guitar). This conceit is striking when one considers the degree to which Hendrix himself was preoccupied with technology, with regards to the studio techniques discussed above, but also simply his own instrument: the very pick-scratching technique, crackling through Hendrix's Marshall amplifier in imitation of the song's title, is a product of modern technology, another way in which Hendrix's guitar and the gun become one and the same.

By the dawn of 1970 Hendrix seemed to be unraveling: firing his band, then firing his new band, striving creatively but frustrated by the confinements thrust upon him. The musician who had long spoken of music in the terms of limitless potential seemed increasingly torn in different directions, artistically, politically, racially. Before the Band of Gypsys shows Hendrix had confessed a desire "to get back to the blues, because that's what I am," an uncharacteristic statement from a musician who tended to speak solely in terms of progress, normally loathe to present his own music as being a "return" to anything.[83] "Machine Gun" can be heard as a sort of undoing, its seriousness and gravity tinged with ambivalence, a man who imagined music as a world-changing force surveying a world of violence seemingly inured to correction.

Less than ten months after the New Year's shows at the Fillmore East Hendrix was dead, a victim of an overdose of sleeping pills at the London flat of his German girlfriend, Monika Danneman. His death was, unsurprisingly, the cause of controversy. Aside from

[83] Ibid., 289.

rampant speculation of suicide, Hendrix's overdose fueled a moral panic over drugs in rock music that was further stoked by Janis Joplin's fatal overdose two weeks later.[84] As in life, coverage of Hendrix's death fixated upon his race, even the suicide speculation. In a story detailing Danneman's insistence at the inquest that Hendrix had not seemed depressed on the eve of his overdose, the African American *Philadelphia Tribune* chose to run the headline, "Black Rock Singer Died Happy Man, Blond Moans."[85]

Most notable of all was the frankness with which his race was discussed as an aberration and curiosity. The *Los Angeles Times* called him "the first black sex symbol in rock music for white America," while the *Philadelphia Tribune* described him as "a kind of black sex symbol to thousands of female fans."[86] Most pointedly, the *Boston Globe* described Hendrix as "a black man in the alien world of rock."[87] Hendrix had embodied the interracial possibilities of 1960s music as much as any other musician; a black man who'd trained on the rhythm and blues circuit, then moved to England to play psychedelic rock with white musicians, then returned to America where he played with racially mixed bands, and yet in death he was rendered an outsider.

Hendrix's performance of the national anthem at Woodstock fits conveniently with any number of mythologies: the one-to-one relationship between sixties music and political action; the tragic artist issuing a paean and provocation to his country amidst a time of upheaval; the notion of Woodstock as an interracial utopia of art and free expression. The violent ambivalence of "Machine Gun," on the other hand, recorded less than four months

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[84] Shortly before Hendrix's death Vice President Spiro Agnew had suggested that American youth were being "brainwashed" by the "drug culture" of rock music, even singling out specific songs for condemnation. Robert Hilburn, "Death Poses 'Drug Culture' Question," *Los Angeles Times* 19 Sept. 1970, B6.
[85] "Black Rock Singer Died Happy Man, Blond Moans," *Philadelphia Tribune* 29 Sept. 1970, 1.
[86] Robert Hilburn, "Jimi Hendrix: Quality Made Him 'Something Else,'" *Los Angeles Times* 4 Oct. 1970, Q1; "Jimi Hendrix's Ascent to 'Sex God' Began in Phila.," *Philadelphia Tribune* 22 Sept. 1970, 1.
[87] Ernie Santosuosso, "Epitaph for Jimi Hendrix," *Boston Globe* 19 Sept. 1970, 10.

later, may be more instructive in considering an artist whose preoccupations with violence foreshadowed his own self-destruction. Hendrix's flirtations with musical violence, from "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" to "All Along the Watchtower" to "Machine Gun," can be heard as the sound of gathering desperation from an artist raging against a musical landscape that was denying him the potential of existence.

A month before the Fillmore East show that kicked off the brief career of Hendrix's Band of Gypsys, Hendrix had attended a Rolling Stones concert at Madison Square Garden on November 27, his twenty-seventh birthday.[88] Hendrix played around with Stones guitarist Keith Richards backstage, then watched the show from behind one of Richards' amps. He never joined the Stones onstage, probably to the audience's disappointment—his presence was visible—but the encounter is fitting, as no other rock and roll band in this period held a fixation with violence similar to Hendrix as the Stones, and no other shared a more complicated relationship to the strange intermingling of musical practice and racial imagination.

Both Hendrix and the Stones were committed to a version of rock and roll as an interracial music but came to this through extraordinarily different directions, Hendrix a black American who'd gone to London to achieve rock and roll stardom, the Stones white Englishmen obsessed with American music who received their breakthrough by achieving success in America. The remainder of this chapter examines the peculiar history of the Rolling Stones, a band whose legacy in rock and roll music has no real comparison, and whose fixations on violence in this period reached creative heights similar to Hendrix during this period, and similarly troubling ends.

Just a Shot Away: The Rolling Stones, Race and Violence

[88] Henderson, 329.

One of the many ironies of the Rolling Stones is that a band which has, at the time of this writing, existed for fifty years, never set out to be a rock and roll band at all. As described in the second chapter of this dissertation, the Rolling Stones were born from the strange subcultural cauldron of British blues, an ersatz folk revival in which young British men developed obsessive relationships with African American music and the mystical doorway to personal authenticity and escape from post-War British whiteness that it provided. As previously noted, one of the earliest profiles of the Rolling Stones, in the *New Musical Express*, provided the following characterization: "They are, they claim, first and foremost a rhythm-and-blues group. If you refer to them as a beat outfit, they frown. If you venture to suggest that they play rock 'n' roll, they positively glower."[89]

British blues had a relationship with black music that was deeply reverent but also fetishistic, the music's content often inseparable from its perceived danger and subversive liminality. As Adam Gussow has argued, the Southern blues tradition that the Rolling Stones and other British musicians so studiously absorbed is itself plagued by violence, both in its content and its broader relation to structures of racial terror in the American South.[90] Following this, the fantasy of the blues singer's "threatening" authenticity, as identified by Bryan Wagner, took on uniquely powerful imaginative dimensions in British blues, a sphere in which actual black bodies were often absent. As I will soon show, discourse surrounding the Rolling Stones themselves was frequently tinged with the language of racial threat.,

The Rolling Stones' relationship to black music, and race itself, is among the most complex of any white artists in the history of rock and roll, and over the years the band has weathered charges of minstrelsy from Black Arts Movement poets to white academics

[89] Chris Williams, "Rolling Stones R and B Champs," *New Musical Express* 23 Aug. 1963, 8.
[90] Adam Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

alike.[91] Over the years Elvis Presley may have inspired more controversy but the singer himself was mostly reluctant to speak on issues of race; Janis Joplin was more outspoken than Presley, but her career and influence were considerably less expansive than that of the Stones. From the very beginning of their careers in England the Stones were linked to African American music, both through the imaginative work of journalists and the band's own self-presentation. The group unfailingly went out of its way to name-drop its influences: Mick Jagger told *Melody Maker* in early 1964, "[w]e have always favoured the music of what we consider the R&B greats—Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, and so on—and we would like to think that we are helping to give the fans of these artists what they want," and in a fan profile the band listed its favorite artists as Reed, Waters, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, and John Lee Hooker.[92]

The Rolling Stones also never took their own success for granted as evidence of racial neutrality, and openly expressed frustration that their own performances of rhythm and blues were more popular among their countrymen than the original versions they revered.[93] Perhaps the most pointed of these remarks came in an article written "by" the Stones for *Melody Maker* in 1964*,* when Jagger acknowledged that "it's the system that's sometimes wrong. Girl fans, particularly, would rather have a copy by a British group than the original American version—mainly, I suppose, because they like the British blokes' faces."[94] Sexism aside, the suggestion that the fans "like the British blokes' faces" strongly

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[91] LeRoi Jones, Martin Williams and John Szwed are three prominent writers who have accused the Rolling Stones (and particularly Jagger) of minstrelsy. See Jones, *Black Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 205-206, Williams, *Jazz Heritage* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 94-95 and Szwed, "Race and the Embodiment of Culture," *Ethnicity* 2.1 (1975), 27.
[92] "The Pursuers: The Big Beat Boys Chart-Chasing the Beatles," *Melody Maker* 11 Jan. 1964, 8-9.
[93] Upon the release of the band's first album Jagger remarked: "[t]o those who listen to groups like ours, and think we are originators, we say—don't listen to us. Listen to the men who inspire us. Buy their records."Ray Coleman, "The Pop Heroes," *Melody Maker* 2 May 1964, 3.
[94] "We're Not On the Wagon," *Melody Maker* 21 March 1964, 3.

suggests that singer recognized that the Stones' skin color had given them an undue advantage among audiences.

The Rolling Stones, particularly early on, were many things—controversial, musically erratic, image-obsessed—but they rarely avoided topics of race or its salience to commercial success. This may partially explain an underacknowledged aspect of the early career of the Rolling Stones, namely the enthusiasm with which the band was received in the African American press. In 1964 the *Los Angeles Sentinel* called the group "wonderful" and wrote that "each [member] has enough talent to take him well beyond the capabilities of the group."[95] A column in the *Chicago Defender* wrote that "the Stones are worth everyone's attention. Many of us are ardent R&B followers and believe me, the Stones are no less ardent. They love and feel this music and if the money was taken away, you would still find them playing and singing R&B… the Stones are R&B men in the truest sense."[96] And in October 1965, the same paper printed an interview with Muddy Waters in which Waters said, "The Rolling Stones, sure I dig them, they're a part of me…. Those boys jam." The *Defender* then quipped, "The man has spoken. Take a bow Stones."[97]

Such notices are more remarkable in light of the fact that a large portion of white press attention directed at the band was scathing, although much of this was orchestrated by the group's manager, Andrew Loog Oldham.[98] In February of 1964 the Rolling Stones released their third single, a cover of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away;" the single reached #3 on the U.K. singles charts and turned the group into full-fledged stars.[99] That month also marked the first time that a writer named Ray Coleman profiled the band for *Melody Maker*,

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[95] Maydiea Cole, "Star-Studded TAMI Rock 'n' Roll Show Thrills Teens," *Los Angeles Sentinel* 5 Nov. 1964, C10.
[96] Terry, Penny, Pip, Brandy and Tee, "The Low Down," *Chicago Defender* 12 June 1965, 30.
[97] Pip, Brandi, Penni, Terry Joe, "The Low Down," *Chicago Defender* 16 Oct. 1965, 28.
[98] See Steve Jones, *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2002), 46.
[99] "Not Fade Away" also reached #48 on the US charts. The Rolling Stones, "Not Fade Away," London 9657, 1964, 45rpm.

and over the coming months no journalist would wield more influence in shaping the media discourse surrounding the band.

Coleman's stories emphasized public revulsion at the Rolling Stones. In his first profile, published in the February 8, 1964 issue, Coleman wrote of an anonymous taxi driver who "loathed the Rolling Stones. Like certain others he considers them downright scruffy, hairy horrors."[100] In the interview portion of the story the band actually protests its own image, but Coleman disregards this, writing that, "[a]lthough they deny it, the truth is that they are angry young rebels who scorn conformity." The article closed with a description of the Stones leaving the restaurant where the interview had taken place: "People eating lunch looked up, aghast at such a sight."

Coleman's coverage of the band in this period was marked by such a tone, sympathetic toward the band while loudly insisting that polite British society loathed them. In March of 1964 *Melody Maker* announced the band's forthcoming American tour with a screaming front page headline: "Stones for States! Group Parents Hate Makes Big Hit." The same issue featured an article by Coleman that opened thusly: "What is your conception of the five far-out figures who make up the Rolling Stones? Nice boys—or ugly cave men? Do you wake in the middle of the night screaming with horror at the faces that stared at you from the TV screen a few hours earlier?"[101]

The most notorious piece of *Melody Maker* Stones coverage came in the March 14, 1964 issue, another piece by Coleman that was adorned with the instantly-memorable headline, "Would You Let Your Sister Go Out With a Rolling Stone?" The piece itself was fairly tame, and as usual, each attempt at generating controversy was vague and

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[100] Ray Coleman, "Rebels With a Beat!," *Melody Maker* 6 Feb. 1964, 10-11.
[101] Ray Coleman, "Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones Asks… Why Do Parents Hate Us?" *Melody Maker* 7 Mar. 1964, 9.

undersourced: a claim that "elders groan with horror at the Rolling Stones;" allegations of a letter from an unnamed fan who claimed her parents had barred her from attending a Stones concert.[102] The "Would You Let Your…" headline would become iconic, though, appearing in various iterations in both the American and British press.[103]

The scandal-driven discourse followed the band to the United States. When the Stones arrived in the United States in June of 1964 for their first American tour, the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: "Thank you, Rolling Stones. You have been able to convince the world that no one, not even the Beatles, could be more repulsive than you."[104] A column in the *Evening Standard* entitled "But Would You Let Your Daughter Marry One?" (a clear reference to the *Melody Maker* headline) declared that "Never have middle-class virtues… been so lacking as they are in the Rolling Stones."[105]

Huge swaths of American coverage focused on their physical appearance, particularly their hair. The *Tribune* ran a story about a barber attempting to forcibly give the band a haircut: "The visit of the Rolling Stones, who say they are singers, ended abruptly yesterday on North Michigan avenue. A barber came along… All wear tight trousers and haggard looks. All of them slouch. Each look unkempt."[106] The *New York Times* ran two lengthy articles on "angdrogynous" hairstyles and reported that the city of Cleveland would soon prohibit rock and roll performances at that city's Public Hall: "The ban goes into effect after tonight's Public Hall appearance of the Rolling Stones, another group of shaggy-haired

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[102] Ray Coleman, "Would You Let Your Sister Go With a Rolling Stone," *Melody Maker* 14 Mar. 1964, 8-9.
[103] The proliferation of this headline is well-documented. See James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 146.
[104] Martha Olson, "Beatles Surpassed," *Chicago Tribune* 29 Jun. 1964, 14.
[105] Qtd. in Paytress, 48.
[106] Louise Hutchinson, "Barber Gives Scare to Five Fuzzy Singers," *Chicago Tribune* 12 June 1964, 20.

English singers."[107] The *Los Angeles Times* compared the Rolling Stones to cavemen, chimpanzees and "very ugly Radcliffe girls."[108]

The most notable aspect of all of the negative attention paid to the Rolling Stones by the American and British white mainstream presses is the degree to which it traffics in the language and imagery of racist fear-mongering. The obsessions with physical appearance, the dehumanizing comparisons to Neanderthals and animals, the phobic moralism (the Cleveland ban cited destructive effects on "the community's culture"), the miscegenation implications distinctly embedded in the headlines about sisters and daughters: all of these were ways of marking the Stones' appearance and foreign origin as indices of moral degeneracy and social danger. This is not to suggest that the Rolling Stones were rendered as *black,* but rather that they but they were rendered something *other than properly white,* which to some readerships may have been more frightening.

In England this took root in the band's identification with a British blues subculture, but when this traveled over to America it came incompletely and piecemeal: the Stones were seen as curiously obsessed with black American music and culture to degrees most American youths were not, and this in turn was met by moral conservatism and xenophobia. The Beatles had encountered hostility in some corners but the Stones were seen as something far more dangerous. "Rolling Stones Lacking in Beatle-like Finesse," declared the *Washington Post* in 1965, then went on to describe the band as "morbid and pathetic," even rendering Mick Jagger's speech in dialect.[109]

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[107] Gloria Emerson, "British 'His and Her' Haircuts Blur 'Him-Her' Line," *New York Times* 23 July 1964, 29; Andrew Carthew, "Shaggy Englishmen Story," *New York Times* 6 Sept. 1964, SM18, "Cleveland to Bar Beatles and the Like In Public Hall," *New York Times* 4 Nov. 1964, 46.
[108] Bill Whitworth, "After the Beatles Came the Deluge," *Los Angeles Times* 6 Dec. 1964, 26.
[109] Paul Richard, "Rolling Stones Lacking in Beatle-Like Finesse," *Washington Post* 14 Nov. 1965, B3.

When the Stones became more successful this continued to cling to them, but continued exposure and their own creative development caused certain aspects to change. As the band shifted away from playing covers to playing mostly original material, the Rolling Stones' transgressive image and the content of their music grew increasingly intertwined. "Satisfaction" and "Let's Spend the Night Together" were censored or banned from radio; songs like "Get off of My Cloud," "Nineteenth Nervous Breakdown" and "Paint It, Black" were anthems of non-conformity; "Mother's Little Helper" was one of the earliest rock and roll songs about substance abuse. The group was constantly on the defensive against charges of moral corruption, and even when they protested coverage was often slanted against them. In early 1967 Jagger told the *Chicago Tribune* that "I'm not leading the revolt. If the family unit is breaking down, if there is more illegitimacy around, parents might consider where they went wrong instead of blaming their children—or the lyrics of pop songs." In typically sensationalizing fashion, the headline of the story read simply, "Singer Puts Blame On Parents."[110]

The Redlands drug bust of February 1967 only exacerbated the band's image, and when both Jagger and Richards were convicted in June of 1967—the former receiving three months in prison, the latter a year—there were protests on both sides of the Atlantic, including a famous editorial from William Rees-Mogg, editor of the London *Times*, entitled "Who Breaks a Butterfly On a Wheel?"[111] By the end of July, Richards' sentence had been overturned on appeal, and Jagger's changed to a conditional discharge.

Still, the Redlands affair further linked the Rolling Stones to hedonism and degeneracy. This lingering turmoil coupled with the psychedelic disaster of *Their Satanic Majesties Request* made the band's re-emergence with "Jumpin' Jack Flash" in the spring of

[110] Robert Musel, "Singer Puts Blame on Parents," *Chicago Tribune* 29 Jan. 1967, A4.
[111] "Who Breaks a Butterfly On a Wheel?" *London Times* 1 July 1967, 11.

1968 even more surprising. "Jumpin' Jack Flash" not only righted the band commercially, it pointed a new musical direction driven in large part by Keith Richards' increased reliance on open guitar tunings. Open tunings allowed more facility in the creation of chordal riffs, particularly harmonic movements in fourths, enabled simply by repositioning two fingers against a barred chord.[112] The transition effectively allowed Richards to re-purpose the rhythm guitar as a lead instrument, with loud, clattering chords such as those heard at the beginning of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" suddenly becoming the instrumental centerpiece of entire songs. In many senses it was a throwback to earlier rock and roll, and particularly the guitar work of Richards' primary influence, Chuck Berry, but in terms of songwriting Richards drifted away from conventional blues chords of I, IV and V into more Aeolian textures facilitated by the open tuning, with bVI, bVI, and bIII chords appearing with increasing frequency.[113]

"Jumpin' Jack Flash" marked other shifts in the music of the Rolling Stones. Its lyrics were marked by violence, its performance by menacing aggression. "Jumpin' Jack Flash" was also the first Stones single produced by Jimmy Miller, an American who'd previously worked with the Spencer Davis Group and would go on to produce all of the Stones' major recordings through 1973. The record had no extended solo sections or ornate instrumentation, and its most notable arrangement touch was the addition of maracas coming out of its second chorus, a small flourish that subtly transforms the shape of the song.

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[112] Richards writes extensively of his discovery of open tunings in his autobiography, declaring "It transformed my life." Keith Richards, *Life* (New York: Little, Brown, 2010), esp. pp. 241-244.

[113] The chord progression for the chorus of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" is bIII – bVII – IV - I. Note the preponderance of fourths. As Rob Walser has argued, Aeolian later became the dominant mode of hard rock and heavy metal in the 1970s and 80s, a legacy that can to some degree be traced to Richards' open tunings and the innovations they brought to his guitar technique and songwriting. Walser, 40-53.

"Jumpin' Jack Flash" was the most important and groundbreaking Rolling Stones single since "Satisfaction," and if 1967 had been stunted by discord and dysfunction for the band, 1968 would be extraordinarily reinvigorating. By the end of the year the band released its first LP since *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, entitled *Beggars Banquet*.[114] *Rolling Stone* magazine called it "the best record they have yet done," adding that it "marks the comeback of the Stones from the disastrous *Their Satanic Majesties Request,* a recording episode as unfortunate as any for any group in the world."[115] The *Washington Post* called it "their rawest, lewdest, most arrogant, most savage record yet. And it's beautiful."[116]

Beggars Banquet was ten songs long and presented the Stones in unprecedented versatility. There was the usual leering rhythm and blues—"Stray Cat Blues," "Parachute Woman"—but also moments of quiet introspection, such as "No Expectations" and "Factory Girl." Arguably the album's most notorious track was its opener, a six-minute-plus opus entitled "Sympathy for the Devil." "Sympathy" was essentially a tour through Twentieth Century history guided by Lucifer, one that began at the Russian Revolution and went all the way up to the assassination of Robert Kennedy. It was an up-tempo and infectious song, with a slithering bass line and an instantly memorable refrain—"please to meet you / hope you guess my name."

"Sympathy for the Devil" furthered the notion of the Stones as destructive and evil: the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article on the rise of satanic imagery in rock music, and cited the band as central progenitors.[117] The *Washington Post* described the group as "satanic" and "demonic," while the *New York Times* soon wrote that Mick Jagger "combines bitterness,

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[114] The Rolling Stones, *Beggars Banquet,* London 33, 1968, 33rpm.
[115] Jann Wenner, "Rolling Stones Comeback: Beggars' Banquet," *Rolling Stone* 10 Aug. 1968, 1. *Rolling Stone* (magazine) and the Rolling Stones (band) share no connection other than a name.
[116] Carl Bernstein, "Rolling Stones: Contempt for Just About Everything," *Washington Post* 12 Jan. 1969, 182.
[117] Robb Baker, "Revolutionary, Satanic Imagery Sweeping the Rock World," *Chicago Tribune* 8 Sept. 1968, SC1.

much hate, frustration, and defiance… He adores his evil."[118] The Stones had flirted with such imagery before—"Paint It, Black" had occult overtones, and obviously the title of *Their Satanic Majesties Request* carried the same— "Sympathy for the Devil" raised this to new heights.

Concurrent to this was a growing association with the Rolling Stones and violence, fueled by the lead single from *Beggars Banquet*, a raucous piece of rock and roll entitled "Street Fighting Man."[119] "Street Fighting Man" was released as a single in late August of 1968 and would reach number forty-eight on the American charts, an impressively high showing given that, once again, many American radio stations refused to play it on the grounds that it was an incitement to violence.[120] Released within a week of the 1968 Democratic National Convention into a summer already thick with urban unrest on both sides of the Atlantic, its "picture sleeve" boasted a graphic image of police brutality taken from Los Angeles' Sunset Strip curfew riots of 1966. The image was quickly removed from shelves.

"Street Fighting Man" was the follow-up single to "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and is similar in energy and arrangement. Like "Jumpin' Jack Flash" it opens with an overdriven acoustic guitar, playing a riff rooted in a I-IV chord progression. After two bars a pounding kick drum comes in, and after two more the full band: more acoustic guitars, bass, shakers and percussion. Its first verse is brief but memorable: "Everywhere I hear the sound of marching charging feet, boy / But summer's here, and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy." The song's chorus—"But what can a poor boy do / Except to sing for a rock and roll band / Cause in sleepy London town / There's just no place for a street fighting man" explicitly linked rock and roll to violence, again raging against the peace-and-love-

[118] Patrick Lydon, "Mick Jagger: A Churning Writhing Paradox." *New York Times* 20 July 1969, D26.
[119] The Rolling Stones, "Street Fighting Man" (1968), London 909.
[120] Davis, 257.

through-music ethos that ran through parts of the 1960s counterculture. The phrase "poor boy" contains both a class statement and its own hints of blues tradition: "A poor boy took his father's bread / and started down the road" is the opening line of Robert Wilkins' blues standard "Prodigal Son," which the Stones in fact covered on *Beggars Banquet*.

Most notably, the phrase "summer's here, and the time is right" is a direct homage to Martha and the Vandellas' 1964 Motown hit "Dancing In The Street," a song that had itself already been speculated as being indirectly about urban unrest.[121] "Street Fighting Man" is an angry, relentless piece of music, a call to rebellion and an excoriation of conformity. "I think the time is right for a palace revolution / but where I live the game to play is compromise solution," shouts Jagger in the song's second verse. Like "Jumpin' Jack Flash" its lyrical content is pointedly vague, and there are no references to any specific political concerns; it's an exploration of rebellion on its own terms, and with rapt attention to the traditions that preceded it. "Street Fighting Man" takes "Dancing in the Street" and made its allegorical uprising far more explicit, forcibly resituating the Vandellas and Motown into London, four years later, a thoughtful and serious homage that imaginatively repurposes its object for a vastly different political context.

The significance of the interracial exchange here should also not be overlooked, as it speaks directly to Richard Goldstein's claim about the imaginative linkage of upheaval to R&B music. The fact that the Stones choose contemporary black music to do so, though, rather than some long-lost lineage, is particularly notable. Here and elsewhere the Rolling Stones remained devoted to surrounding themselves with present-day black music and black musicians in ways that were becoming increasingly uncommon in late 1960s rock. On the

[121]Martha and the Vandellas, "Dancing in the Street," Gordy 7033, 1964, 45rpm. In 1967 Le Roi Jones wrote that the song "provided a legitimate core of social feeling, though mainly metaphorical and allegorical for Black people." LeRoi Jones, *Black Music* (1967; New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 208.

band's 1969 tour Ike and Tina Turner and B.B. King served as opening acts, and the band also frequently played alongside African American performers onstage and in the studio, most notably singer Merry Clayton, who will be discussed shortly.

This ongoing proximity to black culture often manifested itself in strange ways outside of the band. In 1968, French New Wave filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard made a feature-length film called *One Plus One* that would later be re-titled *Sympathy for the Devil*. The film was a mix of long sequences of the Rolling Stones in the studio recording the title track, intercut with extended vignettes featuring black French "revolutionaries" reading aloud from Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, and other radical African American authors. In one of the more memorable sequences, revolutionaries kidnap and murder a group of white women, all wearing white dresses. Jagger himself provided the following description of the film to an interviewer: ""Well it's [Godard's] wife who plays the lead chick. She comes to London and gets totally destroyed with some spade cat. Gets involved with drugs or something. Anyway, while she is getting destroyed we find the Rolling Stones freaking out at the recording studio making these sounds."[122]

The film *Sympathy for the Devil* made visible what the song "Street Fighting Man" had made audible: an imaginative connection between the Rolling Stones, racial boundary crossing, and violence. In his 1968 review of *Beggars Banquet* critic Jon Landau had written: "The Rolling Stones are violence. Their music penetrates the raw nerve endings of their listeners and finds its way into the groove marked 'release of frustration.' Their violence has always been a surrogate for the larger violence their audience is so obviously capable of." This only increased in July of 1969, when former guitarist Brian Jones drowned in his swimming pool and only two days later the band played a free concert in London's Hyde

[122] "The Rolling Stone Interview: Mick Jagger," *Rolling Stone* 12 Oct. 1968, 17.

Park to introduce his replacement, Mick Taylor. If the timing seemed in poor taste, as the *New York Times* noted in its coverage of the concert, "the Rolling Stones have always expressed the most savage urges and frustration of their followers."[123]

It was against this backdrop that the Stones would release their follow-up to *Beggars Banquet,* the evocatively titled album *Let It Bleed,* in late 1969.[124] *Let It Bleed* sandwiched a diverse array of material between its opening track, "Gimme Shelter," and its conclusion, the seven-and-a-half-minute, whimsically elegiac "You Can't Always Get What You Want." Amidst the band's typical moments of bawdy rock and roll ("Live With Me," "Let It Bleed") was an understated Robert Johnson blues ("Love In Vain"), a folk ballad ("You Got The Silver") and a shambling ho-down ("Country Honk"). Furthering the band's obsession with depravity was "Midnight Rambler," a blues told through the eyes of a serial rapist and murderer. The album was well-received by critics: "*Let It Bleed* presents the Stones in their strongest suit—heavy, black-tinged, passionately erotic hard rock/blues," wrote the *Times*.[125]

For all of its eclecticism, *Let It Bleed*'s most striking moment was "Gimme Shelter," which found the Stones venturing even deeper into the dark recesses they'd explored in "Jumpin' Jack Flash," "Sympathy for the Devil" and "Street Fighting Man." Reviewing the album in *Rolling Stone* magazine in late 1969, Greil Marcus wrote:

> "Gimmie Shelter" [sic] is a song about fear; it probably serves better than anything written this year as a passageway straight into the next few years… It's a full-faced meeting with all the terror the mind can summon, moving fast and never breaking so that men and women have to beat that terror at the game's own pace.[126]

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123 Lydon, D26.
124 The Rolling Stones, *Let It Bleed,* London 4, 1969, 33rpm.
125 Don Heckman, "Pop: No, The Rolling Stones Are Not Fascists," *New York Times*, 28 December 1969, D24. "What we're left with is still basically the Stones' own hard, gritty, matter-of-fact, blues-based musicianship. Oozing all over. Let it bleed," wrote Robb Baker in "Rolling Stones Ooze In Latest: 'Let It Bleed,'" *Chicago Tribune*, 14 December 1969, SC2.
126 Greil Marcus, "You Get What You Need." *Rolling Stone*, 27 December 1969, 52.

"Gimme Shelter" is an explicitly violent piece of music. The song begins with a quiet, tremolo-laden guitar intro, playing a straight-eighth-note figure that's little more than a decelerated version of the propulsive guitar introductions made famous by Chuck Berry in the 1950s on hits such as "Roll Over Beethoven" and "Johnny B. Goode."[127] After the opening four bars of guitar introduction, more instruments layer on. Light percussion begins to creep through and a second guitar enters, playing sparse melodic fills. In the background we hear vocals, the falsetto voices of Jagger and Richards singing wordless "ooooohs" in a sort of occult rendering of street-corner doo-wop. After eight more bars an electric bass enters, lightly plucking the root, and four bars later a piano crashes on the downbeat, striking an ominous octave in the low register. Charlie Watts cracks his snare twice and the full band enters like an explosion into a quagmire.

"Gimme Shelter"'s text is an apocalyptic flood blues. It reads like a hybrid of Delta bluesman Charley Patton's 1929 classic "High Water Everywhere" and William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming," the lyric's description of a "mad bull, lost its way" bearing distinct echoes of Yeats' "rough beast" that "slouches towards Bethlehem to be born." [128] The song's opening verse is sung by Jagger in a slurred, melismatic bravado:

> Oooh, storm is threatenin'
> My very life today
> If I don't get some shelter
> Oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away

This opening stanza is representative of the lyrical imagery of "Gimme Shelter": the threat of the "storm" is vague, suggesting only a general atmosphere of dread, while the plea for "shelter" suggests that the impending destruction is inevitable and out of the speaker's

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[127] Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" (Chess 1626) and "Johnny B. Goode" (Chess 1691) were released on 45rpm in 1956 and 1958, respectively.
[128] W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," in *The Poems,* ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 187. Charley Patton's "High Water Everywhere" can be found on *Charley Patton: Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2,* Document Records 5010, 1990, CD.

control. Perhaps the most pointed phrase in the opening verse, one that is revisited later in the song, is the suggestion of "fading away," a reference to Buddy Holly's 1957 classic "Not Fade Away"—a cover version of which served as the Rolling Stones' first major hit. Here we have another moment of the Stones gesturing to rock 'n' roll history, and the reference to Holly, who in 1969 still represented the most famous death in the music's history, enhances the themes of death and destruction.

After the opening verse, "Gimme Shelter" enters its chorus. Here a second voice arrives, that of African American female gospel singer Merry Clayton, who belts the song's refrain in harmony with Jagger: "War, children / it's just a shot away / it's just a shot away." The chorus' utilization of "children" carries a double edge, invoking both the gospel tradition of referring to one's audience as "children" and the Vietnam-era images of children slaughtered in villages and fleeing napalm strikes: children as victims of war, children as ourselves.

Perhaps the most indelible moment of "Gimme Shelter" comes after its second verse and on the heels of a Keith Richards guitar solo, when Clayton wails through four repetitions of the chorus, this time without the accompaniment of Jagger. The text shifts from "War, children / It's just a shot away" to "Rape, murder / It's just a shot away," and Clayton's voice teeters between a song and a shout, producing the unsettling experience of hearing a woman repeatedly cry the word "rape" on a rock 'n' roll record. The song then enters its last verse, with Jagger and Clayton singing the final verse almost entirely in tandem:

> Ooh, those floods is threatenin'
> My very life today
> Gimme, gimme shelter
> Oh, I'm gonna fade away

The final verse is in many senses a restatement of the first, with several small but notable changes. The "storm" of the first verse has been replaced by "floods," carrying the

implication of the storm's aftermath as well as that of blood running in the street. "If I don't get some shelter" has changed to "gimme shelter," and we have the repetition of "fade away," a line that now sounds more like fated resignation than impending threat. Like Hendrix's "Machine Gun," "Gimme Shelter" makes its violence explicit, though the Rolling Stones seem more interested in vicariously representing war than explicating or critiquing it.

Following "Street Fighting Man," the song also finds the Rolling Stones playing even deeper in musical history: the Chuck Berry intro, the Buddy Holly allusions, the knowing nods to entire various traditions: flood blues, gospel, doo-wop. Clayton's presence on the track also heightens the notion of racialized violence surrounding the band, five white men and a black woman in the recording studio, performing a song about rape and murder.

"Gimme Shelter" remains one of the most iconic musical markers of violence in popular culture, appearing repeatedly in films, television shows and other media, though the roots of its power have since exceeded the specifics of its composition and original recording, thanks to its associations with a specific historical incident and the film that came out of that incident, both of which would forever alter the cultural career of the Rolling Stones.[129]

On December 6, 1969 the Rolling Stones arrived at the Altamont Speedway, located in between the towns of Tracy and Livermore in Northern California, to perform a free concert before a crowd estimated at 300,000 people. The disastrous run-up to Altamont has been recounted in a number of contexts, most notably in Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin's *Gimme Shelter*.[130] The infamous decision to hire the Hell's Angels

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[129] According to research conducted at the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) and All Music Guide (www.allmusic.com) "Gimme Shelter" has appeared in more films and television programs than any Rolling Stones song, from Vietnam War documentaries to police thrillers to gangster epics.

[130] *Gimme Shelter*, DVD, directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, and Charlotte K. Swerin. (1970; Los Angeles: Criterion Collection, 2000).

motorcycle gang as security was mostly a reflection of the poor planning of the concert, though there had been a precedent of the Angels maintaining a peaceful presence at rock concerts in the San Francisco area, and a London chapter of the Hell's Angles had presided over the Stones' earlier Hyde Park concert. Violence began erupting relatively early in the day, with the Angels accusing audience members of vandalizing their motorcycles. The Stones were the final act of the day and made their way through a disjointed and frequently interrupted set. It was during their performance of "Under My Thumb" that African-American teenager Meredith Hunter was stabbed to death by a Hell's Angel, his murder captured on film by the crew of *Gimme Shelter*.

National reaction to Hunter's killing was initially subdued: perhaps ironically, it was *Rolling Stone* magazine that would be primarily responsible for the transformation of Altamont from circumstantial tragedy into an apocalyptic death rattle of the 1960s. The magazine devoted fifteen pages of coverage to Altamont in their issue of 21 January 1970, festooning their coverage with the headline "Let It Bleed."[131] *Rolling Stone* compared Altamont to Hiroshima, and quoted Ralph Gleason wondering aloud if Mick Jagger was guilty of murder.[132] In its next issue, *Rolling Stone* ran a second feature on Altamont; in both stories, the magazine erroneously reported that the Stones had been playing "Sympathy For The Devil" when Meredith Hunter was stabbed.[133]

The mythology of Altamont soon caught fire: in a March 1970 *Scanlan's Monthly* article Sol Stern dubbed Altamont "Pearl Harbor to the Woodstock Generation," and as the year rolled forward more and more critics laid blame for the carnage at Altamont squarely on

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[131] *Rolling Stone* magazine has no actual relation to the Rolling Stones other than sharing a name, although this has frequently been a subject of confusion.
[132] Lester Bangs et al., "Let It Bleed," *Rolling Stone* 21 Jan. 1970, 1-36.
[133] John Burks, "Rock & Roll's Worst Day," *Rolling Stone* Feb. 7, 1970.

the Rolling Stones.[134] By the time the Maysles' *Gimme Shelter* was released in theaters in December of 1970 Altamont had been elevated to national-catastrophe proportions. In the *New Yorker*, Pauline Kael despaired, "But how does one review this picture? It's like reviewing the footage of President Kennedy's assassination or of Lee Harvey Oswald's murder."[135]

The Altamont tragedy made material an already-existent imaginative connection between the Rolling Stones, racial transgression, and violence. Hunter's race, and his involvement in an interracial relationship, was mentioned incessantly in media accounts. *Rolling Stone* even suggested that Hunter's girlfriend's race may have had a role in his death, and compared his murder to "that [which] we've all seen in photographs of redneck brutality against black people in the South." Hunter's death was framed in many quarters as a race murder; shortly after Altamont, Hunter's sister told an interviewer that "their being a mixed couple… maybe have had quite a lot to do with it. The Hell's Angels are just white men with badges on their backs."[136] It is difficult to know whether Hunter's race had a role in his death, but this element of the Altamont story captivated its various tellers, from William F. Buckley's inflammatory characterization of Hunter as a "hopped-up Negro" to David Maysles' own description of Meredith Hunter as "a nigger zoot suit… you wouldn't believe him if you saw him in a fiction film."[137]

The tragic and symbolic irony of Altamont was hard to ignore: a young black man, framed as an outsider, murdered at a rock concert at the end of the 1960s, a concert headlined by a white band who had mined black musical traditions with unprecedented

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134 Sol Stern, "Altamont: Pearl Harbor to the Woodstock Generation," reprinted in *Conversations With The New Reality* (San Francisco: Canfield, 1971), 45-68.
135 Kael, *The New Yorker,* 112.
136 Bangs et al., 32.
137 William F. Buckley, "Rock Fest Murder Makes Subject for Youth Movie," *Los Angeles Times* 11 Dec. 1970, D11; Joel Haycock, "Gimme Shelter," *Film Quarterly* 24.4 (1971), 60.

creative energy. As historian Brian Ward has noted "[w]hereas blacks had once greeted the interracialism of early rock and roll dances and concerts as portents of a new era of race relations, the concert at Altamont had simply provided the occasion for another lynching."[138] While Ward's invocation of lynching seems hyperbolic, the Rolling Stones' racial transgressions became absorbed into the figure of Meredith Hunter and the Altamont narrative, and the Altamont incident legitimized the idea that the violence found in the music of the Rolling Stones was in fact simply a "surrogate" for a wider violence lingering about the audience culture that embraced the band.

The Rolling Stones' insistence on the continued relevance of black music to rock and roll was never entirely heard; like Hendrix, they became exceptional figures, their curious obsessions with blues and rhythm and blues simply becoming another way of being white rock and roll stars, their challenges to racially-prescriptive theories of music-making absorbed by a discourses that denied the very possibility of black participation by relegating African American music to something that had been rightfully appropriated by white musicians. The clattering rage of "Jumpin' Jack Flash," the reworked and revised Motown of "Street Fighting Man," the prophetic tumult of "Gimme Shelter," even the tragedy of Hunter's murder: all of these things simply became subsumed into the myth of the Rolling Stones.

Like Hendrix, they too had attempted to carve out an alternative musical space that was not overtly determined by racial category and had seen it run aground, but as opposed to reaching towards a limitless future they had done so by forging an obsessive relationship to rock and roll past. Songs like "Street Fighting Man" and "Gimme Shelter" are musical histories, works whose life depends upon a continual and conscious interaction with the

[138] Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 360.

music that came before them, much of which was black in origin. The problem was that the music the Stones were so clearly hearing as a living past, something still present—"Summer's here, and the time is right"—its audience and critics were hearing only as a past.

Coda: Cold English Blood Runs Hot

The Rolling Stones continued to record and perform after the events at Altamont, though by the early 1970s Keith Richards was spiraling into a debilitating heroin addiction. In 1973 the band would part ways with producer Jimmy Miller, ending what would come to be widely regarded as their most fertile creative period. The Rolling Stones did muster one more remarkable rendez-vous at the intersection of rock and roll, race, and violence, however. In the spring of 1971 the band released its first album since Altamont. Entitled *Sticky Fingers*, the LP's cover was designed by Andy Warhol, featuring a frontal photo of a pair of jeans and a suggestively operative zipper.[139] The lead single to *Sticky Fingers*, entitled "Brown Sugar," was released in the U.S. in May and promptly went to Number One on the *Billboard* charts, the band's sixth single to do so.[140]

Although it was released in 1971, "Brown Sugar" had in fact been recorded in early December of 1969, at the Muscle Shoals Sound Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, a venture started by the same Muscle Shoals session musicians who'd performed on Aretha Franklin's most famous Atlantic recordings.[141] The Stones would debut the song live two days after wrapping its recording, in front of 300,000 fans at the free concert at the Altamont Motor Speedway, but the recording itself sat on the shelf for over a year. By the time it was released, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin were dead, the film *Gimme Shelter* had been released, and the Sixties were over, the Stones—in the estimation of some—having ended them.

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[139] The Rolling Stones, *Sticky Fingers,* Rolling Stones 59100, 1971, 33rpm.
[140] The Rolling Stones, "Brown Sugar," Rolling Stones 19100, 1971, 45rpm.
[141] Martin Elliott, *The Rolling Stones: Complete Recording Sessions* (London: Cassell, 1990), 102.

Even by the Rolling Stones' standards "Brown Sugar" is among the more shocking compositions in all of rock and roll. The song's inspiration was Jagger's girlfriend, the African American singer and actress Marsha Hunt. "Brown Sugar" is an up-tempo and rollicking bit of rhythm and blues, and its musical backdrop draws from what were by now hallmarks of Stones productions, from the slashing opening guitar riff—open G tuning, inversions on the I, IV and V chords—to the trademark maracas on the final verse. From a purely musical standpoint it's a great performance, precisely the sort of lean, driving rock and roll that by 1971 the Stones could churn out with ramshackle precision.

Jagger's vocal performance is emphatic and controlled, full of grunts, shouts and interjections. As in many of his other performances the lyrics are slurred nearly beyond recognition, but it's possible that here it's particularly deliberate, as "Brown Sugar" is likely one of the most racist pieces of rock and roll ever written, a catalogue of racial and sexual violence so gratuitous it seems to simultaneously critique and congratulate itself. It is a song about the transatlantic chattel slave trade and is startlingly explicit in its imagery, from its opening verse:

> Gold coast slave ship bound for cotton fields
> Sold in the market down in New Orleans
> Scarred old slaver, know he's doin' alright
> Hear him whip the women just around midnight

"Brown Sugar" is a song about white-on-black slave rape and the racial and sexual violence of the slaveholding south. It traffics in repugnant stereotypes of black female sexual availability and mines the historical crime of slavery for ribald male fantasy, all while the rollicking ebullience of the backing track betrays flippancy toward its subject matter. On this level one can hear "Brown Sugar" as the most racially offensive composition in the catalogue of one of the most racially troublesome bands in rock and roll, and it is entirely possible that it is that.

But on another level one can hear "Brown Sugar" as one of the most unflinchingly direct explorations of racial and musical imagination ever put to record by a white rock and roll band, and it is entirely possible that it is that, too. At a moment when conversations about musical and racial authenticity had become dominated by claims of innate white and black expressive capacity, claims that stretched into the most primordial origins of American racial thought, the Rolling Stones wrote a rock and roll song about those origins. "Brown Sugar" is a song about many things: it's a song about desire, lust, and the underside of history; it is a song about exploitation and numbingly iterative violence; it is a song about musical power, carnal power, and the entwinement of the two; it is about the most grotesque and unseemly cultural politics of economies of pleasure; and it is about the ways race figures so centrally in all of the above. Heard this way, "Brown Sugar" is a song about rock and roll music itself, an inimitable song in the most literal sense, one that, for better and worse, only the Rolling Stones could write, equal parts invention and inheritance.

The Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix commanded the imagery of musical violence in the late 1960s to degrees previously unheard in rock and roll music. Their fascination with violence emerged in reaction to a musical landscape that was subtly but increasingly denying each artist the possibility of their own existence. For Hendrix these critiques took place in the future tense, in the form of a categorical denial of the legitimacy of race itself and its connection to genre and musical authenticity, and a notion of musical creativity that was profoundly individualist and anti-essentialist. The Stones' critiques took nearly the opposite shape: an obsessive and dogged insistence on the centrality of tradition to rock and roll, which the band saw as directly contiguous to a long and rich history of African American music.

In a sense the Rolling Stones' position was fundamentally conservative and Hendrix's fundamentally progressive, but both viewed rock and roll music as a space where race was radically indeterminate. Ultimately neither critique was successful, partly undone by the intensity that enabled them and the self-destruction that it wrought. But they were also undone by an ideology of white rock music that simply accepted them. Hendrix is the lone black star in the "pantheon" of rock heroes; gone are the accusations of "Uncle Tom" and the shock engendered by his appearance and performance style; he is now an icon of the music, an artist whose instrumental prowess and performance style has influenced everyone who has come after him. As for the Rolling Stones, they have continued to perform with African American musicians and still make a point of selecting African American artists as touring partners: their most recent North American tour, in 2006, found them sharing a bill with hip-hop star Kanye West. Still, this has now simply become part of the Rolling Stones, the band's obsession with black music simply a taken-for-granted part of its mythology.

The critiques of racial orthodoxy offered by Hendrix and the Rolling Stones were undone for a number of reasons. First, they were never completely able to counter pre-existing audience stereotypes of black and white musical performance, and in some senses even relied upon these in troublesome ways. Hendrix's hypersexualized performance style, particularly during the early portion of his brief career, did interact with cultural myths of black male sexual prowess, and furthered notions of the guitarist as exotic, dangerous, different. This is not, of course, to suggest that Hendrix engaged in cynical gimmickry, nor that such a style should have been somehow off-limits to him: rather, that for large portions of his audience, his style was so unique and provocative that it further served to mark him as exceptional, rock's "alien" black guitar player.

The Rolling Stones, on the other hand, were never fully able to separate their relationship to black music from a sort of fantastical fetishization of that music, a fetishization whose roots derived from the band's subcultural beginnings. The roots of the band's dangerous, outsider status—a status that in this period took on appropriately mythic proportions—was rooted in this idea, that for a white band to play black music was transgressive, subversive and titillating. The Rolling Stones themselves were by no means innocent in the construction of this image, and to no small degree it has lurked beneath the surface of nearly all of their work, this period being no exception. If Hendrix had a view of race as genuinely irrelevant and something that could be disbelieved as readily as believed, the Rolling Stones' ongoing flirtations with black fantasy suggest that they were never able to entirely embrace this disbelief.

But most crucially, the flirtations with violence that marked the music of Hendrix and the Stones in this period were simply accepted into rock and roll ideology as affirmations of the music's own notion of authenticity, rather than as attempts to destabilize it. Part of this was due to the issues presented above but a larger part was due to a discursive landscape that simply would not allow the critiques to be heard, and rendered musical iconoclasm into musical archetype. The complex case of "Brown Sugar" can be heard as a sort of fulcrum for this: for all its potential layers it is at its most literal a song about white male sexual conquest; it is at this level that a white rock landscape would subsume the song into its consolidating canon, and again, the white men who wrote and performed it are by no means innocent. As hard rock and heavy metal emerged in the 1970s a litany of bands made musical violence a marker of white male hegemony rather than a space where that hegemony might potentially be disrupted. This violence served no political purpose, and often little imaginative purpose either. It simply became another way of being white, which was one

thing that, for all else, neither Jimi Hendrix nor the Rolling Stones were ever interested in being.

Conclusion

On July 12, 1979 a riot broke out at Chicago's Comiskey Park during the interim of a day-night doubleheader between the Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers. Thousands of fans stormed the field, and the evening game was canceled and subsequently awarded to the Tigers via forfeit, only the fourth such occurrence in the history of the American League. The following morning's *Chicago Tribune* reported thirty-nine arrests, and at least six injuries.[1]

Those who violently rioted that summer Thursday were not doing so on account of a baseball game. Rather, they were burning disco records, at the behest of a local rock radio DJ named Steve Dahl who had proclaimed disco music "a disease" and was known for leading his followers, known as the "Insane Coho Lips Antidisco Army," into Chicago nightclubs to pelt disco fans with marshmallows.[2] In describing the riot, Chicago police Lieutenant Robert Reilly remarked to the *Tribune*: "It's as bad as the night the Beatles were here."[3] In some ways the comparison was peculiarly apt, as the anti-disco conflagration at Comiskey recalled the Beatle-record bonfires that had pocked America in 1966, the wake of John Lennon's "more popular than Jesus" remark. But while the anti-Beatles protests were ostensibly driven by religious fervor, the "Disco Demolition Night" uprising was seemingly wrought by little more or less than a quarrel over taste, the idea that something as petty and imaginary as a genre distinction—"disco" vs. "rock"—was worthy of violent, physical revolt.

Commentators in years since have emphasized the bigoted underpinnings of Disco Demolition Night, and what historian Alice Echols calls "discophobia" more generally.[4] Craig Werner writes that "attacks on disco gave respectable voice to the ugliest kinds of

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[1] Richard Dozer, "Sox Promotion Ends in a Mob Scene," *Chicago Tribune* 13 July 1979, D1; "Tigers Gain Forfeit in Postponement," *Washington Post* 14 July 1979, C2.
[2] See Patrick Goldstein, "Disco Records: A Real Explosion," *Los Angeles Times* 29 July 1979, L79; Jennings Parrott, "Disco Takes a Real Beating in Chicago," *Los Angeles Times* 24 Aug. 1979, B2.
[3] Dozer, D1.
[4] Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 205.

unacknowledged racism, sexism, and homophobia," while Dave Marsh called it "your most paranoid fantasy about where the ethnic cleansing of the rock radio could ultimately lead."[5] Disco's perceived blackness, its perceived effeminacy, its perceived glamor: hatred of all of these may have driven the rioters, the vast majority of whom, notes Werner, were "young white men."[6]

And yet while describing Disco Demolition Night as a pogrom may be accurate, it tells only half the story. What it does not tell is how a stadium's worth of young white men had come to so fully invest themselves in a musical genre, their senses of selves so determined by a worldview that saw rock music as *of them*, and everything else as dangerously other. In the *Tribune*'s summation, the goal of Disco Demolition Night had been "to stamp out disco music and make the world safe for pure rock 'n' roll."[7] In the discophobic mind, the concept of "pure rock 'n' roll" was crucially enabled by the identity of those who made and consumed it, and, conversely, endangered by those who didn't. In this dialectic of purity and impurity, musical difference was heard as personal threat.

This dissertation has told the story of this elision of genre and identity, how musical practice and racial difference were reimagined as being one and the same, and how "pure rock 'n' roll" came to be overwhelmingly synonymous with white men. These chapters have argued that rock and roll music became white not so much because of the music white and black people made, but rather because of what people told themselves, and each other, about the music that they heard. Whether it was claiming that Bob Dylan had invented a more serious form with "Like a Rolling Stone," or that the primary difference between Aretha

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[5] Craig Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come* (New York: Plume, 1998), 211. Tony Sclafani, "When 'Disco Sucks!' Echoed Around the World," *MSNBC* 10 July 2009, http://www.today.com/id/31832616/ns/today-entertainment/t/when-disco-sucks-echoed-around-world/#.UVyAD6s0hk8

[6] Werner, 211.

[7] Gary Deeb, "Steve Dahl: The Deejay Who Rocked the Sox," *Chicago Tribune* 16 July 1979, 6.

Franklin and Janis Joplin's music was some mystical power of skin color, or that Motown was an accommodationist sell-out while the Beatles were intrepid avant-gardists: all of these were ways of talking about music that were also indirect ways of talking about race.

A recurrent theme in these pages has been the tendency to consider white music as the product of individuals and black music as the product of a group: a white writer's derision of soul singers as "nigger minstrels" with "no individuality whatever" and *Time* magazine's celebration of Aretha Franklin that disingenuously attributed her musical abilities to racial hardship instead of talent and technique are, after all, rooted in the same impulse. While white rock music formulated an idea of authenticity rooted in individual expression—individual expression invariably exemplified by white people—black artists were heard as beholden to and trapped within an audio-racial category. This idea was not new to this period, of course: the tendency to grant white people individuality while denying nonwhite people the same is arguably the bedrock of Western racism. But in the context of 1960s popular music, it became manifest in a white imagining of "authentic" black music that was monolithic, inflexibly primordial, and offered little use to rock music other than as a faintly residual, long-vanished authentication agent

In the Introduction to this dissertation I noted that a common trait shared by every artist discussed here is that none of them, regardless of race, set out to make music that was "white." And yet ironically, to the ears of many, that is ultimately what they did. The interracial explorations of figures like Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Janis Joplin and the Rolling Stones became archetypes for new ideas about being musically white, while the explorations of Sam Cooke, Motown, Aretha Franklin and even Jimi Hendrix were confined by old ideas about what it meant to be musically black. Rock ideology did not redraw the color line in popular music so much as it rendered that line porous in but direction. This is neither a

story of cultural theft, nor a story of people and music simply drifting apart, but rather a story of willful misrecognition.

And yet it is not the only story. While this dissertation has shown the persistent malleability of racial essentialisms, it has also shown music's own resistance to such ideas, suggesting that if we listen more closely to musical recordings and performances these divisions become far blurrier. If, ultimately, one of the recurrent threads of this project has been the power and perils of ideas of "authenticity," many of these artists' greatest contributions came through violations of these notions. Bob Dylan decided against being "folk" much as Sam Cooke decided against being "gospel;" the Rolling Stones could hardly have been less interested in being authentically British; if Berry Gordy had contented himself with being authentically "R&B," American music and *With the Beatles* would both sound vastly different.

All in all, this dissertation has sought to argue that there is no bright line between policing "authentic" white and black music and policing "authentic" white and black people: each practice devalues the very thing it purports to describe. All of this music began from a profound disregard for what people had previously told themselves about popular music's possibilities; just as importantly, it originated independently what we have told ourselves about it since. That it might still exist apart from these stories is perhaps the greatest testament to its legacy.

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