

**Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz:  
Hearing the Counter-Plantation in Black Atlantic Sonic Culture, 1791-1928**

by

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Benjamin Barson, PhD  
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This dissertation is both a comparative cultural history and a social history of early New Orleans jazz. While twentieth-century paradigms tend to examine jazz as a product of a self-contained African American culture or of African-European interaction, I argue that we would be better served understanding jazz's syncretism within the Afro-Atlantic social movements which contested slavery, colonization, and capitalism in the Caribbean basin. From the Haitian revolution to Radical Reconstruction, new musical forms were an important tool to communicate political developments abroad as well as to generate an aestheticized political consciousness that imagined, built, and martialled the collective will to defend a new commons. Part one explores intra-Caribbean influences on the music and political organizing of Louisiana's Black communities, particularly highlighting the impact of the Haitian Revolution. I explore the life of bandleader and freedom-rider Daniel Desdunes, and his influential sister, the Storyville blues pioneer Mamie Desdunes, arguing that their Haitian identities and connection to counter-plantation legacies influenced the development of their practice of jazz as activism. I also trace the family of clarinetists Lorenzo and Louis Tio whose connections to revolutionary Mexico allowed them safe passage to build an agricultural commune in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to escape the racial oppression of antebellum New Orleans. Part two explores the prominence of brass bands within Black American social movements in the south, including during the Civil War, at dockworkers' union

parades in New Orleans, and on plantations themselves. Tracing the bands' institutional history opens up new connections between the collectivist structures heard in early jazz and the practice of grassroots democracy and communal economics among African Americans in both rural and urban Louisiana. I term this expansion of political and musical space "brassroots democracy." In tune with the counter-plantation, these forms of social organization were recreated and resurrected in the music, performing the world they struggled to see.

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## **Dedication**

For Fred Ho and Russell Maroon Shoatz.

## Preface

A dissertation takes a village, and I have been very fortunate to have a large and motley crew to support me in what is oftentimes a very solidary and occasionally maddening endeavor. My deepest love and gratitude go to Gizelxanath Rodriguez, who has weathered countless research trips across the hemisphere, from Havana to Santiago de Cuba to New Orleans, countless late night jam sessions, countless late night frantic expositions and pontifications, countless sleepless nights, and countless relaxation-free days as we consummated some of the integral ideas found here. In a way, this dissertation is nothing less than the product of our never-ending, synaptic, intersubjective, storytelling and story-feeling rhythm. Our shared commitment to the seemingly impossible; a world which will not be consumed in the fires of business-as-usual nihilism, has made this project worthwhile for me, and hopefully for her as well. Her propensity for empathy has allowed the information presented here to reach your eyes and ears in a state that is more digestible than it otherwise would have been. In fact, without her contributions, both as a French translator and as an intellectual-emotional confidant, it likely would not be here at all.

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have been a constant source of support, encouragement, in addition to being patient readers. As you can see, it truly takes a village, and I have had the privilege of working with this motley crew of incredible collaborators and supporters to bring this dissertation to fruition. I can only hope it pays back some dividends in the collective life of our mind.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Opening

*“[R]evolutionary situations appear which may lead the liberation struggle toward victory... What would they [the United States] do when faced with other Santo Domingos?”*

- Võ Nguyên Giáp of the Vietnam People’s Army<sup>1</sup>

In working on this dissertation, I have been haunted by images of “White Leaguers” and Ku Klux Klan members attacking meetings of freedpeople in the U.S. South. They are haunting, not because they are phantoms, but because “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living”, and current movements for white supremacy rhyme all too strongly with these nineteenth century paramilitary movements which inform this study of Louisianan jazz history.<sup>2</sup> During my completion of this work, the summer and fall of 2020, the extrajudicial executions of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor starkly revealed that the specter of plantation hierarchy is still strong in ordering American society. As a white man writing on the history of jazz and its connections to nineteenth century social movements in New Orleans and the Caribbean basin, I have long felt a responsibility to continue to foreground the role music has played in articulating both a new way of being and denouncing the gratuitous violence that characterizes Black life and death.<sup>3</sup> Today, from professional athletes to jazz musicians, Black

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<sup>1</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap, “The Liberation War in South Vietnam: Its Essential Characteristics,” in *Military Art of People’s War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 250.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ed. Daniel De Leon (1852: Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1913), 15.

<sup>3</sup> I capitalize Black, and decapitalize white, for reasons outlined in Cheryl I. Harris’s seminal “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91. I also subscribe to the “nation within a nation” thesis.

cultural workers have increasingly defined their work as a site of political struggle, re-envisioned as a space where “resistance is a kind of Black becoming.”<sup>4</sup> From social media threads to major mainstream news outlets, a diverse commentariat has centered Black music’s historic role as witness to the barbarity of white racial violence and as a space for transcendence. The words of trumpet player Terrance Blanchard about Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On” attest to this fact:

It hit me then just how many people listen to the groove and the melody of this song, without really hearing the words. And that made me realize that many well-meaning people have heard only the melody of our plight, without knowing what the song means for us.

Sure, they can hum it back with the same phrasing, can mimic all the inflections in Marvin's voice, enough to make themselves and us think they know the song as well as we do. They can groove to the beat the same way we would, can know the exact timing of each phrase, to the point where it seems they must get it. But when it comes to the words, it's like we're singing in two different languages. The pain we sing of is a lingering, never-going-away pain. For the well-intentioned co-conspirator, it's a temporary pinprick — just enough discomfort to provide a false sense of assimilation and understanding.<sup>5</sup>

For Blanchard, protest is something beyond language; it is an affect that animates musical decisions, akin to a grammar of interaction within and against the white supremacist reality. Processing and challenging oppression is as fundamental to Black music as notes and chords. It is an irreducible part of the music, coming out of “never-going-away-pain.” Within writings about jazz, these association with Black music and Black social memory has a long and contested history. As New Orleans clarinetist Sidney Bechet claimed about his grandfather, a maroon named Omar,

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See Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Terence Blanchard, “Opinion: Black Protest Is Music. Learning The Melody Isn’t Enough,” NPR.org, June 18, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/18/879663904/opinion-terence-blanchard-black-protest-marvin-gaye-melody>.

in *Treat it Gentle* (published in 1960): “No one had to explain notes or rhythm or feeling to him. All the things that was happening to him outside, they had to get there to be measured—there inside him where the music was.”<sup>6</sup>

This connection is contested not only because of its content, but because of its context. The ideological stakes of the cultural artifact that has been dubbed “America’s classical music” are high precisely because they have the potential to demystify the centrality of Black exploitation to wealth stockpiles within the US and the foundation of capitalism at large. Fred Ho, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, considered jazz to be “the revolutionary music of the twentieth century—not just for America, but for the planet as well. Is it the music that embodies and expresses the contradiction of the century.”<sup>7</sup> The “contradiction” Ho speaks of that the civil society of an erstwhile democracy rests on an anti-democratic foundation of Indigenous genocide and Black enslavement. These socio-musical engagements that Ho and Blanchard call for may unmask the unprocessed participation in Black suffering, oppression, and exploitation which lies at the heart of this country’s wealth.

Money talks, and powerful institutions have impacted how we talk and don’t talk about the music. Those armed with significant stakes of capital often set the terms of debate.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the spokesman for Jazz at Lincoln Center, Wynton Marsalis, hailed Duke Ellington in his

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1960), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Ho, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader*, ed. Diane Fujino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 93-94.

<sup>8</sup> As Dale Chapman has noted in his study on neoliberalism and jazz, the 2004 unveiling of the New Orleans Jazz Market, funded in part by a \$10 million investment from Goldman Sach’s Urban Investment Fund, replaced “Gator’s Discount Store,” which sold cheaply priced produced to New Orleans’s low-income community. That this store was run and managed by a Cuban immigrant shows us that capitalism has a hidden transcript, too. In general, scholars doing critical work on race, class, gender, transnationalism, and resistance in jazz cultures overwhelmingly tend to avoid New Orleans or early jazz, which has been so successfully “claimed” as a site of an emergent post-racial Americana, or a discourse of personal liberty that minimizes both Caribbean cultural or ideological wellsprings as well any radical or anticapitalist implications of the African American story from bondage to musical freedom. See Dale Chapman, *The Jazz Bubble: Neoclassical Jazz in Neoliberal Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

introduction to *Beyond Category: The Life And Genius Of Duke Ellington* because “[Ellington] touched more people than confetti;” because, “He was patriotic” and because “He worshipped his mother.” Such imagery invokes family and national values in order to make Ellington legible to a broader, and whiter, America.<sup>9</sup> But Duke Ellington’s human rights-themed musical *Jump for Joy* (1941), the first large scale stage production to introduce discussion of the historical and present-day mistreatment of the “American Negro,” did not receive mention from Marsalis; nor did he mention Ellington’s uncompleted opera *Boola*, which also centered Black oppression.<sup>10</sup> Hegemonic framings have contributed to a general silencing of political agency in Black music. For instance, as of June 10, 2020, posts that support the Black Lives Matter movement in the most populated “Fans of Duke Ellington” group on Facebook are being erased by moderators.<sup>11</sup> As a Yoruba proverb says, “The white man who made the pencil also made the eraser.”<sup>12</sup>

As I bear witness to this process of turning pain into power, and the efforts of white- and economically privileged peoples to interrupt this process, I am constantly reminded of how the current struggle to re-center Black music’s protest tradition has precedents. The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s modeled Black music as a form of decolonization. “Coltrane,” wrote Amiri Baraka, “showed us how to murder the popular song. To do away with weak Western forms. He is a beautiful philosopher.”<sup>13</sup> Baraka read similar significations in bebop’s angular and virtuosic

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<sup>9</sup> Wynton Marsalis in John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life And Genius Of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995). See also John R. Gennari, “But Is It Jazz?,” *Reviews in American History* 23, no. 1 (1995): 91–97.

<sup>10</sup> As his compositional focus changed during the course of 1942, Ellington wound up using the overall structure, themes, and lyrics of *Boola* in the planning of *Black, Brown, and Beige*. See Duke Ellington, *Black, Brown, and Beige* (Saratoga Springs, NY: Jazz Lines Foundation Inc., 2017), for notes on this subject.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan Price, post in “Saxophonists who Know Black Lives Matter Group,” Facebook, June 10, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/794498867748031/permalink/797169594147625/>

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Joseph Roach, “Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World,” in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 45.

<sup>13</sup> Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), *Black Music* (New York: Quill, 1967), 183.

melodic-harmonic-rhythmic innovations. Yet late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New Orleans jazz has largely remained outside the discourses that have reclaimed the music as revolutionary, despite some significant interventions.<sup>14</sup> A large part of the goal of this dissertation is to reveal the extensive networks of radicalism that turn of the century New Orleans sustained. I highlight two main narratives: the first is the city's preeminence as a center for Black activism, a bellwether for civil rights legislation, and home of powerful interracial unions during the dawn of segregation. The second is its significance as a Black musical mecca and the birthplace of jazz. It should not surprise us in the slightest that these two spheres were intertwined. I suggest that music was not only politics by other means; rather it was produced by the same historical circumstances and creative resistance that made Louisiana's post-Civil War political environment so explosive.

The Caribbean and Louisiana were connected by the plantation system, and specifically, a plantation system based on sugar production. Many commentators have discussed how sugarcane cultivation required massive outlays of capital and a sophisticated industrial infrastructure, and its demands resulted in a significantly higher rate of slave mortality than the harvesting of cotton.<sup>15</sup> Sugar producing regions also shared planters, slaves, as well a trans-Caribbean revolutionary culture marked by antislavery and anti-imperialist ideas. Louisiana's sugar-producing regions also bear the imprint of several musical concepts of the Black Caribbean. There is considerable

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<sup>14</sup> Lipsitz and Hersch both take politics and Black resistance seriously in their treatments of New Orleans. See George Lipsitz, "New Orleans in the World and the World in New Orleans," *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2011): 261–90; Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Richard Follett, "Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters," *Journal of Family History* 28, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 510–39; Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

literature on each of these components in isolation. For instance, the influence of the Haitian Revolution and Afro-Francophone Radical Republicanism on activists in the Crescent City is well documented.<sup>16</sup> There is also a body of work that traces Afro-Cuban and African American shared visions of liberation and solidarity across the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>17</sup> Within jazz studies and Black music research, the influence of Cuban music and musicians in New Orleans has been frequently discussed.<sup>18</sup> A smaller but still significant body of literature traces Haitian-Louisianan musical connections.<sup>19</sup> Yet no scholar has set out to think through how each of these interact and interrelate with one another. I propose an interdisciplinary analysis that views the history of Black Atlantic music through the lens of antislavery, anticapitalist, and anticolonial politics in the Caribbean basin. I engage both sonic and discursive idea flows that spanned the Black world in the turn of

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<sup>16</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Mary Niall Mitchell, "'A Good and Delicious Country': Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana," in *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2000): 123–44; Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Rebecca J. Scott, "The Atlantic World and the Road to 'Plessy v. Ferguson,'" in *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007): 726–33; Anna Brickhouse, "'L'Ouragan de Flammes' ('The Hurricane of Flames') New Orleans and Transamerican Catastrophe, 1866/2005," in *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1097–1127; Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London, New York: Verso, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Philip S. Foner, "A Tribute to Antonio Maceo," in *The Journal of Negro History* 55, no. 1 (1970): 65–71; Jules Benjamin, *The United States and Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1880-1943* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008); Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press Inc, 2007); Jack Stewart, "Cuban Influences on New Orleans Music," in *The Jazz Archivist* XIII (1999): 14–23; Jack Stewart, "The Mexican Band Legend: Myth, Reality, and Musical Impact; A Preliminary Investigation," in *The Jazz Archivist* VI, no. 2 (December 1991), 1–14; Peter Narváez, "The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African-American Blues Musicians," in *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (2002), 175–96; Bruce Raeburn Boyd, "Beyond the 'Spanish Tinge' Hispanics and Latinos in Early New Orleans Jazz," in *Eurojazzland: Jazz and European Sources, Dynamics, and Contexts*, ed. Luca Cerchiari, Laurent Cugny, and Franz Kerschbaumer (2012), 32–51; Christopher Washburne, "The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music," in *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997), 59–80.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Keith Cartwright, *Sacral Grooves / Limbo Gateways: Travels in Deep Southern Time, Circum-Caribbean Space, Afro-Creole Authority* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2013); Keith Cartwright, "Re-Creolizing Swing: St Domingue Refugees in the Govi of New Orleans," in *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and Its Cultural Aftershocks*, ed. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006).

the century Caribbean. In the process, I discovered overlooked connections between musicians and activists, and sometimes musicians *as* activists.

This dissertation argues that the Black working-classes of Louisiana consolidated a protest tradition that reinvented nearly a hundred years of international struggle against the plantation system within the set of musical practices, public interventions, and performance cultures that came to be identified as jazz. And it did so by invoking a cultural vocabulary whose practitioners spanned not only the Southern United States, but also, and crucially, Black communities across the Caribbean. I problematize the tidy division between ideological and material labor, and by culture, I am referring to both ideas and “material” practice. Instead of plantation slavery, Black farmers fought to expand their ecologically restorative gardens and collectively tended provision grounds. Instead of racial stratification, they fought for radical racial, class, and gender equality.<sup>20</sup> Instead of capital and enclosure, they fought to rebuild commons. The Afrodiasporic working class, millions of forced migrants across the West Indies and Louisiana and their descendants, encoded and performed their dreams of a new world in collective musical performance. In lyrics, concepts of timbre, specific rhythmic traditions, modes of vernacular dance, and distinct melodies and harmonies, enslaved peoples reappropriated the sight and sounds of the plantation and turned them into spaces of communal healing—what I refer to, following Jean Casimir, as the counter-plantation.<sup>21</sup> Their music was a uniquely powerfully communicator of this distinct future in the present, “appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.”<sup>22</sup> In these moments of

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<sup>20</sup> On the struggle for gender equality, see Elsa Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 107–46.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Casimir, “On the Origins of the Counterplantation System,” in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Laurent Dubois et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020)

<sup>22</sup> Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 395..

performance, antebellum enslaved and postbellum wage workers reimagined performance traditions to respond to the needs of their communities and their movements for self-determination and liberation. seizing

I begin this introduction by highlighting the pivotal role that the memories and lived experiences of the Haitian Revolution played in amongst New Orleans's Black communities. I link the specific structure of sugar production, and the Black resistance that rose in response, to an intra-Caribbean struggle against the plantation complex. I argue that these trans-continental traditions were sustained through the generation of social imaginaries from below. I then explore the question of creolization and its specific meanings in Louisiana during the long nineteenth century. The second half of this introduction places my ambitions for this study within and against the existing scholarship on jazz, Louisiana, and Afro-Atlantic social movements in the Caribbean basin. I conclude with a chapter summary that outlines the structure of the dissertation.

## **1.2 Alice Zeno and the Song from Haiti**

*For us, to be a Louisianan is to be Haitian.*

- Joseph Colastin Rousseau, "Souvenirs De La Louisiane" (1862) <sup>23</sup>

On a mid-November day in 1958, the jazz historian Bill Russell arrived at 3327 DeArmas Street in New Orleans. For years, he had been interviewing musicians from the "Golden Age" of

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Colastin Rousseau, "Souvenirs De La Louisiane: Moralité De La Poésie", *L'Union*, New Orleans, 14 March; 7, 9 April; 14, 30 May. Originally Published as "Souvenirs De La Louisiane: Moralité De La Poésie," *L'Opinion Nationale* [Port-au-Prince, Haiti], 25 October; 1, 15, 22, 29 November; 6, 27 December 1862; 14, 21 February 1863. This article is discussed in Jean-Marc Allard Duplantier, "Creole Louisiana's Haitian Exile(s)," *Southern Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2007): 68–84.

early jazz. But his interviewee that day differed from the profile of most of his interviewees. Alice Zeno was a ninety-four-year-old Afro-Creole woman with a storied life that spanned Reconstruction to the Civil Rights era -- but she had never been a professional musician. She had been married for a time to Eagle Band drummer Henry Zeno, and she was also the mother of clarinetist George Lewis. Russell had previously recorded George Lewis and trumpeter Bunk Johnson in Lewis's home in 1942, creating an album which contributed greatly to the New Orleans jazz revival.<sup>24</sup> In fact, Russell had helped book a performance and recording of George Lewis at the Newport Jazz Festival a few months before conducting Zeno's interview. Russell often travelled to New Orleans to interview musicians about their experiences playing music in the Crescent City. The questions are overwhelming encyclopedic: "Who did you play with?," "Where did you play?," or "Were you playing blues?" abound in these interviews. Of the 700 interviews conducted by Russell, Zeno is the only mother of a jazz musician who was interviewed, a subject so important that he interviewed her on three separate occasions.

Why did Russell bring his heavy and unwieldy mobile recording rig hundreds of miles via train to interview Alice Zeno? Apart from being a matriarch of a musical family, Russell had a very particular motivation. Alice Zeno credibly claimed Senegambian heritage through her great-grandmother, and some knowledge of the Wolof language of modern-day Senegal. Russell was fascinated by Zeno as a living link to Africa. At the time of the interview, the political climate of the Civil Rights movement loomed large. Just four months earlier, the NAACP Youth Council had

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<sup>24</sup> Also important in this regard was Russell's contributions to the bestselling *Jazzmen* (1938). In addition to his role as an interviewer/researcher, Russell was a prolific composer of avant-garde percussion music, sharing bills and friendships with Henry Cowell and John Cage. His musical compositions included "vodou operas" and "Haitian drums," making the episode recalled below especially contradictory. He also See Leta E. Miller, "Henry Cowell and John Cage: Intersections and Influences, 1933–1941," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (2006): 47–112; Ray Smith and Mike Pointon, *Bill Russell and the New Orleans Jazz Revival* (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2015), 9.

begun sponsoring sit-ins at a lunch counter in Wichita, Kansas, a tactic that quickly spread across the country.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile in the academy, there was an ongoing high stakes debate between sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and anthropologist Melville Herskovitz regarding the role of African culture in Black American identity.<sup>26</sup> Russell's search within Black popular culture for African roots therefore proved to be of utmost significance. Would Zeno be able to fill in an important gap that had so far eluded jazz researchers? Could she demonstrate that Senegambian melodies, rhythm, and phrasing had influenced the generation of musicians that produced the "first notes of jazz"? Might jazz scholarship contribute to debates in more professionalized fields such as anthropology, and demonstrate its value to the social sciences? Could a melody, song lyric, or even a sonority conclusively link the blues to West Africa? These questions, or some variation, may have circulated in Russell's mind.

"When black music and dance sounded and embodied its African origins," David Garcia reminds us, we should ask "how, why, and for whom were those soundings and embodiments materializing?"<sup>27</sup> In this case, we may also want to ask what such a single-minded focus excluded. In the tape of the 1959 interview, Russell's colleague, Richard B. Allen, began the questioning:

Allen: What did she sing, your grandmother?

Russell: Did she sing around the house like you do? Any little song?

Zeno: Oh, sometimes she'd sing, but I don't remember it. She was too busy, she had so many grandchildren, you know.

Russell: Yea.

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<sup>25</sup> Gretchen Cassel Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-72* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin A. Yelvington, "The Anthropology of Afro-Latin America and the Caribbean: Diasporic Dimensions," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30, no. 1 (2001): 227-60;

<sup>27</sup> David F. García, *Listening for Africa: Freedom, Modernity, and the Logic of Black Music's African Origins*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 5.

Zeno: And she took such interest in her children, she, oh, she took interest in, explaining you things and showing you things, and telling you about the weather-when it was gonna, the weather was gonna change; she was just like a good astronomer, she could tell you.<sup>28</sup>

Zeno's discussion of her grandmother's attunement to the climatic conditions of St. John the Baptist Parish, where they resided, or her skill for cosmology did not generate further questions from Russell. Instead, the request for a song was repeated. After some back and forth, Alice Zeno did sing for the researchers, a song she learned from her grandmother. It was not sung in Wolof, however, but in Haitian Creole:

*All Haitians, for the last eleven years  
They've been suffering from the greatest misery  
Food is expensive, there is no money  
Hunger has already killed a lot of mothers.*

*God in the sky, to put an end to injustice  
Of these men [full of?] malice  
Who wanted a conquering general  
Geffrard came to put an end to our misery*

*Down with the Cross of Honor  
Down with the Governor  
He took down the Crown of Iron without killing anyone.<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> Alice Zeno, interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>29</sup> Thank you to Laurent Dubois for providing this translation. The French Creole is:

*Tout Haïtiens depuis plus du onze ans  
Ton père souffert de la plus grand misère  
La bouffe et cher peut pas gagné l'argent  
La faim a tué déjà beaucoup des mères  
Dieu fait par ciel, faut ce par leur douleur [renard?]  
Bon dieu du ciel, pur finir l'injustice  
De ces hommes, décrétement de malice  
Qui on voulaient qu'il general vainqueur  
Geffrard arrivé pour finir nos malheur  
On bat La Croix d'honneur  
À bas le gouverneur  
À bas la couronne sans fair mourir personn*

When Allen asked what the song was about, Zeno explained, “Well, it was when they had the revolution in *Hayti*, Haiti, as they call it...and they had President Geffrard, and he had to come to do for them – you know, to help them out, because they were starving, starving, the mothers were starving.”<sup>30</sup> Geffrard was president of Haiti from 1859 until 1867, possibly dating the song to the Civil War and Reconstruction eras in Louisiana, which was close to when Alice Zeno was born in 1864. The imagery of the “cross of honor” is almost as significant as its subject matter. Laurent Dubois notes that the frequent cross-shaped sound holes on the body of Caribbean banjos were quite common in aesthetic practice in the Afro-Atlantic world, and should be understood as “cosmograms linked to the intertwined aesthetic and spiritual practices of the Congo region.”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in “Vodun: West African Roots of Vodou,” Suzanne Preston Blier demonstrates that Fon and Ewe priests in West Africa and the West Indies created cosmograms “composed of a circle, square, or diamonds with an enclosed cross.” This particular symbol is known as the *weke* (also the Fon word for the cosmos) and it provides cardinal directions and a miniaturized version of the world.<sup>32</sup> In Zeno’s “Song from Haiti,” the “cross of honor” (*La Croix d’honneur*) is mobilized to signify political and social harmony, embodied in a bloodless coup by a benevolent leader—a significant divergence from prior transitions of power in post-revolutionary Haiti.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Alice Zeno, interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>31</sup> Laurent Dubois, *The Banjo: America’s Africa Instrument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 68.

<sup>32</sup> Suzanne Preston Blier, “Vodun: West African Roots of Vodou,” in *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, ed. Donald J. Cosentino (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995), 61–87. See also Elyan Jeanine Hill, “Spirited Choreographies: Ritual, Identity, and History-Making in Ewe Performance” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2018), 87; Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983); James Denbow, “Heart and Soul: Glimpses of Ideology and Cosmology in the Iconography of Tombstones from the Loango Coast of Central Africa,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (July 1999): 407–8.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of Geffrard’s rise to power, see Matthew J. Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile: Haiti and Jamaica After Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

Zeno does not have the opportunity to unpack these motifs, as the interview continues without any follow-up questions about this song. Russell quickly jumps to another topic:

Russell: Did they ever talk about a language called Wolof, a tribe over there, in Senegalia?

Zeno: My great grandmother was only eight years old when she was brought here. So she don't remember but very little. She remember her father's name was Roseann Prince. And her mother's name was Zaire. But she was only eight years old when they brought her here... But I don't remember my great grandmother, you know.

Russell: You don't remember any songs that they had?

Zeno: Oh yes! Yes, I do!

Russell: Any Senegalese songs?

Zeno: I used to! Because my great-great-grandmother, my great-grandmother, her mother would show her the songs that she could remember from her home. And she'd sing it to us children.

Russell: If you could remember some of those, that would really be something, uh, extraordinary.

Zeno: Hm?

Allen: If you could remember some of those, that would really be wonderful.

Zeno: Right now, if I wasn't—I'd remember them all. I'd sing them all the time, I tell you, I sang all 'de time.<sup>34</sup>

This is an uncanny scene, where two white men are begging a ninety-four-year-old Black woman to perform her African heritage, an orientation that Dylan Robinson has identified as “hungry listening.”<sup>35</sup> Russell hoped to capture these “Senegalese” songs, which Zeno could neither

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<sup>34</sup> Alice Zeno, interview, January, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>35</sup> Robinson describes the “settler colonial listening positionality” as one that relocates “structures from an external (and often institutional) point of origin in the outside world to an internal location constituted through subjectivity itself,” whereby “settler perception...[is] subtended by possession...and extraction.” Dylan Robinson,

remember nor forget. Yet in the interviewer's obsessive search, what she does sing is devalued and silenced in the transcription. In hopes to complete their search, Russell and Allen attempted take a musical voyage to West Africa, but their ship got stranded in the West Indies. Unlike Russell and Allen, I find the song that Zeno did sing utterly compelling. How did this song become a part of the Zeno family's song library? Why were Haitian songs, and Haitian songs about current events, circulating on a plantation in St. John the Baptist Parish in 1864? Zeno's song was a kind of sequel to a repertoire of revolutionary songs that circulated throughout the Black Caribbean and Louisiana, what I call, following J. Lorand Matory, the live dialogue of the Afro-Atlantic.<sup>36</sup> This library exponentially expanded in the wake of the Haitian Revolution, and slaves in Jamaica and Venezuela could be heard singing songs celebrating the revolution only a month after its success. Similar stories abound across the Caribbean, with accounts of Haitian Revolution-inspired sonic and material culture in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and even Brazil.<sup>37</sup> "[Caribbean] blacks used song (and puns) as a mode of passive resistance," surmises David Geggus, with the lyrics and sonorities of such songs ensuring that slaves stayed "well informed" and that they "responded positively" to the developments in Saint-Domingue, as prerevolutionary Haiti was called.<sup>38</sup> This circuit of underground communication within the African diaspora brought news from the "masterless" Caribbean, including maroon societies and mobile slaves, to slave societies throughout the

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*Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), Chapter 1.

<sup>36</sup> J. Lorand Matory, "The 'New World' Surrounds an Ocean: Theorizing the Live Dialogue between African and African American Cultures," in *In Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, ed. Kevin A. Yelvington (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press., 2006), 159.

<sup>37</sup> David Geggus, "The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: New Light on the Causes of Slave Rebellions," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1987): 276; see also Robert Renny, *A History of Jamaica* (London, 1807, 241). For Cuba, see Matt D. Childs, "A Black French General Arrived to Conquer the Island: Images of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba's Aponte Rebellion," in Geggus, *Impact of the Haitian Revolution*, 136 – 37; for Brazil, see João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 48.

<sup>38</sup> David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 189; Geggus, "The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s," 276.

Americas. Slaveowners complained of the “unknown mode of conveying intelligence amongst Negroes,” and the historian Julius Scott identified a “transatlantic news pipeline” between maroons, sailors, urban “free coloreds...[who] tested the limits of their masterless status,” and “plantation dissidents.” He coins this regional network of communication as the common wind, and argues that it “bound together the societies of Afro-America” in a shared knowledge of struggle.<sup>39</sup> Zeno’s song points to an aspect of this pipeline that is only alluded to by Scott, namely that Afro-Atlantic song was a crucial pillar of this network, used to disseminate news with meanings often out of reach of masters. In doing so, both the urgency and meaning of musical exchange was dramatically altered.

With what velocity, and through which vessels, did the common wind reach the ears of Black communities in the United States? For Black Americans, both free and enslaved, Haiti was a powerful symbol of Black liberation both in the antebellum period and during Reconstruction. Free Black communities in the United States emigrated to Haiti throughout the first half nineteenth century,<sup>40</sup> and refugees who escaped with the Underground Railroad, such as the couple Thomas and Isabella Harrison, sojourned or moved to Haiti where they were joined by other survivors of exodus such as the escaped Brazilian slave and abolitionist Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua.<sup>41</sup> The imagination attached to the Haitian Revolution was enunciated by Frederick Douglass in 1893: “We should not forget that the freedom you and I enjoy today is largely due to the brave stand

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<sup>39</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018), 16, 96, 87. It is acknowledged that Scott does mention musicians in the British regimental bands who deserted in Jamaica.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Antebellum Free Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 145.

<sup>41</sup> Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad* (Cincinnati, OH: Western Tract Society, 1876); cited in “Harrison, Thomas and Harrison, Isabella Benton,” in Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *The Underground Railroad: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Operations* (London: Routledge, 2008); Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

taken by the black sons of Haiti ninety years ago...striking for freedom, they struck for the freedom of every black man in the world.”<sup>42</sup>

A hidden archive of “popular song” enunciated these freedom dreams in the nineteenth century Louisiana. A genre of repeated and adapted ephemera, it was in these lyrics, melodies, and rhythms where a distinct form of knowledge of the Haitian revolution took root in Louisiana and other Afro-Caribbean communities. Writing in 1981, the historian of slave culture Eugene Genovese commented that, “The extent to which the revolution in Saint-Domingue fired the imagination of the southern slaves [of the United States] remains a matter of conjecture, but some telling signs command attention. Notably, the slaves in Louisiana were heard signing revolutionary songs first heard in the early days of the revolution in Saint-Domingue.”<sup>43</sup> Recent scholarship has documented explicit instances of what Genovese discussed as conjuncture, but ironically, has not systematically tended to the musical elements he pointed to as evidence of Atlantic inspiration. Yet there are numerous examples of musicians, both inspired by and from Haiti, performing throughout Louisiana and the South. On Georgia’s rice coast, white observers witnessed a dance called the “the sioca,” which was described as “a voluptuous dance imported from San Domingo [Haiti].”<sup>44</sup> In another instance, a “wanted” poster for an escaped slave from Charleston reveals that a New Orleans barber named Pierre was born in Le Cap, Saint-Domingue. His erstwhile owner complained in the ad that he was identifiable by “a Tambarine [sic] unstrung in his hand and a pair of razors, from which it is presumed he plays on it,” and “a great quantity of clothes.” He had

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<sup>42</sup> “Frederick Douglass’ Delivered Speech on Haiti at the World’s Fair,” America’s Story from America’s Library, January 2, 1893, [http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/progress/jb\\_progress\\_douglass\\_3.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/progress/jb_progress_douglass_3.html), accessed November 2, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 97. Genovese does not leave a citation for this claim.

<sup>44</sup> Ralph Betts Flanders, *Plantation Slavery In Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 171.

learned how to drum in Saint-Domingue, providing an example of performative Afro-Atlantic culture that was on the loose (both literally and figuratively) in antebellum New Orleans.<sup>45</sup> Through Spanish America, revolutionary songs referencing the “Negro Toussaint” and the Saint-Domingue uprising were anathema security-obsessed for colonial officials, who struggled to ideologically supervise Africans and *Afrodescendientes* in bondage while expanding plantation production.<sup>46</sup> Zeno’s song was one of several that belonged to a century-long sonic common wind, an exchange which tirelessly spread the underground news of the Haitian Revolution and its political afterlives through expressive culture in Louisiana and throughout the Caribbean basin.

### 1.3 The Saint-Domingue Refugees: A Critical Assessment

The arrival of almost twenty thousand refugees from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana from 1791-1810 more than doubled New Orleans’ population and tripled its community of free people of color.<sup>47</sup> This Demographic upheaval yielded mixed results for enslaved people in the Crescent City and the surrounding parishes. The refugees, who included white, free people of color, and enslaved Black Saint-Domingueans in almost equal number, brought musical and material culture

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<sup>45</sup>This story is recounted Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery’s Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24-25. She finds the story in the ad for a runaway that Charlue Guillard placed in the *Courier de la Louisiane* on July 23, 1810. For Black music as diasporic literacy, see Sara Elizabeth Johnson-La O, “Migrant Recitals: Pan-Caribbean Interchanges in the Aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, 1791–1850” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford, California, Stanford University, 2001), 118.

<sup>46</sup>“Venezuela Song, 1801,” Academia de la Historia, Caracas, Sección Civiles, Signature A13-5159-2, report of 24 Feb. 1801), in David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 188; “American Song,” in Archivo General Indias, Estado, 59, n. 6/ 6, discussed in Consuelo Naranjo Orovio and José F. Buscaglia, “Race as a Weapon: Defending the Colonial Plantation Order in the Name of Civilization, 1791-1850,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4, no. 2 (December 2015): 6.

<sup>47</sup> Paul F. Lachance, “The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 29, no. 2 (1988): 109–41.

from one former French colony to another. For instance, a group of Saint-Dominguean immigrants almost immediately founded the South's most renowned opera company upon arrival.<sup>48</sup> However, such cultural transfer was certainly not always emancipatory from the point of view of Louisiana's enslaved peoples.

Testimony from the descendants of enslaved Louisianans recalled that some of the cruelest masters arrived from the "jewel of the Antilles," as Saint-Domingue was popularly known, a reference to its infamous recognition as "the most valuable colonial territory on earth."<sup>49</sup> Refugees from this region were a class obsessed with monetary gain above all else, lacking the skill set and discipline to produce even their own subsistence, a task reluctantly delegated to their enslaved laborers who became skilled farmers and gardeners who practiced diverse polycropping.<sup>50</sup> Speaking of the island's slaveowners, in 1782 Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur complained that "A perpetual pursuit of Gain & Pleasures seem'd to be the idol of the Island."<sup>51</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Desdorides wrote while stationed there that "in Saint-Domingue violent agitations of the heart take the place of principles; except for illusions of love, dreams of pleasure, extravagances of luxury

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<sup>48</sup> Nathalie Dessens, "St Domingue Refugees in New Orleans: Identity and Cultural Influences," in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004*, ed. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 24. Many slaves complained that French-speaking Creoles were the cruelest masters, and Saint-Domingue refugees' successful technological breakthrough made sugar-cultivation and processing viable in Louisiana, see "Lynette Ater Tanner, ed., *Chained to the Land: Voices from Cotton & Cane Plantations* (Salem, NC: Blair, 2014), Location 218 (Kindle Version).

<sup>50</sup> Dorit Brixius, "From Ethnobotany to Emancipation: Slaves, Plant Knowledge, and Gardens on Eighteenth-Century Isle de France," *History of Science*, no. Journal Article (2019): 5. For a discussion of this dependence in British colonies, see Kathleen S. Murphy, "Translating the Vernacular: Indigenous and African Knowledge in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic," *Atlantic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011): 35. Murphy discusses the example of James Papaw who found a remedy for "inveterate venereal Distempers," showing that Afro-Atlantic medicinal knowledge was also sought out by planters.

<sup>51</sup> J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur, "Sketches of Jamaica and Bermudas and Other Subjects," in *More Letters from the American Farmer: An Edition of the Essays in English Left Unpublished by Crèvecoeur*, ed. Dennis D. Moore (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 106-13. See also Christopher Iannini, "'The Itinerant Man': Crèvecoeur's Caribbean, Raynal's Revolution, and the Fate of Atlantic Cosmopolitanism," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2004): 201-34; and Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 25.

and greed, the heart knows no other adorations... Men there reduce everything to financial gain.”<sup>52</sup> Alexandre-Stanislas de Wimpffen, a minor nobleman, opined that “The Commerce of France is the true owner of Saint-Domingue.”<sup>53</sup> This single-minded obsession amongst the ruling class was admired by several of France’s largest banks and merchant houses, who invested in plantations with an abnormally high rate of return.<sup>54</sup> The colony’s output contributed as much as 15 percent to France’s overall economic growth between 1716 and 1787, a period considered the country’s major expansionary years during the *ancien régime*.<sup>55</sup> Saint-Domingue generated so much value for France, and global capitalism in general, that Abbé Raynal argued in 1770 that its sugar production should be considered the pillar of modernity, as “the principal cause of the rapid movement which stirs the universe.”<sup>56</sup>

What spurred such rapid profit maximization was a system that Burnard and Garrigus have called a “plantation machine,” an integrated economy that entailed both the growth of cane and its production into sugar crystals. This was a process so arduous and so technical that it required immense reserves of labor, “deploying hundreds of workers factory-like in an array of complex

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<sup>52</sup> Desdorides, “Remarques sur la colonie de St Domingue, par Mr Desdorides, lieutenant-colonel du régiment provincial d’artillerie de Besançon, 1779, dédié au prince de Montbarey, ministre de la guerre,” 1779, 13, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3453, Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Alexandre-Stanislas de Wimpffen, *Voyage à Saint-Domingue Pendant Les Années 1788, 1789 et 1790* (Paris, 1797), quoted in Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 25.

<sup>54</sup> The Chaurand merchant house of Nantes generated strong profits in the 1780s for its investment in Saint-Domingue plantations. During this time their investment in the West Indies totaled 2 million livres, a staggering amount. See Albane Forestier, “A ‘Considerable’ Credit in the Late Eighteenth Century French West Indies Trade: The Chaurands of Nantes,” *French History* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 48–68. As Burnard and Garrigus note, “Returns on plantations whose profits we know something about, such as the Fleuriau estate, in the Cul-de-Sac region in the Port-au-Prince hinterland, yielded net profits of more than 15 percent per annum between 1775 and 1784.” Some firms did go out of business due to their investments in Saint-Domingue, mostly due to bad business practice, and not because of the island’s unprofitability. Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 224.

<sup>55</sup> Guillaume Daudin, *Commerce et prospérité: La France au XVIIIe siècle - 2e édition* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2005), 77-78.

<sup>56</sup> Abbé Raynal, as cited in Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar, and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6; John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York, NY Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

interdependent tasks with careful attention to time.”<sup>57</sup> The system’s relentless need for labor killed five to ten percent of Dominguan plantation slaves every year, what Laënnec Hurbon as called a form of “cannibalistic consumption.”<sup>58</sup>

The planters who had been masters of this universe of exploitation were a group hardened by war, defeat, and dislocation, and were desperate to retain their class privilege and property when they landed in Louisiana. They brought with them a volatile mix of reactionary ideologies, a propensity for violence, an attachment to slave culture, and the technical knowledge to turn Louisiana into a “historical hell.”<sup>59</sup> “Thousands of black and white Creole families from Saint-Domingue” arrived in New Orleans, notes Glenn Conrad, and many of them “joined their relatives [in Saint John the Baptist Parish] and convinced them of the merits of substituting cane production for previously grown crops.”<sup>60</sup> Long thought impossible because of winter frosts, Louisiana sugar processing was first perfected in Saint John the Baptist Parish by Antoine Morin, a chemist who fled Saint-Domingue. He and his business partner were named “saviour of Louisiana” by the commercial elite. His invention of granulated sugar occurred in the same year as Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin, and both industrial revolutions of United States slavery transformed rural Louisiana.<sup>61</sup> Alice Zeno’s grandmother and great grandmother lived through a revolution in

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<sup>57</sup> Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>58</sup> Laënnec Hurbon, *Le Barbare Imaginaire* (Port-Au-Prince, Haiti: Éditions Henri Deschamps, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> “Historical hell” is a phrase used by Rashauna Johnson to describe antebellum Louisiana in *Slavery’s Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Glenn R. Conrad, *The German Coast: Abstracts of the Civil Records of St. Charles and St. John the Baptist Parishes, 1804-1812* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1981). For attachment to slave culture, see James Sweet, “Research Note: New Perspectives on Kongo in Revolutionary Haiti,” *The Americas* 74, no. 1 (2017): 83–97, which describes the learning of Kikongo by white planters.

<sup>60</sup> Glenn R. Conrad, *The German Coast: Abstracts of the Civil Records of St. Charles and St. John the Baptist Parishes, 1804-1812* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1981), viii.

<sup>61</sup> “Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation, Thibodaux Louisiana,” Historic Structures, accessed June 30, 2020, [http://www.historic-structures.com/la/thibodaux/laurel\\_valley\\_sugar\\_plantation.php](http://www.historic-structures.com/la/thibodaux/laurel_valley_sugar_plantation.php).

sugar production as small-scale plantations producing indigo were replaced with massive sugar refineries that breathed black smog and could be heard from miles away.<sup>62</sup> Sugar plantations became so large that they resembled towns. “We had a sugar house right on de plantation,” recalled Catherine Cornelius. “You know it was a big plantation cause ah remember well [the] dey, ah was standing on de levee when General Butler was on his way to the siege of Vicksburg. He said, ‘girls what town is dis?’ Ah said, ‘Dis aint no town, dis a plantation.’”<sup>63</sup>

Louisiana’s sugar parishes quickly developed a special reputation for terrifying conditions rarely matched throughout the slave south. The site of Solomon Northrup’s enslavement, which he recounted in his monograph *Twelve Years a Slave*, was a Louisiana sugar plantation.<sup>64</sup> Planters of sugar in Louisiana thus shared with their Saint-Domingue sugar-producing predecessors a “a genocidal state of affairs maintained by an astounding rate of slave consumption.”<sup>65</sup> The extreme profitability of sugar profits created an incentive for planters to work their slaves to death if it resulted in more cut cane, since slaves were cheaper than a lost hogshead of sugar. The natural decrease of the slave population in Louisiana’s sugar districts was fueled by an obsession with capital accumulation. Both such economic values and the technologies needed to industrially transform the countryside was almost entirely an imitation (and an importation) of Saint-Domingue’s plantation machine.

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<sup>62</sup> John McCusker notes that the sugar refinery in Saint John the Baptist Parish where Kid Ory grew up deeply affected him in *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 9.

<sup>63</sup> Lynette Ater Tanner, ed., *Chained to the Land: Voices from Cotton & Cane Plantations* (Salem, NC: Blair, 2014), Location 1341 (Kindle Version).

<sup>64</sup> Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841* (Auburn, NY: Applewood Books, 1853), 248-249.

<sup>65</sup> Doris Lorraine Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean*, Book, Whole (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 240.

Refugee free people of color—who I refer to as Creoles of Color—also made dynamic contributions to Louisianan society, as they had in Saint-Domingue. The Creole of Color revolutionary Jean Baptiste Chavanes—who fought the American Revolution on the side of the United States—rose up with a cadre of free people of color against the French government in Haiti led by Vincent Ogé in 1790. They demanded equal rights regardless of color but stopped short of calling for the abolition of slavery. Nonetheless, their militancy and international connections helped spark the Haitian Revolution. After Ogé was brutally executed on a board, with his limbs drawn and broken by rope, Dutty Boukman and his alliance of slaves and maroons began their wholesale burning of plantations, commencing the Haitian Revolution in earnest.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, free people of color were a complex class with shifting alliances in colonial Saint-Domingue. Several owned plantations and slaves themselves, and maintained feelings of cultural superiority to enslaved members of the diaspora.<sup>67</sup> But as I show in Chapter 1, a significant number were committed to the abolition of slavery, and this faction became more prominent as they migrated to New Orleans and encountered the extreme repressiveness of Anglo-Americans. In the Crescent City, Creoles of Color formed a distinct counterculture rooted in Radical Republicanism and maintained links to Haiti and other Caribbean countries well into the late nineteenth century. Creoles of Color contributed a significant number of musicians to the jazz revolution, including Daniel Desdunes, a freedom rider and cornet player. Desdunes was descended from a politically

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<sup>66</sup> Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 81-84; Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 36-37.

<sup>67</sup> John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

active Creole of Color family who migrated from of Haiti during Napoleon’s counterattack on Haiti and who served in the Civil War on the Union side.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the difficulties of growing sugar cane in Louisiana, the human cargo Saint-Domingue planters brought with them to Louisiana was a more complicated asset for the functioning of a sugar economy. Although they possessed the much-coveted skills to harvest, grind, and granulate cane, these migrant slaves who had previously worked in Saint-Domingue had witnessed a revolution which had almost made them free.<sup>69</sup> Although not as well documented as their white and Creole of Color counterparts, their presence in their new home was noted by a variety of assorted testimonies. Mrs. M. S. Fayman, born free near Baton Rouge but reenslaved as a child, was the granddaughter of a “Haitian Negress” and “a Frenchman.” While enslaved on a Kentucky tobacco plantation, she taught French to the masters’ children.<sup>70</sup> Across the Caribbean, colonial historians and officials considered these slaves to be particularly dangerous. Writing from another destination for enslaved Haitians, Santiago de Cuba, in 1909, Cuban historian Bacardí y Moreau relays that prior generations of planters considered the Haitian-descended slaves to

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<sup>68</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Caryn Cossé Bell, “‘Une Chimère’: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Creole New Orleans,” in *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 140–60; Caryn Cossé Bell, “Haitian Immigration to Louisiana in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*, ed. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York Public Library Digital Gallery, 2005), <http://www.inmotionaame.org/print.cfm?migration=5>; Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, “The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State Museum, 1992), 201–61; Michel Fabre, “The New Orleans Press and French-Language Literature by Creoles of Color,” in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 29–49; Anna Brickhouse, “‘L’Ouragan de Flammes’ (‘The Hurricane of Flames’): New Orleans and Transamerican Catastrophe, 1866/2005,” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1097–1127;

<sup>69</sup> As Glenn Conrad notes, “On the German Coast, the Pain, Trouard and Charbonnet families had strong ties with Saint-Domingue.” Glenn R. Conrad, *The German Coast: Abstracts of the Civil Records of St. Charles and St. John the Baptist Parishes, 1804-1812* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1981), 5.

<sup>70</sup> “Mrs. M. S. Fayman,” in Lynette Ater Tanner, ed., *Chained to the Land: Voices from Cotton & Cane Plantations* (Salem, NC: Blair, 2014), Location 1901 (Kindle Version).

possess “an intellectual culture superior to that of other slaves who were not French property”<sup>71</sup> and colonial governors banned Haitian refugees altogether for fear of their corruptive influence.<sup>72</sup>

In 1811, just one year after the Saint-Domingue refugee wave concluded, plantation workers in Zeno’s parish launched the largest slave revolt in United States history, led by a Saint-Domingue transplanted slave named Charles Deslondes. On January 8, 125 rebels marched from sugar plantations in and near present-day LaPlace plantation in Saint John the Baptist Parish (one parish from where Alice Zeno’s grandmother lived) toward the city of New Orleans. More slaves joined on as they marched, and in total estimates range from 200 to 500 slaves who participated. Expressing their hostility to the sugar plantation as an institution, during their two-day, twenty-mile march, the rebels burned five plantation houses, several sugarhouses, and whole fields of cane. The rebellion, known as the German Coast Uprising, was frequently remembered by traumatized planters as one in which drums and singing suggested a high level of military-like organization.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> “Una cultura intelectual mayor que la que poseía el otro esclavo, que no era propiedad francesa; y cultura debemos llamar a la expansión del sentimiento de la raza oprimida, que al exteriorizarlos había de hacerlos brotar, como en todo tiempo han brotado al igual en los pueblos que sufren, valiéndose de dos artes al servicio siempre de los oprimidos: la poesía y la música.” Translation done by myself. Emilio Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba* (Madrid: Graf. Breogan, 1909, rpt. 1972), 508. This quote also appears in Sara E. Johnson, “Cinquillo Consciousness: The Formation of a Pan-Caribbean Musical Aesthetic,” in *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 35–58.

<sup>72</sup> Arango y Parreño, in a 1791 letter to the Spanish king argued that the “the ideas of Toussaint the Black” were threatening to Cuba and that Haiti’s destruction of its plantation complex was “catastrophic.” During the exodus of Saint-Domingue refugees in 1803, thousands of enslaved or free Blacks over the age of 13 were prohibited from landing in Santiago de Cuba; they were held instead offshore and sent to mainland Americas as soon as possible. Francisco de Arango y Parreño, *Obras*, vol. 2 (Havana: Dirección de Cultura, Ministerio de Educación, 1952); Consuelo Naranjo Orovio and José F. Buscaglia, “Race as a Weapon: Defending the Colonial Plantation Order in the Name of Civilization, 1791-1850,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4, no. 2 (December 2015): 4; Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, “Rosalie of the Poulard Nation: Freedom, Law, and Dignity in the Era of the Haitian Revolution,” in *Assumed Identities: The Meanings of Race in the Atlantic World*, ed. John D. Garrigus and Christopher Morris (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 125-26.

<sup>73</sup> Robert L. Paquette, “‘A Horde of Brigands?’ The Great Louisiana Slave Revolt of 1811 Reconsidered,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 35, no. 1 (2009): 72–96; Junius Peter Rodriguez, “Rebellion on the River Road: The Ideology and Influence of Louisiana’s German Coast Slave Insurrection of 1811,” in *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*, ed. John R. McKivigan, Stanley Harrold, and Prof John R. McKivigan (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). For a discussion on the Congolese roots of such combinations of drumming and resistance, see John K. Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1101–13; and, John K. Thornton “I Am the Subject of

These descriptions echo the practices of Haitian revolutionaries. Maroon leader Halou in the Port-Au-Prince region headed an army of two thousand, whose leader “marched preceded by the music of drums, labmis [conch shells], trumpets and sorcerers.”<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth McAlister suggests that this “seems very possibly a historical source for the parading festival called ‘rara.’”<sup>75</sup> *Rara* is frequently cited as a contributor to New Orleans second-line culture.<sup>76</sup> Like the cross in Zeno’s song, there are Kongolse antecedents to *rara* which were nonetheless deeply politicized in Haiti as part of a culture of antislavery and counter-plantation resistance.<sup>77</sup> The history of the German Coast uprising was kept alive in popular memory of enslaved peoples, both in coded song and the continued processional culture that would eventuate in the communal second-line.<sup>78</sup> If the

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the King of Congo’: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 181–214.

<sup>74</sup> Madiou 1847, cited in Jean Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons* (New York: Blyden Press, 1981), 346.

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth McAlister in Sasha Frere-Jones et al., “Roundtable: Haitian Music, Part 2: ‘What Does Revolution Sound Like?’” *The New Yorker*, July 9, 2009, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/sasha-frere-jones/roundtable-haitian-music-part-2-what-does-revolution-sound-like>.

<sup>76</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 31–42.

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). McAlister also writes that “There is indeed historical evidence that enslaved Africans practiced Rara in some form during the colonial period and that early Rara bands functioned for the rebel armies as analogues to French military marching bands during the Haitian Revolution.” Elizabeth McAlister, “Listening for Geographies: Music as Sonic Compass Pointing Toward African and Christian Diasporic Horizons in the Caribbean,” *Black Music Research Journal* 32, no. 2 (2012): 37.

<sup>78</sup> On the folklore of the 1811 revolt, see Marcia G. Gaudet, *Tales from the Levee: The Folklore of St. John the Baptist Parish* (Lafayette, Louisiana: Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1984). Lawrence Powell, in a critical review of Daniel Ramussen’s *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America’s Largest Slave Revolt* (2011), critiques Ramussen’s assertion that Deslondes or the diverse Afro-Louisianan rebels were influenced by Saint-Domingue. “It is not clear whether they were embarking on a Haitian-style revolution, trying for a breakout, or avenging some terrible wrong. Save for a fugitive comment from a convinced slave about wanting to kill whites, the record is nearly mute.” Ramussen’s book has been widely criticized for its lack of original research and its general arrogance, but Powell’s comments capture a debate that extends back several decades, if not a century. French historian Alain Yacou (1984) and Eugene Genovese (1981) asserted that Haitian influences were systemic to slave rebellions in Caribbean and the United States South respectively. In 1997, *A Turbulent Time*, edited by Geggus and Gaspar, reject the influence of Saint-Domingue during the age of slave revolt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mimi Sheller has critiqued Geggus and Gaspar, arguing that the work in this volume depicts a rebellion whose rank and file were stuck in “African-oriented peasant worldviews,” a depiction which denies the enslaved “historical ‘agency’ which many Caribbean scholars have tired to claim” and denied them “ideological sophistication,” strengthening elitist historiography which argues that Caribbean democracy was “bestowed” by “elite tutelage.” I take issue with Geggus et. al and Sheller’s suggestion that “African-oriented peasant worldviews” were incompatible with radical democracy, although I may be overstating the case with this assertion. Regardless, the question is unsettled, and recent volumes

“plantation machine” had successfully inserted itself into Louisiana, so, too, did the counter-plantation political culture of its workforce. It is impossible to overstate the importance of Louisiana’s demographic explosion in this period, which included enslaved revolutionaries, slaveholding elites, and free people of color caught somewhere in between. They brought complex technologies and cultural practices rooted in the confrontation between the plantation system and its enslaved laborers.

These examples demonstrate how synthetic Haitian and Afro-Louisianan creolization was in the sugar parishes. This dissertation also explores this process of creolization between (a) the free and unfree people of color among these new arrivals and (b) Louisiana’s already developed Black culture. Édouard Glissant’s use of the term ‘Creole’ centers on the intermixing of various cultures living in close geographic proximity due to migration, enslavement, and agricultural production as seen in the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Creolization describes the mechanism by which cultural and semiotic elements of heterogenous cultures were shared and mixed in

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continue to build on this ambiguity. See Lawrence N. Powell, review of *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America’s Largest Slave Revolt*, by Daniel Rasmussen, *The Journal of Southern History* 78, no. 2 (2012): 446–48; Alan Yacou, “Le Project Des Révoltes Serviles de l’Île de Cuba Dans La Première Moitié Du XIXe Siècle,” *Revue Du CERC (Guadeloupe)* 1 (1984); Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997); Mimi Sheller, review of *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, by David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 54 (1998): 174–75. Junius Peter Rodriguez, “Rebellion on the River Road: The Ideology and Influence of Louisiana’s German Coast Slave Insurrection of 1811,” in *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*, ed. John R. McKivigan, Stanley Harrold, and Prof John R. McKivigan (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), also merits attention. For a more recent treatment that suggests the Haitian Revolution catalyzed a revolutionary imagination within the region which informed a broader anticolonial politics, see Ifeoma C. K. Nwankwo, “‘Charged with Sympathy for Haiti’: Harnessing the Power of Blackness and Cosmopolitanism in the Wake of the Haitian Revolution,” in *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. Doris Lorraine Garraway (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 91–112. For influences of the Haitian Revolution within slave uprisings later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Alfred Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2006) and Monroe Fordham, “Nineteenth-Century Black Thought in the United States: Some Influences of the Santo Domingo Revolution,” *Journal of Black Studies* 6, no. 2 (December 1, 1975): 115–26.

cohabitated communities.<sup>79</sup> By “creolization” I am thus referring to a process distinct from “cultural mixture,” a clarification offered by Richard Rath: “[T]he demographics of forced labor, mixed origin, displacement, natural increase, racism, and inequality serve to distinguish creolization from other related forms of cultural fashioning like syncretism, hybridity, transfer, borrowing, retention, or translation.”<sup>80</sup> Rath makes special mention of the musical aspects of creolization, noting that “a vocabulary of scales and rhythms, and a syntax of customs and rules” were especially important ways for “displaced African ethnic cultures” to make sense of their world and create new forms of identification “by means of negotiation.”<sup>81</sup>

Nathalie Dessens has described this cultural interaction between Haitians and enslaved Louisianans as a “secondary creolization,” since both cultures were already creolized.<sup>82</sup> Keeping this historical process front and center in our minds helps to contextualize the frequent references to Haitian culture by early jazz musicians. Drummer Abby “Chinee” Foster remembered playing “Haitian drums” in the 1900s, and singer Lizzie Miles composed, sang, and recorded “Haitian Blues” in 1923.<sup>83</sup> Secondary creolization is an ongoing process that propels new musical fusions into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *cinquillo*-inflected rhythms that Jelly Roll Morton (himself

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<sup>79</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); see also Stuart Hall, “Creolité and the Process of Creolization,” in *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations*, ed. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Shirley Anne Tate (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 12–25.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Cullen Rath, “Drums and Power: Ways of Creolizing Music in Coastal South Carolina and Georgia, 1730-1790,” in *Creolization in the Americas: Cultural Adaptations to the New World*, ed. Steven Reinhardt and David Buisseret (Arlington, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 99.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 72.

<sup>82</sup> Nathalie Dessens, “The Saint-Domingue Refugees and the Preservation of Gallic Culture in Early American New Orleans,” *French Colonial History* 8, no. 1 (2007): 53–69.

<sup>83</sup> Abby “Chinee” Foster, Interview, March 9, 1961, Hogan Jazz Archive; Lizzie Miles, *Haitian Blues / Your Time Now*, Shellac, 10", 78 RPM (The New Emerson, 1923); Scott Yanow, “Lizzie Miles: Complete Recorded Works, Volume 1 (1922-1923),” in *All Music Guide to the Blues: The Definitive Guide to the Blues*, ed. Vladimir Bogdanov, Chris Woodstra, and Stephen Thomas Erlewine (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2003), 402.

descended from Saint-Domingue refugees) called the “Latin Tinge” were expressions of this Caribbean and Haitian inheritance in Louisiana’s Black musics.<sup>84</sup>

Placing secondary creolization at the center instead of the margins of Louisiana’s Black musics challenges the notion, still retained as common sense despite important interventions, that African American music is a fusion of “European” harmony and “African” rhythm.<sup>85</sup> As Sara Johnson’s research has shown, “formulas that define Caribbean music as a mixture of African and European elements do not take into account the importance of another level of fusion: the interaction of inter-island migrants.” In the case of the musical traditions under her study, which includes *Bomba y plena*, (Puerto Rico), *tambo* (Jamaica), and *Tumba Francesa* (Cuba), they constitute the afterlives of the Haitian Revolution and the forced migration of nearly freed slaves. “Much like jazz or salsa music of a later period,” writes Johnson, “these musics were built upon the migratory labor of black artists and their publics. Saint-Domingue, and the French Caribbean more generally, became one center of diffusion for elements of these collaborative traditions

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<sup>84</sup> Christopher Washburne opens up the discussion of Haitian rhythms in early jazz, but he does not explore it specifically or analyze what a Haitian “clave” might sound like. “3,000 free black refugees...brought with them their French, Haitian, and Cuban music traditions. Unlike other U.S. cities, the unique environment of New Orleans enabled these immigrants to retain their native languages and cultivate their cultural traditions.” My interest is in exploring those cultural traditions. Christopher Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 64. For Jelly Roll Morton’s Haitian connection, see Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young - Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 110–23.

<sup>85</sup> A quick example of some of the literature that makes some variation of this arguments includes Andre Hodeir, *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* (New York: Black Cat/Grove Press, 1961); Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Peter Ecklund, “‘Louis Licks’ and Nineteenth-Century Cornet Etudes: The Roots of Melodic Improvisation as Seen in the Jazz Style of Louis Armstrong,” *Historic Brass Society Journal* 13 (January 1, 2001): 90–101. As Vic Hobson has noted, “there persists a view that harmony in jazz is predominantly of European deviation.” For a discussion of this ongoing tradition of scholarship, see Vic Hobson, *Creating the Jazz Solo: Louis Armstrong and Barbershop Harmony* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 136-144.

throughout the region.”<sup>86</sup> As Johnson alludes to here but does not discuss in detail, jazz was an important part of this distinguished repertoire.

#### 1.4 Creolization in the “Long Song” of the Counter-Plantation

Creolization included a transformation beyond amalgamating rhythms and scales; it portended to a synchronization of political consciousness amongst diverse groups of forced African migrants. Matory has referred to this as an ongoing process of “live dialogue” amongst Afro-Atlantic populations,<sup>87</sup> while Jason Stanyek has suggested that “pan-African music making” was a means of “overcome[ing] disjuncture” and embracing difference.<sup>88</sup> In this socio-musical process, musical fusion created “the consciousness of [Afro-Caribbean] unity,” in the words of Johnson.<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps the most powerful articulation of this phenomena is written by the jazz musician and theorist Sidney Bechet. In his autobiography *Treat It Gentle*, Bechet provides an allegory for exploring how Afro-Atlantic music, slave spirituality, and a shared commitment to resistance congealed during rituals of musical creolization, a process he termed “The Long Song.”<sup>90</sup> Narrated from the point of view of his grandfather, a maroon named Omar, Bechet describes a moment of collective singing in the swamps outside of New Orleans.

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<sup>86</sup> Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 144.

<sup>87</sup> J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>88</sup> Jason Stanyek, “Diasporic Improvisation and the Articulation of Intercultural Music” (Ph.D. Dissertation, San Diego, California, University of California, San Diego, 2004), 19.

<sup>89</sup> Sara Elizabeth Johnson-La O, “Migrant Recitals: Pan-Caribbean Interchanges in the Aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, 1791–1850” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford, California, Stanford University, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> Bechet, *Treat it Gentle*, 9, 140.

[T]hey were telling themselves about things that were inside them...and the only way they knew to tell it was by singing about a [metaphorical] place where they all used to be happy once—how they stand listening in that place hearing sounds... That’s why there was this music in them; music was all they had to forget with. Or they could use it for a way of remembering that was as good as forgetting.<sup>91</sup>

Bechet suggests the sharing of cultural memory allowed for collective transcendence from the conditions of the plantation. Crucially, however, Bechet makes room for the individuality of each song and each memory. It is only in the process of singing to each other that they can discuss “things that were inside them,” where their fear of repression from white censors could be relaxed. Bechet poetically narrates the moments of this “secondary creolization” to describe the birth of jazz, and it had resonance with Bechet’s own interest in Haitian musical and political culture. In 1939, Sidney Bechet recorded several Haitian songs with Willie “the Lion” Smith and a band a band that dubbed themselves “the Haitian Orchestra,” which would later be compiled on an LP called *Sidney Bechet: Tropical Mood*.<sup>92</sup> When he described he grandfather, “one-armed Omar,” he was also reproducing the legend of Mackandal, the Haitian maroon who led an uprising in Saint-Domingue in the mid-eighteenth century and who, like Omar, had one arm and made potions for spiritual and physical protection.<sup>93</sup>

Importantly, Zeno’s song was, unlike the above-mentioned material, in circulation about 50 years after the Revolution—between 1859 and 1867. This suggests that communication between Haitians and Afro-Louisianans was ongoing into the Reconstruction period. But the fact

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<sup>91</sup> Bechet, *Treat it Gentle*, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Sidney Bechet: *Tropical Mood*, Swingtime 1014 (Copenhagen), reissued 1988.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis Porter and Michael Ullman discuss Bechet’s “Haitian Orchestra” in “Sidney Bechet and His Long Song,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 16, no. 2 (1988): 135–50. For the Haitian roots of the story of Bras-Coupé, see John K. Bardes, “The Notorious Bras Coupé: A Slave Rebellion Replayed in Memory, History, and Anxiety,” *American Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2020): 1–23.

that Zeno framed her song as being “from the Haitian Revolution” might provide a clue as to the song’s reception and the context in which it was heard.<sup>94</sup> At the time of Zeno’s birth in 1864, Saint John the Baptist Parish, and Louisiana as a whole, would have felt like a very different place than only five years prior. Following the conclusion of the Civil War, rural mass meetings of freedpeople in former plantations became the core of a movement for “grassroot democracy” led and initiated by “freed people in the American South” whose political base was a “broad-based community of poor people, linked with a distant and nebulous power in the nation’s capital.”<sup>95</sup> At the core of this project were autonomous institutions of freed Black communities that included “new churches, benevolent associations, schools, and labor cooperatives.”<sup>96</sup> This was a process of “democracy from below”, what Chandra Manning has called “state building from the inside out.”<sup>97</sup>

Reconstruction felt, in many ways, like a revolution. The words of one alarmed planter reveal the ideological stakes: “I don’t intend that any damned radical n—— shall live on my place.”<sup>98</sup> Black radicals agreed. In the words of the Black Georgia minister Bayley Wyat, at the core of emancipation were not only questions of who could vote or the collection of wages for hours worked, but who owned the land: “Our wives, our children, our husbands has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locates upon; for that reason we have a divine right

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<sup>94</sup> Zeno’s song could therefore also point to the counterrevolutionary discourses that circulated with news of the Haitian Revolution. As Matthew Calvin has shown, the memory of the Haitian Revolution was appropriated both by Antebellum antislavery authors who crafted a gendered “heroic narrative” celebrating the bravery of Haitian military leaders such as Toussaint-Louverture, and by slaveholders like Bryan Edwards of Jamaica told the story of the “horrors of St. Domingo” so well that it would be repeated into the early days of Reconstruction. See Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 6-8.

<sup>95</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 6, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 44.

<sup>97</sup> Chandra Manning, “Emancipation as State-Building from the Inside Out,” in *Beyond Freedom: New Directions in American Emancipation*, ed. Jim Downs (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2017).

<sup>98</sup> Testimony of Joshua A. Morris, in U.S. Senate, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1872, S. Rep 41, vol. 11, p. 318; quoted in Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 73.

to the land.” Wyatt then called the very production of wealth into question. “Didn’t dem large cities in de North grow up on de cotton and de sugars and de rice dat we made...? I say dey has grown rich and my people poor.” This “doctrine of divine right to the lands,” complained a Freedman’s Bureau agent, had been “industriously preached to eager listeners,” causing chaos for implanting post-war capitalist social relations.<sup>99</sup> Roger J. Hilton, a freedman bureau’s agent more sympathetic to the agricultural politics of the freedpeople, celebrated the latter’s initiative: “[Freedpeoples’] small farms destroy the serfdom of capital,” he wrote in a report to his superiors, and he based his theory on his firsthand observation of democratic and cooperative economics in Huntsville, Alabama.<sup>100</sup>

In this mission, the freedpeople were joined by the free people of color, known in Louisiana as Creoles of Color. Their organ, the New Orleans *Tribune*, was the first black-owned newspaper in the South. It opined in 1864 that “no true republican government” could exist “unless the land and wealth in general, are distributed among the great mass of the inhabitants...No more room [exists] in our society for an oligarch of slaveholders or property holders.”<sup>101</sup> Many of them were descended from the wave of Creoles of Color who migrated from Saint-Domingue, and their proto-

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<sup>99</sup> Apparently, Wyatt’s speech caused a stir with the Freedman’s Bureau, who complained that rent was not being paid to white landowners for lands tilled by Black farmers: “While the people are very poor, much of this delinquency is, in my opinion, due to the doctrine of divine right to the lands, which has been industriously preached to eager listeners.” See “85: Report of a Speech by a Virginia Freedman; and Freedmen’s Bureau Superintendent of the 5th District of Virginia to the Headquarters of the Virginia Freedmen’s Bureau Assistant Commissioner,” in René Hayden et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Land & Labor, 1866-1867*, vol. 2, 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 336-341; for other discussions of this incident, see Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 486; and Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen’s Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1980), 178.

<sup>100</sup> “161: Freedman’s Bureau Inspector to the Headquarters of the Freedmen’s Bureau Assistant Commissioner for Kentucky, Tennessee, and Northern Alabama,” in Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Land & Labor, 1865*, vol. 1, 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); 632.

<sup>101</sup> Various *New Orleans Tribune* articles, 1864–65, quoted in Hahn, *Nation under Our Feet*, 142–43, and Mandell, *The Lost Tradition of Economic Equality in America*, 231.

socialism was influenced by the lessons they derived from the Haitian revolution. Many visited, moved to, and advocated solidarity with the antislavery society in the revolutionary years between the fall of slavery and the dawn of segregation.<sup>102</sup> The Atlantic politics of this group, and both their connections and contradictions with the freedpeople, are discussed at length in the first three chapters of this dissertation.

During Reconstruction, freedpeople developed collective farming cooperatives, fought for land reform, and attempted to produce a new means of agricultural production and a new legal framework in post-independence Louisiana that was as far distinct from plantation slavery as possible. Despite geographic and chronologic differences, the histories of Haiti and Black Louisiana rhymed in this ongoing regional counter-plantation project. Bechet's description of interiority of the enslaved, realized through the exteriority of collective song, finds echoes in Haitian political economist Jean Casimir's poetic expression of the counter-plantation. A space both physical and metaphysical, Casimir defines it as having roots in a "sovereign universe that preceded slavery," one which the enslaved "kept reproducing by taking shelter from colonialism or zombie-cation in a world situated beyond capitalism." It is this expanded notion of a particular subjectivity that finds expressions in material institutions, such as communal *lakou* landholding system, which is what Casimir defines as "the counter-plantation *system*."<sup>103</sup> This system included

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<sup>102</sup> For interactions between Creoles of Color and Haitians in diasporic literary outlets, see Anna Brickhouse, "'L'Ouragan de Flammes' ('The Hurricane of Flames'): New Orleans and Transamerican Catastrophe, 1866/2005," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1097–1127; for moving to Haiti as well as diasporic literary engagements, see Jean-Marc Allard Duplantier, "Creole Louisiana's Haitian Exile(s)," *Southern Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2007): 68–84; Jan C. Jansen, "Brothers in Exile: Masonic Lodges and the Refugees of the Haitian Revolution, 1790s–1820," *Atlantic Studies* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 341–63; Caryn Cossé Bell, "The Common Wind's Creole Visionary: Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez," *South Atlantic Review* 73, no. 2 (2008): 10–25. See also Kristi Melancon, "An African American Discourse Community in Black & White: The New Orleans Tribune" (PhD Dissertation, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 2011). The piece by Nathalie Dessens, "The Saint-Domingue Refugees and the Preservation of Gallic Culture in Early American New Orleans," *French Colonial History* 8, no. 1 (2007): 53–69, is the only one which deals with music.

<sup>103</sup> "[L]as poblaciones originales de América, de Asia y de África. Estos últimos grupos humanos conviven siglos y siglos antes de encontrarse con el Occidente, mientras que los haitianos nacen en el proceso de resistir el

independent rural markets that often included non-capitalist exchange, collective work rituals mediated by music known as *kombits*, and a set of ethics with the land and the nature world which acknowledged independence—powerfully manifested in both Haitian and Louisiana Vodou.<sup>104</sup> I discuss these counter-plantation formations across the Caribbean in Chapter 4, using the model of the slave garden as a starting point for this alternative mode of production.

Casimir’s formulation has been extremely influential to a recent generation of Haitianists such as Laurent DuBois, Richard Lee Turtis, Johnhenry Gonzalez, and Valerie Kaussen, to name a few.<sup>105</sup> Sidney Bechet’s description of collective music making suggests that Afro-Louisianan communities considered sound as a conduit to reproduce the sovereign universe that Casimir elegantly describes. “Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz” argues that the counter-plantation is an essential analytic for understanding how alternative visions of society were produced and reproduced by Louisiana’s Black musicians. They certainly had a lot to contend with. While collective aspirations for an new mode of production motivated musicians and animated the “freedom dreams” of Reconstruction social movements,<sup>106</sup> plantation relations and

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genocidio y el etnocidio. Se inventan en el seno del Occidente y jamás existen por sí solos... En el proceso de luchar contra imperios coloniales infinitamente más poderosos que ellos, la abigarrada variedad de grupos étnicos acaba por cohesionarse.” Jean Casimir, “Haití y Sus Élités: El Interminable Diálogo de Sordos,” *Foro Internacional* 194, no. XLVIII (2008): 807–41.

<sup>104</sup> Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, “Provision Grounds and Cultural Roots: Towards Ontological Sovereignty,” in *The Caribbean Woman Writer as Scholar: Creating, Imagining, Theorizing*, ed. Keshia N. Abraham (Pompano Beach, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2008); Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, “‘He of the Trees’: Nature, Environment, and Creole Religiosities in Caribbean Literature,” in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, ed. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 182–98; Sophie Sapp Moore, “Organize or Die: Farm School Pedagogy and the Political Ecology of the Agroecological Transition in Rural Haiti,” *The Journal of Environmental Education* 48, no. 4 (2017): 248–59.

<sup>105</sup> Laurent Dubois and Richard Lee Turtis, *Freedom Roots: Histories from the Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2019); Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation*; Valerie Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley explains in *Freedom Dreams* that explore his objective is to “explore the different ways self-proclaimed renegades imagined life after the revolution and where their ideas came from,” a goal this dissertation shares. See Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 7.

land privatizations consistently beleaguered Louisiana's Black activists before and after the fall of Reconstruction.<sup>107</sup> These resistant communities came into conflict with a reconstituting plantocracy, who stifled their efforts at collective land ownership, who attempted to censor Black musical expression, and who violently repressed both labor movements and civil rights activism.

This dissertation traces the ways that collective music making was used to by Black communities to implement their vision of a post-plantation society rooted in economic democracy. One powerful example of this were the use of Black brass bands to congregate freedpeople, where they discuss the pressing issues facing their communities and developed strategies to defend and extend their nascent freedom. I term the expansion of political space and musical space "Brassroots Democracy," and argue that it neither useful nor possible to disentangle the movements for communal agriculture, a living wage, participatory democracy, and collective forms of music making. It is in these constellations of collective improvisation and radical assembly that the first reverberations of jazz were felt.

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<sup>107</sup>The fall of Reconstruction is dealt with in considerable detail, but for our purposes the argument of Andrew Zimmerman, who suggests that the struggle for the commons was at the core of the Black movement, seem convincing. Andrew Zimmerman, "Africa and the American Civil War: The Geopolitics of Freedom and the Production of Commons," in *The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War*, ed. Jörg Nagler, Don Harrison Doyle, and Marcus Gräser (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 127–48. For other discussions of the subject, see Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019); Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); and of course, W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1935).

## 1.5 Research Questions and Overview of Complementary Literature

Alice Zeno's song connected three major epochs of Black Louisianan history: the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution and the immigration of Saint-Domingue planters and slaves in the 1810s; radical Reconstruction; and the jazz revolution and its struggle for both civil rights and the power of organized labor. "Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz" centers this Afro-Atlantic history within each of these epochs to explore how New Orleans jazz was connected to both transnational and inter-regional Black social movements. The radical transduction (the exchange of energy between different mediums) between the common wind, the long song, and the counter-plantation all reflect the fundamental components of what scholars have called a shared "contramodernity"<sup>108</sup> a "counterculture of modernity,"<sup>109</sup> a "changing same,"<sup>110</sup> in which the Afro-Atlantic working-classes projected other social relations and alternative possibilities for the political structure of life. I theorize these ideas, new sonic practices, and movement for communal agriculture as a matrix of "speech, sound, and soil," creating an ongoing practice of interdisciplinary art and politics-making across plantation America. Such is the meaning, in my reading, of how Black music could summon new political collectivities into existence, and how political collectivities could, in turn, imagine themselves and inscribe their values within collective forms of music making.

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<sup>108</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "'Race', Time and the Revision of Modernity," *Oxford Literary Review* 13, no. 1 (July 1, 1991): 193–219.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>110</sup> Here, of course, I refer to Amiri Baraka's notion of Black music as "Changing Same," whereby musical production is an Afro-Atlantic model that mediates historical specificity and an intergenerational pan-African consciousness. Baraka also came to this conclusion in his nuanced sociological narrative of the history of jazz in Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963). See LeRoi Jones, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," see *Black Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968) for the actual reference of the "Changing Same." Baraka's influence is so ubiquitous that I will express here my debt to his work without restating its profound methodological and conceptual innovations here.

Despite impressive breakthroughs in transnational and interdisciplinary work, historians studying the radical ideas embedded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Black Atlantic have as a whole neglected its expressive cultural matrix of traditions and institutions. Methodologically, they have almost always privileged texts over the knowledge within cultural, and specifically musical, production. As Jason Oliver Chang explains, historians' emphases have been "laws, ledgers, and lineages."<sup>111</sup> I believe the gap in research is not so much a question of archives, but rather of how we understand history and social change. "Studies of commerce and trade are integral to the historiography of eighteenth-century America," explains Julius Scott, "yet without exception these studies overlook one of the most important items of exchange which was constantly changing hands—information."<sup>112</sup> Such information, as I have briefly addressed above, included knowledge of an embodied variety.<sup>113</sup> Embodied knowledge might include movement, music, and aesthetics, and these were considered important enough for enslaved runaways, like the tambourine playing barber Pierre, to pass on, even at the risk identification. Echoing Martin Munro: "[T]he scholarly neglect of how the Haitian Revolution reshaped cultures and imaginations needs to be addressed," and this dissertation is a modest contribution to that collective project.<sup>114</sup> Over twenty three years of renewed interest in Haiti has not produced a sustained study of the Haitian Revolution's musical legacies, despite the production of prolific anthologies such as *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (1997), *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (2012), or *The*

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<sup>111</sup> Jason Oliver Change, personal conversation, June 10, 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018), 247.

<sup>113</sup> "Embodied knowledge" is addressed by Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (University of Illinois Press, 2005). See also Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>114</sup> Martin Munro, "Can't Stand up for Falling Down: Haiti, Its Revolutions, and Twentieth-Century Negritudes," *Research in African Literatures* 35, no. 2 (2004): 2-3.

*Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (2020). Even books with ostensibly “cultural” topics, such as *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (2008) possess not a single chapter on music. Laurent Dubois’s *The Banjo: America’s Africa Instrument* (2016) and Sara Johnson’s *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (2012) stand as important exceptions to this trend, but neither work explores Louisiana or jazz explicitly.

Haitianists are hardly unique in relegating expressive culture to mere background music. Rick Halpern has criticized the major historians of the New Orleans’ Black Dockworkers’ unions for the same omission when he wrote that, “Largely missing from [the] fine studies [of New Orleans’s Black dockworkers]...is an attempt to understand the various forms unionism assumed by examining community dynamics.” Halpern challenges us to explore “what sorts of social organizations may have bridged the divide between the worlds of work and community?...This is the critical juncture where African- American and labour history meet, but unfortunately it remains hidden and opaque.”<sup>115</sup> In my history of the Black dockworkers’ union in Chapter 6, I have tried to center the work of Buddy Bolden, Pops Foster, and others as sites to trace what Lipsitz, Heble, and Fischlin have called the “communitarian sources” that contributed to early jazz.<sup>116</sup> These sources reveal what Shana Redmond calls “vivid imaginations and performances of solidarity employed by the African descended,”<sup>117</sup> or experiences Ashton T. Crawley calls the “otherwise life, otherwise possibilities” presented by Black performance culture.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Rick Halpern, “Organized Labour, Black Workers and the Twentieth-Century South: The Emerging Revision,” *Social History* 19, no. 3 (1994): 371.

<sup>116</sup> Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>118</sup> Ashton T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

If historians have been guilty of a narrow archival prism of “laws, ledgers, and lineages,” Haiti’s removal from jazz history is endemic to a number of depoliticized jazz narratives which complete a broken circle. Perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than the scholarly treatment of Zeno’s song. Alice Zeno’s poor performance of her Senegambian ancestry led future jazz scholars like Tom Bethel to conclude that both she and her son, George Lewis, had “Not an African but an American past;”<sup>119</sup> it compelled Charles Hersch to observe that Zeno’s “Mother rejected the African language,”<sup>120</sup> and led Randall Sandke to argue that “all racial hues” performed “more or less the same repertoire before the advent of jazz.”<sup>121</sup> None of these scholars comment on the “song

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<sup>119</sup> In Tom Bethell’s 1977 biography of George Lewis, Bethel cites this interview as an example of the limited or non-existence impact of African culture on early jazz. “When we come to Alice’s own life the tenor of her recollections changes abruptly from faint memories of Africa to the cosmopolitan Creole world of New Orleans,” writes Bethel, and he minimizes “Alice Zeno’s knowledge of Senegal [which] extended to one or two phrases and a few recipes; she knew nothing about the music.” *She knew nothing about the music*. From this point of departure, Bethel takes a Frazierian hypothesis to its logical conclusion. “The African pasts of blacks in New Orleans and elsewhere was extremely remote—much more remote, in fact, than the European past of most white Americans.” In conclusion, Bethell argues that while “George Lewis’s ancestors came from Senegal...to understand his music, and the New Orleans setting in which he was born, he should be thought of as having not an African but an American past.” Tom Bethell, *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 7, 13, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Charles Hersch’s *Subversive Sounds* (2008) is a thorough and incisive account of power, resistance, and race amongst jazz musicians in New Orleans. Hersch’s study is invaluable for its interwoven theory and history, and the present dissertation is indebted to Hersch’s method and his understanding New Orleans jazz spaces as “heterotopias.” Nonetheless, his treatment of Zeno, while brief, has a distinct effect. He writes: “Alice Zeno, clarinetist George Lewis’s mother, born in 1864, embodies the African and French mixture in New Orleans. Her grandmother knew some Senegalese and cooked African dishes, but her mother rejected the African language and spoke French and Creole; Zeno grew up speaking French, though she could understand Creole.” Hersch does not make the claims nearly as strong as Bethell—that Zeno represents African erasure in New Orleans’s Black culture writ large—but by highlighting her family’s language loss, and her mother’s “rejection” of African language, he employs this same interview to suggest how Afro-Creoles had a complicated relationship with Blackness and Africa. Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 20, 35.

<sup>121</sup> Randall Sandke’s provocative *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet* (2010), which makes a concentrated argument for the cultural importance of European forms and contests the Africanity of jazz’s innovators. “For many white musicians in New Orleans, jazz became their specialty and principal form of musical expression. I must say I find it odd, even disturbing, that their story has received so little attention from jazz scholars.” He argues that 19th century New Orleanian musicians of “all racial hues” performed “more or less the same repertoire before the advent of jazz,” which could be reduced to “European-derived dance music such as the schottische, mazurka, polka, waltz, and quadrille (a precursor to square dancing).” What is his major historiographic basis for making this claim? It comes by describing “Alice, [who] was born a slave in 1864. From her mother, a full-blooded Wolof, Alice learned words and expressions in the Wolof language. Nevertheless, when asked what kind of music she remembered her husband playing, Alice Zeno spoke of waltzes, quadrilles, polkas and mazurkas.” Putting aside the fact that Alice was not born a slave—she was born after the Union army occupation of New Orleans in 1862—it is striking that as recently as 2010, her interview is still being cited as a barometer for measuring the Africanity of jazz music was, or

from Haiti,” and to date, it has remained unpublished as its only representation is the words “Creole” in the interview’s transcription.

Alice Zeno could not have predicted the ideological burden future scholarship would place on her apparent forgetfulness. Zeno’s African-ness—or specifically, her problematically perceived lack of it—served as a barometer for acculturation, African American identity, theories of cultural diffusion, New Orleans historiography, and jazz itself.<sup>122</sup> The lack of care given to Zeno’s song is part of a larger Western tendency that Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes as “the silencing of the Haitian Revolution,” which as he explains is “only a chapter within a narrative of global domination. It is part of the history of the West and it is likely to persist, even in attenuated form, as long as the history of the West is not retold in ways that bring forward the perspective of the world. Unfortunately, we are not even close to such fundamental rewriting of world history, in spite of a few spectacular achievements.”<sup>123</sup>

Perhaps Bethell, Hersh, and Sandke were responding to a strain of early jazz scholarship in which Africa’s presence was both exoticized and made into a marker of difference and intellectual inferiority,<sup>124</sup> a historiography that represents “jazz musicians as the inarticulate and

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how African New Orleans was. Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 80.

<sup>122</sup> For another application of Roach’s conception of circum-Atlantic performance within the values of Black popular music, see Shanya Maskell, “Noise as Power: Bad Brains and the Aesthetic of Race in Hardcore Punk,” in *Music at the Extremes: Essays on Sounds Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Scott A. Wilson (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

<sup>123</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995; Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015), 150-1.

<sup>124</sup> The French jazz critic Hughes Panassié did not directly mention Africa per se, but he declared that jazz proved that “primitive man generally has greater talent than civilized man” and that “An excesses of culture atrophies inspiration, and men crammed with culture tend too much to play tricks,” creating music “stripped of real vitality.” Such discourses played deeply into constructions of Africa through which Europe constructed itself. See Hugues Panassié, *The Real Jazz* (New York: Smith & Durrell, 1942), 6; Vy Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Robert Goffin, a Belgian jazz aficionado and critic who successfully fled the Nazis, expressed his theory of history immediately with the title of his book, *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1944).

unsophisticated practitioner [sic] of an art which he himself barely understands.”<sup>125</sup> Yet the search for “Africanisms” itself belongs to a reified understanding of culture as essence. As J. Lorand Matory notes, “Herskovitz was far more attentive to psychological and unconscious ‘dispositions’ than to agency and strategy in the reproduction of cultural forms. What, for example, might be any given actor’s *motive* (beyond inertia) to reproduce a form as ‘African’?”<sup>126</sup> Russell was not the only one searching for these “missing links” in Black popular culture, and his predecessors include the black linguist Lorenzo Turner in the early 1930s. Alan Lomax’s work with the Georgia Sea Island Singers in the late 1950s points to a particular shift amongst white musicologists in this decade, a larger paradigm which hoped to find African musical characteristics in Black American music and has continued to influence contemporary jazz writing. This dissertation does not reject “connections” in and of themselves, but hopes to respond to Matory’s call for centering motive in how we analyze the reproduction of Afro-Atlantic forms. A main way I accomplish this is by tracing the contours of a regional counter-plantation movement. I argue that the political impulses embedded within musical performance worked to animate the rhythms, musical devices, and dreams of emancipation that were selectively reproduced from one generation to the next.<sup>127</sup>

This work continues in the tradition of some recent interventions into early jazz, which includes the illustrious scholarship of George Lipsitz (2011) on New Orleans,<sup>128</sup> Clyde Woods’s

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<sup>125</sup> Ted Gioia, “Jazz and the Primitivist Myth,” *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1989): 138. For a challenge to this view, and one that foregrounds Panassié’s commitment to both the music and the musicians, see Tom Perchard, “Tradition, Modernity and the Supernatural Swing: Re-Reading ‘primitivism’ in Hugues Panassié’s Writing on Jazz,” *Popular Music* 30, no. 1 (2011): 25–45.

<sup>126</sup> J. Lorand Matory, “The ‘New World’ Surrounds an Ocean: Theorizing the Live Dialogue between African and African American Cultures,” in *In Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, ed. Kevin A. Yelvington (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press., 2006), 159.

<sup>127</sup> On performance as cultural surrogation for cultural memory, see Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>128</sup> George Lipsitz, “New Orleans in the World and the World in New Orleans,” *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2011): 261–90.

(2017, 1998) brilliant discussion of the “blues aesthetic” and the development agenda of the Black working class in the Mississippi Delta region,<sup>129</sup> and Charles Hersch’s (2008) insightful examination of race and resistance amongst early jazz musicians.<sup>130</sup> Despite their contributions, these authors largely overlook Haiti and intra-Caribbean influence, and only Woods takes Reconstruction seriously. Even more broadly than the specific elimination of Haiti and other Caribbean influences, much scholarship on early jazz imagines a delimited historical subject —“the musician”—erasing the multiplicity of identities that might include, in a single person, a dockworker, an activist, a community organizer, a son or daughter, a community member, a person who identifies as Haitian-Louisianan, and even a revolutionary. Before becoming associated with the Dixieland revival, George Lewis arguably identified as much as dockworker as a jazz musician.<sup>131</sup>

But the mainstream literature of early jazz has for decades ignored social history altogether, opting instead for a particularistic methodology that focuses on what I call “bands, beats, and bills,” robbing the music creators of historical context and even basic agency. Much of the scholarship produced about New Orleans is an encyclopedic list, a sort of Sisyphean positivism that overwhelms critical thinking through its impressive and relentless martialing of names, places, and styles. The learning curve for entering such discussions is steep, and readers, even those with a deep knowledge of jazz, often have no way to make meaningful associations. There is a deep value in the task of resurrecting forgotten names and a suppressed history, voices which the Jim

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<sup>129</sup> Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998).

<sup>130</sup> Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*.

<sup>131</sup> Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “George Lewis and Friends,” in *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story*, by Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010).

Crow South never intended to allow to emerge. In fact, I am highly indebted to the archival efforts of generations of researchers who have shared William Russell's commitment to unearth the people, places, and dates of New Orleans jazz. Yet the rigor, encyclopedic style, and delimited (and depoliticized) historical subject renders this scholarship out of touch with other generations of scholars of Black music who are animated by questions of agency, power, and identity. The very attention to detail subsumes the entire picture; the forest is replaced with the trees.

My research hopes to reorient the existing orthodoxy on early jazz with an eclectic mix of sources. I have found insights in histories of Caribbean gardening, the papers of the Freedman's Bureau, Black newspapers during and after Reconstruction, histories of Civil War celebrations, accounts of labor, oral histories housed in the Hogan Jazz Archive, insights from Black feminist philosophers of music and ontology, and cross-cultural polyrhythms in early jazz songs such as Mamie Desdunes's "2:19 Blues." This methodology allows me to capture the expansive nature of Black creativity in the face of social death and plantation colonialism. I thus come out of a tradition of musical sociology that Ralph Ellison quipped was "burden[some] enough to give even the blues the blues."<sup>132</sup> That is, I am deeply influenced by Amiri Baraka's lifelong body of work that takes seriously the ability of music to capture Black psychological and cultural responses to slavery, emancipation, Jim Crow, and less-than-citizenship assimilation, a process he calls the "changing same."<sup>133</sup>

I am also motivated by the call put forward by one of Baraka's disciples, the composer-activist Fred Ho, who argued that "'Jazz' or African American music" is "the revolutionary music of the twentieth century," and "not just for America, but for the planet as well." Ho argues that the

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<sup>132</sup> Ralph Ellison, "The Blues," February 6, 1964, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1964/02/06/the-blues/>.

<sup>133</sup> Amiri Baraka, *Black Music* (New York: Quill, 1967).

music embodies the “contradiction of the century,” between “imperialist nations” and “the emerging African American proletariat.”<sup>134</sup> Ho points us towards tracing proletarianization as a process: from whence did this class emerge, and how did it understand itself and its contribution, and critique, of capitalist society? How were such values expressed in the music? These questions intensify as American capitalism, the lifeblood of the nation’s imperial ambitions, really “spreads its wings and learns to fly” with its late 19th - early 20th century takeover of the Caribbean, and attunes us to the interconnections between slavery, imperialism, and Black music.

“Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz” is also an homage to the eruption of literature that has claimed a special significance for Black music as the core of a number of emancipatory, hybridist, and countercultural projects. Paul Gilroy (1993), Timothy Brennan (2008), and Njoroge Njoroge (2016)<sup>135</sup> have facilitated an expanded reading of Black (counter) modernisms. Their eloquent formulations strike profound chords that have reoriented how we conceptualize the history of capitalism, modernity, and the world. However, their work does not capture the lived experiences of the Afro-Atlantic working classes who did not have the ability to leave a documented literary or artistic legacy. Because of this, it can be guilty of, in the words of Brackette Williams, “removing politics from politics,” specifically because analysis within the diverse field of cultural studies often overlooks “links to the specifics of power and economy in the shaping of racial consciousness” and ignores “social and spatial relations of production in black Atlantic transformations.”<sup>136</sup> “Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz” hopes to supplement and

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<sup>134</sup> Fred Ho, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader*, ed. Diane Fujino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 94.

<sup>135</sup> Njoroge M. Njoroge, *Chocolate Surrealism: Music, Movement, Memory, and History in the Circum-Caribbean* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016); Timothy Brennan, *Secular Devotion: Afro-Latin Music and Imperial Jazz* (New York: Verso, 2008).

<sup>136</sup> Brackette F Williams, “Review of *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, by Paul Gilroy.,” *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (1995): 175–92.

complicate the claims made by these Black Atlantic theorists by providing a close-grained, empirically-based investigation of Black working-class Louisiana and their counter-plantation Afro-Caribbean comrades. It is inspired not only by Black men (and they are overwhelmingly men) of arts and letters chronicled in the aforementioned titles. Union League leadership, the Women's auxiliary to the Longshoremen Benevolent Association (which sabotaged scabs' carts during the dockworkers' strike of 1907), politicized sex workers, and gardeners on plantations also inspire my analysis and framework. The line between each of these identities and those of "musicians," as we will see, was thin indeed.

This study is a response to these gaps: gaps within Haitian, Reconstruction, and dockworkers' historiography; gaps amongst the ruthless positivism of New Orleans jazz history; and gaps undergirding the ahistorical nature of some of cultural studies' most compelling claims. "Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz" hopes to point to a new methodology for a study of music history from below, one which illuminates sonic class struggle and connects specific historical figures to the actual social-political processes of music. Fire companies and dock unions are examples of resistant and prefigurative movements; Caribbean musical influences (and those of the Black Baptist church) pointed to alternative conceptualizations of subjectivity and land. I argue that the Afro-Atlantic counter-plantation requires a new model as it struggled for reality at both material and phenomenological levels. It was the first to "argue" that the "personal is political," and its incredible breakthrough in music was matched by moments in which its communal solutions to production, democracy, and citizenship flourished, even if they were eventually defeated. These defeats were temporary at best, because the music which coordinated their collective activity continued to be reproduced even when the institutional forms within which they were reproduced were dismantled. Collective work ceremonies before harvest continued

when there was no harvest; Black Labor Day parades continued in spirit even when the union movement was destroyed, and the modern-day Mardi Gras krewe “the Black Men of Labor” continues to acknowledge the interconnection of second lining and the militancy of their dockworking ancestors.<sup>137</sup>

## 1.6 Chapter Summary

Because of its multi-faceted, multi geographical thrust, the history of Afro-Louisiana’s counter-plantation struggles cannot be written in a strict chronological fashion. “Brassroots Democracy and the Birth of Jazz” reconstructs the history of the music by working through specific locales and social movements. Before dealing with the local history of Louisiana, Chapter 1 discusses the trans-Caribbean and Afro-Atlantic “live dialogue” of which Louisiana and New Orleans was a part. The Chapter also analyzes the existing jazz paradigm, which often begins in Congo Square as an imagined reconstruction of Africa. While I do not reject African influences of American Black music, I strive to explore the sociological and philosophical implications of these influences. I situate Africinity as historically and locally constructed, especially in regards to the plantation complex within which African peoples were embedded.<sup>138</sup> The process came to have a very particular meaning in revolutionary Haiti, which I argue is essential for our study of music’s communicative and transformational properties.

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<sup>137</sup> Valentine Pierce, “Interview with Fred Johnson,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018).

<sup>138</sup> Valerie Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008), 9.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the Haitian-Louisianan Desdunes family. I first take up the prolific Daniel Desdunes, a renowned cornetist and violinist who marched with a popular brass band that bore his namesake. Daniel's father, Rodolphe, was a militant Creole of Color Radical Republican activist—an example his son emulated. In 1892, Daniel was arrested for sitting in the whites-only section of a segregated train car. This direct-action protest at the dawn of Jim Crow was coordinated with the *Comité de Citoyens*, a mixed-race group of activists which included Rodolphe Desdunes, shoemaker Homer Plessy, a radical Cuban immigrant named Ramón Pages. Daniel Desdunes was a strategic choice to be the face of the campaign. As a popular musician, his arrest was widely covered by both New Orleans and national newspapers, and his popularity may have even influenced the outcome of the case—the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled in Desdunes's favor. In Chapter 2, I explore the music of his sister Mamie Desdunes, an early woman blues singer who mixed Afro-Haitian rhythmic traditions and storytelling conventions in the blues form as early as 1895. Her work denounced a patriarchal sex industry that she obligated to participate in.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Creole of Color Tio family, a family of clarinet prodigies that fled the repressive New Orleans white supremacist government to resettle in Veracruz, Mexico in the late 1850s to help build a free Black colony predicated on communal agriculture.<sup>139</sup> They returned to New Orleans in 1877, profoundly shaping New Orleans's clarinet tradition and training generations of woodwind players. While the Tios have been discussed in early jazz scholarship, less consideration has been placed on the tradition radical solidarity between the antislavery state

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<sup>139</sup> Louis R. Tio, Interview, October 26, 1960, New Orleans, The Hogan Jazz Archive; see also Charles Kinzer, "The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933," PhD diss., (Louisiana State University, 1993), 148; "Arnold Metoyer," in Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstorm, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 81; Daniel Hardie, *Exploring Early Jazz: The Origins and Evolution of the New Orleans Style* (Bloomington, Indiana: iUniverse, 2002), 82; see also Mary Gehman, "L.A. Creole-Mexican Connection," Dville Press, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://dvillepress.com/LCMC.php>.

of Mexico and Creoles of Color in New Orleans. The Tios' story reveals that the geographic bounds of the counter-plantation exceeded the Haiti-Louisiana nexus to encompass the whole range of the Caribbean basin. It also furthers the argument that Black musical internationalism was another modality of anticolonial political solidarity. Thus, the first half of this dissertation is primarily interested in tracing Atlantic lineages to underscore an undertheorized trans-Caribbean, Afro-Atlantic history of exchange and political formation that informed jazz. We can think through these connections in light of Brent Hayes Edward's *detour*, and his reminder that Black internationalism is not the 'second step' of Black nationalism—it is the basis of it.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, a dialogue between sonic cultures is not the outcome of political solidarity—it is a precursor to it.

These next sections do not do away with trans-Caribbean influence, but they do hope to foreground the activists and musicians of New Orleans within the context of Louisiana. Establishing the commonplaceness of Haitian, Afro-Mexican, Cuban, and other Afrodiasporic influences in New Orleans has been essential prework, if you will, for us to consider the anticapitalist social relations that were both self-evident and reproduced in periods of revolution. Focusing on the transition from slavery, though the Civil War and Reconstruction, to the evolution of New Orleans's Black dockworkers' movement to the labor movement, I hope to show concretely how Black communities in the Americas were modeling anticapitalist social relations. Crucially, however, the practice of anticapitalism was distinct, because the social subject I endeavor to outline does not fall on a traditional metropolitan historical class structure. These struggles were neither bourgeoisie–democratic, nor belonged to class struggle in the narrow

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<sup>140</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), 23, 234.

industrial proletariat sense; but that of a distinct revolutionary tradition, that of the counter-plantation.

In Chapter 4, I trace one of the main institutions of the counter-plantation complex, the internal gardening systems of enslaved communities. I demonstrate the pervasive influence of land reform and commoning ideologies in the Afro-Atlantic, and then zoom in to their expression in Louisiana. To do this, I examine the lives of musicians such as Kid Ory, who grew up as impoverished sugar worker, and consider how brass bands were deeply integrated into the daily life of Black and Creole of Color communities in the plantation belt as an expression of the commons which were being actively struggled for.

In Chapter 5, I explore how brass bands contributed to the phenomena of “brassroots democracy” that revolutionized Reconstruction Louisiana and the South at large. I trace the association of spectacular brass band performance with emancipation and jubilee. I argue that the brass band spoke to a new form of sonic politics in the Civil War and Reconstruction South, in which Black music’s centrality in political spectacle was undergirded by a radically participatory politics characterized by mass assembly.

Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on how New Orleans’ Black working class constituted new forms of culture and political organizing to continue fighting for day-to-day gains in the quality of their life. Yet they did so within a framework that continued to imagine a new future and challenge a global system of capitalism. Specifically, central to this project was the reclamation of time from a wage or capital relation and toward a communally oriented one. Above all, Black workers and musicians resisted the capitalist equation of time and wages and the idea that their time belonged to someone else. Black musicians were well-represented on the docks: Alice Zeno’s son, the clarinetist George Lewis, was a dockworker before his career was re-launched with the “revival”

movement, and his band was organized as a cooperative in which each member had ownership.<sup>141</sup> Unions provided more than collective bargaining rights: they organized funerals, provided health insurance, and collectively constructed a shared consciousness of resistance and self-determination that deeply impacted their musician-membership. Traces of working-class militancy can be found in the musical repertoire of Buddy Bolden, the clarinetist Willie Parker explicitly supported dockworkers' strikes in a 1958 interview, and in New Orleans' Black and white press.<sup>142</sup>

These three chapters trace how jazz musicians—as dockworkers, Reconstruction activists, and proponents of collective land ownership—foreground that Black autonomous movements had distinct interventions in the following categories: production/land (Chapter 4); democracy (Chapter 5); and time-being and work (Chapter 6). Each had a specific social institution associated, where music played a foundational ritual/ceremonial/social role: the commune-garden; the assembly; and the Black labor union. As we will see, brass bands intersected with each, resounding a communitarian grammar that I have called brassroots democracy.

The conclusion of my work attempts to tie together the complex history of the subaltern song of Afro-Atlantic resistance to the plantation system. I will demonstrate that jazz was part of musical technology that contested not only slavery, but racism, ecocide, patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism. I also show the afterlives of jazz's counter-plantation logic, analyzing how this music inspired freedom dreams and commoning projects in defiance of United States Empire in the Caribbean and Latin America, sketching possible directions for further study of the Long Song.

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<sup>141</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 67.

<sup>142</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

## 2.0 The Common Wind's Second Gale, the Desdunes Family

### 2.1 Introduction

*All the World is a stage, said Shakespeare in As You Like It, with many players having their exits and entrances. The nation-state sees the entire territory as its performance area; it organizes the space as a huge enclosure, with definite places of entrance and exit... The nation-state performs its being relentlessly with the use of passports, visa, and flags.*

- Ngugi wa Thiong'o<sup>143</sup>

One question has long occupied jazz historians: when did the music we call “jazz” really begin? The question is impossible to answer—the music was not referred to as such during its development, though the researcher who has made this their impractical (and probably misguided) task may take solace in the scattered memories of one hundred-or-so odd musicians recalling late nineteenth-century life. Thanks to one scholar’s journey, a quote from the trombonist George Fihle has been highlighted for contemplation: “Younger musicians about 1892 began to ‘swing.’ Older men used lots of Mexican music.” Fihle specifically credits “swinging” to “Dan Desdunes,” a musician with whom he played: “[We] played jazz, [and] would always swing the music, that was [our] novelty.”<sup>144</sup> While what such swinging consisted of, exactly, is not explained, we are left with a sense that something changed in 1892 amongst brass bands, and that the new music was different from the Mexican-derived music of an earlier generation.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 53.

<sup>144</sup> Lawrence Gushee, "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz," *Black Music Research Journal* 14:1 (Spring 1994): 16.

<sup>145</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Part II,” in *The Jazz Archivist XX* (2007): 5.

The year 1892 also marked another kind of transformation. It was also the year that Daniel Desdunes—the very same New Orleanian Creole of Color violin and cornet player to whom Fihle attributed the development of swing—crossed the color line in public transportation. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Desdunes boarded a Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L & N) train with a first-class ticket for passage from New Orleans to Mobile and took a seat in a car reserved for whites only.<sup>146</sup> It was a strategic action years in the making. The Separate Car Act, which required “equal, but separate” train car accommodations for Black and white passengers, had been passed in 1890 by the Louisiana State Legislature to stymie gains made by the state’s Black working classes under the 1868 Louisiana Constitution.<sup>147</sup> In response, an activist collective named the *Comité des Citoyens* coordinated the action with Desdunes. The group attracted a motley crew of dissidents, including a former African American governor of Louisiana (P. B. S. Pinchback), a Cuban revolutionary exile and union leader (Ramón Pages), and Desdunes’s father Rodolphe Desdunes, a Creole of Color activist of Haitian descent.<sup>148</sup> The collective proclaimed a double mission: to wage legal battle and to disseminate propaganda to challenge the recently established Jim Crow laws.<sup>149</sup> *Comité* member Daniel Desdunes, precisely because of his prominent place in the public eye as an innovative musician, was selected as the first test case.

The incident was closely followed both locally and throughout the United States by onlookers waiting to see if Louisiana’s Democratic legislature and its new political project called

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<sup>146</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, February 28, 1892

<sup>147</sup> Act 111 of the Louisiana Legislature was technically called the Withdraw Car Act, but it was referred to colloquially as the Separate Car Act. Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8-60.

<sup>148</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, “The Atlantic World and the Road to ‘Plessy v. Ferguson,’” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007): 731.

<sup>149</sup> Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 126; see also Karen Battle, “New Orleans’ Creoles of Color: Shattered Dreams and Broken Promises,” *Loyola University Student Historical Journal* 23 (1992 1991).

segregation would be ruled constitutional. Major national news outlets covered Desdunes's sit-in, and the *New York Times* depicted a particularly dramatic showdown. According to the *Times* reporter on the scene, a stressed conductor yelled, "You can't ride in this car!" Desdunes disagreed, and when he refused to budge, a private detective riding on the train took it upon himself to arrest the freedom rider, but only after hailing backup from local police outside the station. Even with several officers escorting him, according to the reporter, Desdunes "used some harsh language and made resistance."<sup>150</sup> In many ways, the tense scene was really a pretense, for the arrest was carefully orchestrated and the railroad company eagerly cooperated with the choreography; the "detective" had even been hired by the *Comité*.<sup>151</sup> The whole event was a form of street theater designed to gain exposure for the upcoming case.<sup>152</sup> The state was clearly threatened. Desdunes's \$500 bond—the equivalent of \$14,000 in today's currency—demonstrated the New South's commitment to bankrupting and criminalizing any emergent civil rights action.<sup>153</sup> In court, however, Desdunes prevailed. Because the train was moving between states, the court determined that his ejection violated the Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution. The broader constitutionality of "separate and equal" institutions for white and Black, however, was left unaddressed. This issue would not be resolved until four years later in the better-known case brought by Desdunes's friend and fellow *Comité* member, the shoemaker Homer Plessy. Plessy's

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<sup>150</sup> "Now for a Test Case: Colored Man Arrested for Refusing to Leave a Railway Car," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1892.

<sup>151</sup> "The [rail]roads are not in favor of the separate car law owing to the expense entailed," explained the radical notary Louis A. Martinet in a letter to Desdunes's civil rights lawyer, Albion Tourgée. See Letter from Martinet to Tourgée, dated 5 October 1891, in Thomas Davis, "More than Segregation, Racial Identity: The Neglected Question in Plessy v. Ferguson," *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 22-23.

<sup>152</sup> Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

<sup>153</sup> "Now for a Test Case: Colored Man Arrested for Refusing to Leave a Railway Car," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1892. On the New South, see Joseph Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

defeat in 1896's U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* set a 68-year precedent for American apartheid.<sup>154</sup> In the intervening years of 1892-1896, however, a victory had been briefly secured, segregation's legal basis was weakened, and a generation was further politicized.<sup>155</sup>

That a new musical form and a new civil rights campaign both commenced in 1892, embodied by a single person who was supported by a large coalition of musicians and organizers, provides a window into the antiracist rebellion within swing's new structure of feeling. Several commentators have suggested that the 1890s were a time when the rhythmic substrates of brass band performance styles became increasingly integrated with *tresillo* and *habanera* rhythms.<sup>156</sup> If this was one component of what Fihle meant by "swing"—and it certainly aligns with his timeline—then Desdunes's compelling reinterpretation of brass band rhythm reflects, as Eric Lott wrote about another epoch, how "the music attempted to resolve at the level of style what the militancy combated in the streets."<sup>157</sup> These rhythms, as I explored in this dissertation's introduction, were derived from the music of Haitian and Afro-Caribbean migrants, who also brought distinct notions of freedom and political agency to the Crescent City.<sup>158</sup> Their fusion in the person of Daniel is but one part of the legacy of an overlooked Haitian-descended family who engaged deeply with both music and politics.

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<sup>154</sup> Thomas Davis, "More than Segregation, Racial Identity: The Neglected Question in *Plessy v. Ferguson*," *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 1–41.

<sup>155</sup> Lawrence Gushee, "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz," *Black Music Research Journal* 14:1 (Spring 1994): 16; Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, "The Desdunes Family," *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 25–45

<sup>156</sup> Benjamin Grant Doleac, "'We Made It Through That Water': Rhythm, Dance, and Resistance in the New Orleans Second Line" (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, 2018), 6-7; Robert Goffin, *La Nouvelle-Orléans, Capitale Du Jazz* (New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1946), 69-70; Lawrence Gushee, "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz," *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (1994): 151–74.

<sup>157</sup> Eric Lott, "Double V, Double-Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo*, no. 36 (1988): 597–605.

<sup>158</sup> Sara E. Johnson does not discuss Louisiana, but does make the case that Haitian musical devices, and an antislavery political consciousness, travelled with the Saint-Domingue exodus during the Haitian Revolution throughout the Caribbean in her essay "Cinquillo Consciousness: The Formation of a Pan-Caribbean Musical Aesthetic," in *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 35–58.

This chapter explores the Desdunes family and foregrounds their activism from Reconstruction through the emergence of Jim Crow and the Great Migration in order to make larger claims regarding early jazz's connection to a Black Atlantic counter-plantation tradition. As Jean Casimir notes regarding Haiti, "It follows that just as the plantation was a new economy created in its entirety by French conquerors, so, too, the counter-plantation was an innovation put into practice by the winners of the [Haitian] War of Independence." He points to post-independence institutions such as widespread communal landholding tenure—part of a *lakou* (group living) system—as evidence that enslaved Haitians "did not live like capitalists or according to a capitalist mindset."<sup>159</sup> I argue that the political impulses embedded within these Afro-Atlantic commons were phenomenologically activated by distinct rhythms and musical devices. It was in this manner that dreams of emancipation were selectively reproduced from one generation to the next, transforming in order to respond to shifting historical circumstances while retaining a commitment to a world founded upon radical inclusivity.<sup>160</sup> In order to support these claims, I first highlight the work of Daniels's father Rodolphe, whose invocations of Haiti signaled a nineteenth-century strain of Black internationalism and a commitment to a program for radical economic empowerment amongst freedpeople. Particularly revealing is how Rodolphe and fellow activists frequently invoked the Haitian Revolution as they struggled for land reform alongside freedpeople in postwar Louisiana. This chapter then explores Daniel Desdunes's intertwined musical career and antipoverty work in Omaha, Nebraska, where he relocated with his family in

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<sup>159</sup> Jean Casimir, "Going Backwards Toward the Future: From Haiti to Saint-Domingue," trans. Mary Claypool, *The Global South* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 181-83; see also Yanique M. Edmond, Suzanne M. Randolph, and Guylaine L. Richard, "The Lakou System: A Cultural, Ecological Analysis of Mothering in Rural Haiti," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 1 (November 15, 2007): 19-33; Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Laurent Dubois and Richard Lee Turits, *Freedom Roots: Histories from the Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2019).

<sup>160</sup> On performance as cultural surrogation for cultural memory, see Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

1904 as part of the westward wing of the Great Migration. Daniel's work at an interracial orphanage in this Midwestern metropolis was an extension of Reconstruction's legacy of social justice and its struggle for the commons. Daniel was grounded by a musical practice motivated, not by careerism, but communal uplift and institution building.

I do not address here Daniel's sister, Mamie Desdunes, an influential pianist based in Storyville who left a marked impact on early jazz and blues piano playing. Her song "2:19 Blues," a testimony to disappeared sex workers, was, in the words of trombonist Willie Cornish, a "blues you had to know" if you hoped to make a living playing music.<sup>161</sup> Her contributions will be unpacked in the Chapter 2. But I make mention of her because both siblings have been essentially erased by jazz writing; there is currently no scholarly monograph on either. This is unfortunate because the Desdunes siblings challenge the notion that Black musicians and community-based expressive traditions did not directly participate in the political movements during the first era of Jim Crow. J. Morgan Kousser, historian of the New South, comments that by 1910, white supremacy and Black oppression in the United States South "were hardened into fundamental legal postulates of the society...folkways became stateways, with all the psychological power of legality and the social power of enforceability behind them."<sup>162</sup> To the contrary, the Desdunes family manifested multigenerational folkways to defy the state's ability to order racial and gendered space. Daniel Desdunes performed desegregation as street theater, both through his sit-in of a segregated train car and in his later work as the brass band instructor of an Omaha orphanage, while Mamie Desdunes challenged the social relations of coerced sex in Storyville through her

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<sup>161</sup> Frederic Ramsey Papers, MSS 559, Box 16C, Historic New Orleans Collection. Quoted in Vic Hobson, "New Orleans Jazz and the Blues," *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27

<sup>162</sup> J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 262-263.

pointed reimagination of the blues. Both created musical spaces for the plotting of autonomous existences, an essential foundation for any oppositional culture to take root and a theme that resonates with the “common wind.” Julius Scott has coined this phrase to refer to the ideologies and practices of freedom that circulated during the age of the Haitian Revolution, transmitted through a grapevine propelled by maroons, mobile slaves, and free people of color; in this chapter, I suggest that its influence was felt well into the second half of the nineteenth century, with a profound resonance during Radical Reconstruction up through the birth of jazz.<sup>163</sup>

## 2.2 Haiti: Resonantly Resounding an Altermodernity

*Vous signé nom moi, mais bous pas signé pieds moi.*  
(*You signed my name, but you haven't signed my feet.*)

- Haitian Expression<sup>164</sup>

The impact of the Haitian Revolution spans from Germany to South America, from philosophy to cultural studies to new strands of Atlantic history. Following CLR James,<sup>165</sup> the writing of Yves Benot weaves the Haitian Revolution into the French Revolution,<sup>166</sup> while Robin Blackburn helps transform our understanding of the New World age of Revolutions by demonstrating how “The revolutions—American, French, Haitian, and Spanish-American—

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<sup>163</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018).

<sup>164</sup> Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études Sur l'Histoire d'Haïti*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry, Madeleien et Ce, 1860), volume 10, 23, n1; quoted in Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 166.

<sup>165</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1938).

<sup>166</sup> Yves Benot, *La Révolution Française et La Fin des Colonies 1789-1794* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007).

should be seen as interconnected, with each helping to radicalize the next.” Haiti’s all important contribution to this revolutionary cypher was that its revolution precipitated the “major breach in the hugely important systems of slavery in the Americas.” This abolition came not from above, but from below, with “Jacobin revolutionaries and the black peasantry of Saint Dominique” inspiring a global antislavery agenda that transformed every Spanish-American revolutionary movement.<sup>167</sup> Laurent Dubois’s work likewise highlights how Haitian Revolutionaries creolized the Enlightenment: they brought “the *lwa* into the Republican ceremony,” endowing a global democratic movement both Afrodiasporic and anticapitalist meanings and missions: “The universalism of the Republic gained potent, and unexpected, meaning through slave insurgents’ demands for inclusion, a transformation that marked a powerful blow to the system of slavery...Emancipation, furthermore, struck at the foundations of an economic system deemed central to the functioning of a French Empire.”<sup>168</sup> No ostensibly Western philosopher was exempt from this radical turning of the world upside-down. Susan Buck-Morss has argued convincingly that the Haitian Revolution deeply impacted Hegel’s notion of history as the progressive self-realization of human liberty across distinct populations, even if Hegel did not consciously acknowledge it.<sup>169</sup> This small sample is only a fraction of the critical literature that has broken new ground in a variety of fields related to Haiti’s revolution. As David Geggus surmises, “Recent historians of the Atlantic revolutions, unlike their predecessors, now give ample space to Haiti’s revolution in their analyses. Some have argued that it played a key role in the history of democracy,

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<sup>167</sup> Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006): 643.

<sup>168</sup> Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>169</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 821–65.

or the Radical Enlightenment, or the making of modernity.”<sup>170</sup> It is, quite simply, impossible to ignore Haiti’s influence in contemporary accounts of the nineteenth-century Caribbean and North American world.

It seems ironic that this wave of scholarship centering Haiti’s contribution to the meaning of Atlantic liberation seems to have bypassed writers on that musical form which has been so often linked to the construction of a particularly modern and New World notion of freedom: jazz. In compiling my research on the Desdunes family, I had hoped, even assumed, that I would be able to locate a music-conscious, if not music-centered, historiography that integrated the history of Haitian migration to New Orleans within more established narratives of early Louisianan settlement, Congo Square, and Creole of Color and African American alliances and tensions. But despite the outpouring of interest in Haitian studies, even accounts of jazz history with an eye towards the long arc of the Middle Passage somehow ignore the epic and overdetermined influence of Haitian migrants in Louisiana and their connection to jazz practices.

For instance, in a 2018 article for a special issue of the *Journal of African American History* on New Orleans’s 300<sup>th</sup> birthday, Clyde Robertson traces New Orleans’s jazz traditions as follows. Starting with a fairly detailed account of the 1719 arrival of 420 enslaved Africans to Louisiana aboard the *L’Aurore* and *le Duc de Maine*, Robertson then explores the 1740s proliferation of African diasporic dance and music in Place Congo. Abruptly, Robertson fast forwards to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: “These festive but important assemblies [in Congo Square] contributed mightily to

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<sup>170</sup> David Geggus, “The Louisiana Purchase and the Haitian Revolution,” in *The Haitian Revolution and the Early United States: Histories, Textualities, Geographies*, ed. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon and Michael J. Drexler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 117.

‘Africanisms’ currently found in the music...one of the most exciting examples of New Orleans’s African-ness is jazz.”<sup>171</sup>

Matt Sakakeeny, in his influential and well-conceived essay “New Orleans Music as a Circulatory System,” follows a similar script. Also locating the “beginning” in the eighteenth century, Sakakeeny repeats an often-repeated observation, also found in Robertson, that “A large number of slaves were imported from a single source, Senegambia.”<sup>172</sup> Citing the major Senegambian presence as a potential causal factor for the dynamism of Congo Square, Sakakeeny then proceeds to theorize this space as an “aural public sphere” which created a “music [that] facilitated communication among slaves in Congo Square while also communicating to the fascinated crowds on the square’s perimeter.”<sup>173</sup> Sakakeeny devotes a single line to acknowledge the “enslaved... transported from [other] points in the Caribbean,” with no further details, and we are still left with the impression that the 1719 arrival of a Senegambian majority is the main thread of Afro-Louisianan history. This is despite Sakakeeny’s acknowledgment that in “New Orleans...accounts of African-derived rhythms began in the first decade of the nineteenth century and reached critical mass in the 1830s,” a critical mass whose sudden emergence is left explained.<sup>174</sup> While Sakakeeny’s goal is not to develop a comprehensive prehistory of jazz, but rather to explore “[b]y what processes do specific musical forms and practices become linked to particular people and places,” it is interesting that he reproduces a historiography which links jazz’s Africinity to one particular place: Senegambia. We do not hear, in any sustained manner,

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<sup>171</sup> Clyde C. Robertson, “New Orleans Jazz in the World,” *The Journal of African American History* 103, no. 4 (2018): 472-473.

<sup>172</sup> Matt Sakakeeny, “New Orleans Music as a Circulatory System,” *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2011): 295.

<sup>173</sup> Matt Sakakeeny, “New Orleans Music as a Circulatory System,” 297.

<sup>174</sup> Matt Sakakeeny, “New Orleans Music as a Circulatory System,” 291.

an acknowledgment of those who contributed so much to both the content and shaping of that culture in the New World: the Haitian emgirés whose lives were touched, in one or another, by the Haitian Revolution.

Jazz historians are by no means alone in reproducing this erasure. The influential theater scholar Joseph Roach developed his landmark work by situating New Orleans as a privileged site of circum-Atlantic cultural negotiations and confrontations, of collective memory and forgetting. “In opposition to the official voice of history, which...has tended to emphasize the cultural annihilations of the diaspora, the voice of collective memory, which derives from performance, speaks of stubbornly restored behavior.”<sup>175</sup> But when the question arises of which behavior was restored, Roach bypasses Haitian influence in cultural ceremonies in a manner similar to our interlocutors in jazz studies. Roach cites the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht in which French slave traders circumvented British middlemen to highlight the “Mandekan-speaking peoples from Senegambia” as a source for Congo Square’s dynamism. “One consequence of this French policy,” Roach writes, “was a cohesion and continuity in Louisiana slave society that enabled it to retain performance-rich African traditions relatively intact.”<sup>176</sup> Discussing “celebrations of death founded on religious belief in the participation of ancestral spirits,” Roach, like Sakakeeny and Robertson, excels in the art of time travel. “Afrocentric funeral rites in Louisiana...became a vehicle for the covert expression of officially discouraged solidarity...In 1962, Richard Allen, an observer of the revelers in the most joyous part of a Jazz Funeral (after the body is ‘cut loose’ and sent on its way), noted: ‘At least two boys and two women dancing with partners of opposite sex and color.’”<sup>177</sup> Ironically,

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<sup>175</sup> Joseph Roach, “Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World,” in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 58.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Joseph Roach, “Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World,” 59; Richard Allen, *Funeral and Music*, Hogan Jazz Archive.

the dance described here is of Haitian derivation: the *bamboula*. These movements of Haitian culture could have meanings which supplemented these “relatively intact” Senegambian performance traditions. Perhaps more fundamentally, this particular historicization leaves little space for political and ideological change, and, almost tragically, erases legacies of Haiti in Louisiana on the eve of the largest slave revolt in the United States, the German Coast uprising of 1811, as well as in Radical Reconstruction and, yes, jazz funerals.

Fortunately, there is a smaller but growing body of work that contextualizes New Orleans brass band funerals within the lateral connections between Afro-Caribbean traditions, specifically those of Cuba and Haiti. Richard Brent Turner, for instance, has argued that “New Orleans’s status as a sacred city in the African diaspora derives from the profound influences of two distinct cultures: the city’s Mardi Gras Indian tribes, with their second-line street performances and festival parades, and the sequin artists and Rara bands of Haiti.”<sup>178</sup> Turner employs what he calls a “triangular mode of inquiry” in order to trace how “spiritual philosophies” alongside “concrete historical connections” manifested in Haiti, Central Africa, and New Orleans. Drawing examples from secret societies of drummers, healing rituals, feather-covered flags, and the testimonies of New Orleans musicians such as trumpeter Irvin Mayfield who travelled to Haiti, Turner convincingly demonstrates not only Haitian influence within jazz, but also how Black Mardi Gras Indians summoned the submerged history of Afro-Indigenous maroon collectives:<sup>179</sup>

The black revolution in Haiti provided a powerful model of political resistance for people of African descent in New Orleans. Political and cultural resistance was incorporated in the black community’s efforts to subversively invoke various sacred Vodou values in the

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<sup>178</sup> Richard Brent Turner, *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 39.

<sup>179</sup> Turner, *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans*, 40. For more on this subject, see Shane Lief and John McCusker, *Jockomo: The Native Roots of Mardi Gras Indians* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2019).

nineteenth- century Congo Square performances that continued to inform twentieth-century, second-line culture: the sacred nature of the universe; morality based on a fluid African ethos; a communal emphasis on biological and extended family; ritual as a bridge between human beings and their ancestors; respect for elders; wholeness of being—the interdependence of human beings with the forces of nature; a black aesthetics; initiation; healing and coping strategies; and resistance and continuity.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to Irvin Mayfield, other research has unearthed how Haitian influence is still apparent amongst contemporary second-liners, such as Juan Pardo. Pardo claimed his “first musical inspiration” was from his Haitian and Panamanian grandparents, who imparted upon him the beauty of “clave rhythms.”<sup>181</sup> In 2013, the second-liner Fred Johnson, speaking at an awards dinner before the twentieth anniversary parade of the Mardi Gras krewe named “Black Men of Labor” referred to their parades as a “dance across the Diaspora,” theorizing the movements of their bodies in the streets as a way to connect the archipelagos of New World Afro-Atlantic culture.<sup>182</sup> The connections between the Afro-Atlantic and New Orleans second-lining tradition are actively remembered, enacted, and lived to the present day.

As Daniel Desdunes matured as a bandleader in the 1890s, these rhythms (re)entered brass band repertoire with a pronounced vigor, deepening the tradition of “secondary creolization” between Afro-Louisianans and Haitian émigrés which dated back to the first decade of the century.<sup>183</sup> Conforming with George Filhe’s 1892 date of when “musicians [such as Desdunes] started to swing,” musicologist Benjamin Doleac’s research suggests that the “Afro-Caribbean

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<sup>180</sup> Turner, *Jazz Religion*, 21.

<sup>181</sup> Robin Ligon Williams, “From Maroons to Mardi Gras: The Role of African Cultural Retention in the Development of the Black Indian Culture of New Orleans” (Master’s Theses, Lynchburg, Virginia, Liberty University, 2018), 82.

<sup>182</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” 42.

<sup>183</sup> Nathalie Dessens, “St Domingue Refugees in New Orleans: Identity and Cultural Influences,” in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004*, ed. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2008), 87-115.

reinterpretation of the duple...[the] Euro-American march beat” entered New Orleans brass bands style around the “end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...by the 1910s at the very latest.”<sup>184</sup> New Orleans cornetist Manuel Perez, who came of age during this decade, also marked the early 1890s as an age of “syncopated evolution.”<sup>185</sup> Drummers’ cross-cutting, polyrhythmic-accented patterns were thrown into the brass band mix, especially rhythms derived from the *clave*, the *tresillo*, the *habanera*, and the *cinquillo*. The latter two of this list have been explicitly linked to the 1791-1810 Saint-Domingue exodus,<sup>186</sup> which Sara Johnson describes as an aesthetic-ideological corridor she calls “cinquillo consciousness.”<sup>187</sup> Alongside these rhythmic integrations, the very feel of time changed, too. One Afro-Caribbean inheritance in this early 1890s period was a “flexible sense of timing,” specifically a space that found “drumbeats often falling somewhere in between a duple and triple time feel,” what Doleac describes as “the most sublime of jazz’s foundational characteristics.”<sup>188</sup>

New Orleans’s Black brass bands and their Afro-Caribbean and Haitian-Cuban contributions, combinations that undergirded the development of swing, support an Afro-Atlantic rendering of Olly Wilson’s “heterogenous sound ideal.”<sup>189</sup> Amongst African American music, Wilson points to both “variable” and “fixed rhythmic group[s],” a recognition that the rhythmic feel cannot be reduced to a single pattern, but rather should be conceived as composites generated

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<sup>184</sup> Benjamin Grant Doleac, “‘We Made It Through That Water’: Rhythm, Dance, and Resistance in the New Orleans Second Line” (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, 2018), 6-7.

<sup>185</sup> Robert Goffin, *La Nouvelle-Orléans, Capitale Du Jazz* (New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1946), 69-70.

<sup>186</sup> Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>187</sup> Sara E. Johnson, “Cinquillo Consciousness: The Formation of a Pan-Caribbean Musical Aesthetic,” in *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 35–58.

<sup>188</sup> Benjamin Grant Doleac, “‘We Made It Through That Water’: Rhythm, Dance, and Resistance in the New Orleans Second Line” (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, 2018),

<sup>189</sup> Olly Wilson, “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African American Music,” in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honour of Eileen Southern*, eds. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (Michigan, IL: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 327-340,

by several instruments that play repeated interlocking parts and leave room for improvisation.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, John Chernoff and Hafiz Shabazz Farel Johnson describe how the “beat” of a Afro-Atlantic given style (their essay explores Afro-Cuban conga rhythms) “emerges from the overall organization and dynamics of several rhythms combined and working together.”<sup>191</sup>

Across the Caribbean, marching bands enacted this critical cosmopolitanism from below and reordered public space in doing so. Freddi Williams Evans and Zada Johnson have traced the “link among the street-parading traditions of New Orleans, Cuba, and Haiti” which all integrated “African-derived performance styles into the colonial Carnival tradition...that resisted the cultural oppression of enslaved groups.”<sup>192</sup> The authors note that similar features can be observed in each, such as organized benevolent societies attached to each parade ensemble, a shared mimicking of militaristic and governmental positions, and similar (or identical) rhythmic cells.

Haitian *rara* bands and New Orleans second-lining shared more than rhythms and parallel spectacles: they both performed alternatives to racial capitalism. In her article “The Gift of the New Orleans Second Line,” Margaret M. Olsen argues that second-line traditions have been “a cultural response to capital since the nineteenth century,” and their symbiotic mutual aid associations must be understood as “a deep sense of creative economic resilience and solidarity.”<sup>193</sup> The cultural contacts between Louisianan Creole of Color and Haitian families point

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<sup>190</sup> Olly Wilson, “The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 2, no. 1 (1974): 19.

<sup>191</sup> Hafiz Shabazz Farel Johnson and John M. Chernoff, “Basic Conga Drum Rhythms in African-American Musical Styles,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 1 (1991): 56.

<sup>192</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 39.

<sup>193</sup> Maragret Olsen, “The Gift of the New Orleans Second Line,” in *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres: Performance Permutations*, ed. Lara D. Nielsen and Patricia Ybarra Ybarra (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 176, 180.

to a transfer between the *rara* groups of Haiti's "maroon nation," whose disavowal of capital was well appreciated by Haitian elites who tried to ban the practice.<sup>194</sup>

Accounts of the transformative effects of second-lining point to how a shared repertoire included not only rhythms and notes but specific socio-spatial affects: the phenomenology of the commons. One contemporary New Orleans second-lining clarinetist, Michael G. White, describes how band parades "transform earthly reality" through collective social action. "[T]he crowd grew larger and the music and the dancing increased in intensity, the entire scene was converted into a kind of spiritual dimension in which there was total freedom, a uniting of souls, and a constant reinterpretation of earthly reality."<sup>195</sup> Similarly, Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat spoke eloquently of reinterpretation and collective transformation through *rara* parades:

I can no longer resist the contagious revelry. I am one of those women now, loving and fearing the sensation of red-hot nails pricking me all over, and all I can do is dance and dance for relief from their sting. I am among the clergy and soldiers in flames. I am one of those marchers and migrants, back from the purgatory of exile, expatiating sins of coldness and distance.

At last, my body is a tiny fragment of a much larger being. I am part of a group possession, a massive stream of joy. I feel like I am twirling around a maypole, and going much too fast, and I cannot stop. My head is spinning, but I don't care. There is nothing that seems to matter as much as following the curve of the other bodies pressed against mine. In that brief space and time, the carnival offers all the paradoxical elements I am craving: anonymity, jubilant community, and belonging.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019). For bans on "Vodou" culture and other rural repression, see Mimi Sheller, "'You Signed My Name, but Not My Feet': Paradoxes of Peasant Resistance and State Control in Post-Revolutionary Haiti," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2004): 72–86; Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>195</sup> Michael G. White, "A Musician's Life in the Second Line," in *Freedom's Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018)..

<sup>196</sup> Edwidge Danticat, *After the Dance: A Walk Through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti* (2002; New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2015), 147.

Haitians have long considered dance and music to be potent expressions of their embodied freedom, or what the Haitian anthropologist Jean-Casimir called a “bearer of a sovereign universe that preceded slavery and that [t]he[y] kept reproducing.”<sup>197</sup> A Haitian expression resists the sovereignty of the slave power: “Vous signé *nom* moi, mais bous pas signé *pieds* moi” translates to “You signed my *name*, but you haven’t signed my *feet*.”<sup>198</sup> A maroon conception of freedom, this common sense rejected the legible formations of property ownership in slaves or in rural permits to travel—both of which require a “signed name.”<sup>199</sup> “Feet” thus might mean escape from plantations—*exodus*—or it might mean the “historic materiality” of soil, agriculture, and the body, what Mimi Sheller connects with the formulation of “erotic agency.”<sup>200</sup> But more literally, it refers to dancing. Caribbean sacred and secular dance forms often use the lower body—the “winding of the hips, the shaking of the bottom, or the stomping of the feet”—a very different physicality from a dance form such as ballet which emphasizes “high” movements.<sup>201</sup> These relationships between the body, the Earth, and social movement are reflected in the song of at least one Haitian-descended early jazz musician.<sup>202</sup> Jelly Roll Morton’s “Black Bottom Stomp” is based on the dance called the

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<sup>197</sup> Jean Casimir, “Haiti’s Need for a Great South,” trans. Eglantine Colon and Michelle Koerner, *Global South*, *The 5*, no. 1 (2011): 14–36.

<sup>198</sup> Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études Sur l’Histoire d’Haïti*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry, Madeleien et Ce, 1860), vol. 10:23 n1; Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 166.

<sup>199</sup> Also resisted Boyer’s rural code which made rural workers’ self-managed cooperatives illegal and prohibited rural-urban travel without authorization from a government official. See Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 172.

<sup>200</sup> “In my view, the historian of freedom who seeks traces of subaltern agency must also look beneath conventional definitions of political agency and of citizenship and seek out the unexcavated field of embodied (material and spiritual) practices through which people excursive and envision freedom in a Domain that I will define later as “erotic agency.” Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 3.

<sup>201</sup> Tim Cresswell, “‘You Cannot Shake That Shimmie Here’: Producing Mobility on the Dance Floor,” *Cultural Geographies* 12, no. 1 (2006): 55–77; Brenda D. Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 1–10; quote is from Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 23.

<sup>202</sup> On Morton’s Haitian genealogy, see Lawrence Gushee, “Would You Believe Ferman Mouton? (A Second Look),” *Storyville*, December 1981.

“Black Bottom,” the name given to the rich alluvial lands found in the heart of the Black Belt where large numbers of slaves, at first, and then freedmen, lived and worked the land. Morton transliterated the dance rhythm to form the foundation of his piece. The song summons an eco-social space associated with self-sufficiency during emancipation, and the dance that commemorated it was a bridge between soil and soul.<sup>203</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels argues that:

Though not a practitioner of vodun, Morton kept alive the dance traditions associated with Haitian and West African dance traditions...[by] drumming with their feet, [they were] turning the dance floors (or the earth, when in rural areas) into a giant drum that resounded with the sound of shoes or bare feet. Moreover, this was a way of communicating with the ancestors who are generally associated with the soil and the ground, of letting them know that they were still perpetuating the traditions so close to the heart of African religion and spirituality.<sup>204</sup>

Other African American jazz musicians who composed “stomps” included Mary Lou Williams’s “Messa Stomp,” Hot Lips Page’s “Good for Stompin’”; and the standard “Stompin’ at the Savoy” named after the Harlem club of the same name.<sup>205</sup> “Stompin’” and striking the ground was a part of a repertoire of eco-musical activity associated with the decidedly non-anthropocentric spirituality of Haitian migrants. In Santiago de Cuba, Dalia Timitoc Borrero remembered a Haitian spiritual leader named Santiago Fiz on a coffee farm she grew up on in the 1930s. Fiz sang songs from “the war of the Haitians against the French” and “while he sang...beat the ground with a stick like they did in Haiti[,] calling to his ancestors.”<sup>206</sup> The Haitian art music composer Jaegerhuber points to a similar motion when he claimed as his inspiration “the Negro with hands injured by

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<sup>203</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young - Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 117.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Linda Dahl, *Morning Glory: A Biography of Mary Lou Williams* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 437. *Hot Lips Page, 1940-1944* (Classics 809).

<sup>206</sup> Casey, *Haitian Migrants in Cuba*, 184.

work and disdain [who] strikes the earth intent on thus entering in contact with the gods, and from there drawing solace.”<sup>207</sup>

The careful tracing of this interconnected repertoire across the Atlantic summons a number of conceptual frameworks for how we understand Black culture across the diaspora. Instead of thinking of these as Kongolese or West African “retentions,” or even of *Haitian* retentions, I find the metaphor coined by J. Lorand Matory of “live dialogue” to reflect the agency and creativity in these Afro-Atlantic exchanges.<sup>208</sup> This metaphoric antiphony the decision-making aspects in communication and identification. Jazz was one product of this live dialogue, and its contribution of Afro-Atlantic rhythms such as the *tresillo*, *cinquillo*, and *clave* to the feeling of “swing” in the New Orleans brass band.

In the following section, I return to the Desdunes family to foreground their activism during Reconstruction and the emergence of Jim Crow. I highlight Rodolphe Desdunes’s various invocations of Haiti as a practice of Black internationalism. In doing so, I hope to show how what the “heterogenous sound ideal” might have meant to those who had experienced a triple or quadruple hyphenated identity—African, Haitian, Cuban, Louisianan, and only recently, North American. During the Civil War and Reconstruction years, the anticolonial internationalism of radical Creoles of Color was proudly announced in their written statements. For instance, in the Creole of Color newspaper the *Tribune*, they contextualize their struggle as “only one chapter in the great universal fight of the oppressed of all colors and nations.”<sup>209</sup> The challenge of Louisiana’s

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<sup>207</sup> Louis Maximilien, 1954, 35-36; quoted in Michael Largey, “Ethnographic Transcription and Music Ideology in Haiti: The Music of Werner A. Jaegerhuber,” *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 25, no. 1 (2004): 1–31.

<sup>208</sup> J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>209</sup> Houzeau, *My Passage*, 2–5, 19–23, 75, 78.

Radical Reconstruction was one wherein a multilinguistic Black population attempt to synchronize several languages, visions of freedom, and diverse rhythms of life in order to work together. It is pertinent we address this period in order to uncover the socio-political valences of Haitian musical devices in the body of the brass band. This multigeneration process, which has its roots in the 1791-1810 Saint-Domingue migration, took on a critical mass during Reconstruction.

### 2.3 The History of New Orleans's Creoles of Color Community

*There is not State in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historic importance and yet about whose so comparatively little is known. His history is like the Mardi Gras of the city of New Orleans, beautiful and mysterious and wonderful, but with a serious thought underlying it all. May it be better known to the world someday.*

- Alice Dunbar-Nelson<sup>210</sup>

In 1907, Rodolphe Desdunes published a fifteen-page pamphlet entitled *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois 'With Malice Toward None.'* Desdunes, in phrases alternating lavish praise and pointed criticism, attacked Du Bois's apparent elitism and his distrust of the intellectual capacities of the Black masses. Du Bois had recently opined that Black southerners lacked book learning and industrial skills. "The Negroes of the South," retorted the elder Desdunes, "do not deserve to stand under the indictment which the first part of that declaration conveys."<sup>211</sup> Rodolphe Desdunes's defense of Black southerners as a whole, and his very overture to Du Bois, may seem surprising,

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<sup>210</sup> Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color of Louisiana, Part II," *Journal of Negro History* II (January 1917): 78.

<sup>211</sup> Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois 'With Malice Toward None'* (New Orleans, 1907), 2.

given the latter's prolific scholarship lifting up the contributions of the Black working-class. Who was this Creole of Color from Louisiana to call out the venerable W.E.B. Du Bois for his credentials?

Desdunes was "an active Mason who took a broad view of the struggle," writes Rebecca Scott, a struggle which encompassed "the principles of the French and Haitian Revolutions, the Louisiana Constitution of 1868, and the history of the fight for equal rights across the Caribbean."<sup>212</sup> Desdunes's political education started at a young age, when he studied Radical Republican ideals in a New Orleans school founded by a once-enslaved Haitian emigrant, Marie Justine Couvent. Desdunes himself descended from Haitian immigrants, and the connections were ongoing: his parents and brother were part of a group of Creole of Color families who briefly emigrated to Haiti in 1858. Songs were brought back from these voyages, and in the 1950s, jazz researchers recorded Haitian songs still sung in Louisiana that referenced current events in Haiti from the late 1850s.<sup>213</sup>

Rodolphe's brother, Pierre-Aristide, fought in the Civil War with the explicit motivation to secure the emancipation of some four million enslaved people of African descent. Rodolphe did not see wartime combat but served in the racially integrated Metropolitan Police to defend Reconstruction's gains from right-wing white terroristic violence. In 1874, he was injured by a confrontation with a white supremacist militia, the "White League," at the battle of Liberty Place.<sup>214</sup> While not present at Louisiana's 1868 constitutional convention, they were in the tight-

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<sup>212</sup> Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba After Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 75.

<sup>213</sup> "Zeno's Song" is described in this dissertation's introduction at length. It refers to a song sung by Alice Zeno, a Creole of Color born in 1862 in Saint John the Baptist Parish which references Haitian President Geffrard Haiti. Alice Zeno and George Lewis, Interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>214</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, "The Desdunes Family," *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 25–45.

knit circle of radical Creoles of Color and contributed to the war of ideas which animated its result. Now considered a century ahead of its time, the 1868 Louisiana Constitution included likely the strongest antiracist provisions in the nineteenth-century world. What set it apart from other Reconstruction constitutions is that its framework for racial equality, such as the novel language of “public rights,” was developed by Black and Creole revolutionaries during the Saint-Domingue uprising.<sup>215</sup> As Logsdon and Bell note, Desdunes and those of his generation took positions and adopted tactics that “placed them in the political vanguard of the entire nation.”<sup>216</sup> Louisiana’s radical Creole of Color activists fought for the most expansive suffrage laws in the United States, they fought for agricultural cooperatives to replace plantations,<sup>217</sup> they fought for woman’s rights,<sup>218</sup> they fought to build a robust and desegregated public school system, and worked to build a culture of radical interracial solidarity. These innovations had everything to do with the meaning and messaging of the Haitian Revolution, exemplifying Westenley Alcenat’s argument that “the idea of Haiti became a radically subversive alternate to American citizenship.”<sup>219</sup> Perhaps in this period, we can say that the idea of Haiti radically altered, and expanded, the meaning of American citizenship.

Rodolphe Desdunes was deeply inspired by both the idea and the actual politics of Haiti. It was late in Desdunes’s life when he expressed his disagreements with Du Bois (he would soon

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<sup>215</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, “Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (1844-1918), Creole Poet, Civil War Soldier, and Civil Rights Activist: The Common Wind’s Legacy,” 282; Rebecca Scott, “The Atlantic World and the Road to ‘Plessy v. Ferguson,’” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007)

<sup>216</sup> Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, “The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State Museum, 1992), 220.

<sup>217</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 278.

<sup>218</sup> See Scott and Hébrard’s discussion of Eduard Tinchant’s argument for woman’s suffrage in *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>219</sup> Westenley Alcenat, “‘Children of Africa, Shall Be Haytians’: Prince Saunders, Revolutionary Transnationalism, and the Foundations of Black Emigration” (PhD Dissertation, New York, Columbia University, 2019).

become partially blind), and it was decades after the defeats of both Radical Reconstruction and the 1890s civil rights movement. Yet he still proselytized a vision of social change based in the saga of the Haitian Revolution, looking to the Black republic's history for lessons of decolonization and revolutionary leadership. Du Bois had, in Desdunes's assessment, uncritically accepted Toussaint L'Ouverture as the great Black hero of the Saint-Domingue revolution, which led to a misunderstanding of the Black masses. "Louverture was willing to see the island remain under French control," Desdunes notes, before quipping in language that Du Bois was sure to understand that "Toussaint L'Ouverture was the Booker T. Washington of Haiti."<sup>220</sup> While this rhetoric may be overkill, L'Ouverture was complicit with French rule and plantation agriculture, a point reinforced by modern scholarship.<sup>221</sup> Desdunes contrasts L'Ouverture with Jean Jacques Dessalines, Haiti's Black emperor who was born into slavery, and who Desdunes celebrates for pushing for independence and helping initiate slave revolts aboard. In essence, Desdunes is self-consciously aligning himself with what he understood as the most radical, anticolonial, and uncompromisingly revolutionary legacy of the Haitian Revolution in order to argue that the masses of Southern freedpeople are capable of being revolutionary subjects—an opinion that Du Bois himself would argue forcibly some twenty-eight years later in *Black Reconstruction in America*.

Desdunes points to a legacy of activists who came of age during Reconstruction and self-consciously identified their work with the memory and example of Haiti. His summoning of Dessalines in his interaction with Du Bois supports Duplantier's assessment that "Creoles of Color

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<sup>220</sup> Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois 'With Malice Toward None'* (New Orleans, 1907). See also Charles E/ O'Neill's introduction to Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes's *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

<sup>221</sup> Michael O. West and William G. Martin, "Haiti, I'm Sorry: The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International," in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution*, ed. Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 72–104; David Geggus, "Haiti's Declaration of Independence," in *The Haitian Declaration of Independence: Creation, Context, and Legacy*, ed. Julia Gaffield (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 29.

no doubt felt a strong personal connection to Haiti,” since many, if not most, were “second or third generation Saint-Domingue immigrants.”<sup>222</sup> That Desdunes continued to proselytize, decades after heart-crushing defeats of equal rights provisions and the consolidation of white supremacist rule, echoes Christopher Hodson’s assertion that the energetic activism of Creoles of Color can be attributed to their “particular vantage point” wherein “Louisiana emerges as an energetic offshoot of the greater Caribbean patched hastily onto the fabric of the United States.” This particularly Atlantic perspective understood “the hardening of racial categories in the pre-Civil War south and the ruinous end of reconstruction” to be “less as national tragedies and more as American manifestations of a trans-Atlantic reckoning.”<sup>223</sup> Reckonings swung both ways, however, and Rodolphe’s keen sense of history lent clarity to these new struggles by considering the political openings and tactics that prior revolutions, slave uprisings, and civil rights movements offered. This worldview animated the participation of the Desdunes family in the Civil War, Reconstruction, and as 1890s freedom riders.

Studying Rodolphe Desdunes’s fellow travelers may help us further understand with what lens this vantage point, or rather, this Afro-Atlantic kaleidoscope, saw the world. Édouard Tinchant, a Creole of Color Union army veteran and Reconstruction activist, had a story that was equally Atlantic in scope, and one in which Haiti figured prominently. His grandmother, Rosalie, of the “Pollard” nation, was enslaved in Senegambia and shipped to Haiti; in the tumultuous years of the Haitian Revolution, she gained her freedom. Tinchant’s mother, Elisabeth, was a Haitian émigré who fled Louisiana for France during the especially oppressive years leading up to the

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<sup>222</sup> Jean-Marc Allard Duplantier, “Creole Louisiana’s Haitian Exile(s),” *Southern Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2007): 69.

<sup>223</sup> Christopher Hodson, “Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation by Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard (Review),” *Journal of the Early Republic* 35, no. 4 (2015): 677–80.

Civil War. Tinchant grew up in Paris where he was radicalized as a student in his twenties by Napoleon III's violent repression of the Paris Commune of 1848. He quickly became an avid anti-imperialist and Radical Republican. He moved to New Orleans two years before the battle of Fort Sumter and fought in the Civil War on the side of the Union Army. During Reconstruction, he participated in Louisiana's Constitutional Convention of 1867-68, where he fought for universal suffrage for both men and women, and later became a school board president, a position he considered to be a continuation of his earlier activism.<sup>224</sup>

What grounded all of these transatlantic journeys was that he self-consciously identified, in his words, as “a son of Africa...of Haitian descent,” and he fought in order to “defeat, reverse and obliterate this tyrannical aristocracy that forced our father to expatriate and which, ever since our earliest years, he has taught us to hate.” He defined “aristocracy” as the tripartite of plantation slavery, racial discrimination, and European colonialism. In protests at the French consulate and in letters to more conservative Creoles of Color, he defended the Mexican Revolution against French invasion in 1862; he also claimed to be “in early and ardent sympathy [*sic*] with the Cuban cause” in a letter to Cuban independence leader Máximo Gomez in 1899.<sup>225</sup> His internationalism was an embodiment of his Haitian ancestry, and this connection was made apparent in his various letters and speeches, which had a particular impact on the Louisiana's Reconstruction Constitution. As Scott notes, “during the last months of 1867 and the first months of 1868, this French-born man

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<sup>224</sup> Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>225</sup> Édouard Tinchant, Communiqué, *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans*, 21 July 1864; Tinchant, 1899 letter to Máximo Gómez; in Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 6.

of Haitian ancestry helped to hammer out the most radical state constitution the South had ever seen.”<sup>226</sup>

This radical faction of Creoles of Color reimagined their Haitian identity to ground daring alternatives to the plantation order in the context of postwar Louisiana’s tumultuous political changes. It was not as if Creoles of Color lacked access to Haiti or its intellectual and performance cultures. In 1858, at the height of racism against free people of color in New Orleans, as many as 585 Afro-Louisianans moved to Haiti.<sup>227</sup> The New Orleans Creole of Color romantic poet, Joseph Colastin Rosseau, was among those who participated in this exodus, and he contributed to the Haitian literary scene. In 1862, he wrote a long serial article for the Port-au-Prince *L’Opinion Nationale* which fused pan-Africanist ideas with Haitian and Afro-Louisianan solidarity. Here, Rosseau explained that he wrote to build relationships across the Saint-Domingue diaspora: “[I write] in order to shine a light upon these Louisianians, so that everyone, and most especially our Haitian brothers, might learn more about who these people are, because for us, to be a Louisianian is to be Haitian.”<sup>228</sup> Rosseau’s proud declaration as a Haitian-Louisianan reflected a commitment to creating a Black counterpublic and was an early expression of Black internationalism in print media. But more importantly, this was no passive inheritance—Rosseau constructed it.

But this was not the first example of Creole of Color solidarity with Haitian relatives. In 1832, New Orleans Creoles of Color coordinated a fundraising campaign for hurricane victims in Les Cayes and Jérémie on Haiti’s southern peninsula.<sup>229</sup> In schools organized by Creoles of Color,

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<sup>226</sup> Rebecca J Scott, “Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary,” *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 2 (2007): 245.

<sup>227</sup> *Pine and Palm*, 12 October 1861, 19 October 1861, 26 October 1861; Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 210n9.

<sup>228</sup> Rousseau, “Souvenirs,” Port-au-Prince *L’Opinion Nationale*, 27 Dec. 1862. Translation by Duplantier.

<sup>229</sup> Anna Brickhouse, “‘L’Ouragan de Flammes’ (‘The Hurricane of Flames’): New Orleans and Transamerican Catastrophe, 1866/2005,” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1097–1127.

Haiti was part of the curriculum. One fourteen year old Creole of Color named Lucien Lamanière wrote to a fictional “J.H. Sauvign” in 1861: “I am going next year and I invite you to come[,] we will go to Paris together before coming back to New Orleans, we will go and visit that fine country called Hayti and if you are not satisfied of those two countries, we will go and visit Mexico the finest country after Paris.”<sup>230</sup> The imaginary of the young Lamanière shows how deeply Creoles of Color *reproduced*, generation after generation, an Atlantic conception of human freedom constructed within, and transmitted from, the revolutions in Haiti, Mexico, and France.

It was none other than the Desdunes family who were the nodal point between Haiti and Louisiana. Rodolphe Desdunes’s father, Pierre-Jérémie, convinced Haiti’s Emperor Soulouque in a clandestine meeting in Haiti to allow Black Louisianan emigration to Haiti. Rodolphe describes this episode in his landmark history of the Creoles of Color, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire* (1911). He claimed that his uncle Emile, while born in New Orleans, “was Haitian by education and custom,” and thus “Emperor Soulouque, acting on basis of reports he received, decided to send Emile Desdunes to New Orleans to inquire into the condition of all people of Haitian descent.” While the meaning of “Haitian by education and custom” was left undefined by Desdunes, it seemed that this important marker of identity made an impression on the Haitian head-of-state. “[Emile] Desdunes justified all his [Soulouque’s] expectations,” due to his “remarkable ability and sincerity,” attributes which convinced hundreds of families to make the reverse voyage.<sup>231</sup> Emile managed to break the United States embargo by encouraging New Orleans merchants to establish

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<sup>230</sup> Mary Niall Mitchell, “‘A Good and Delicious Country’: Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana.” *History of Education Quarterly*, no. 40 (Summer 2000): 123–44.

<sup>231</sup> Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, 68.

a line of packets;<sup>232</sup> he appealed to African Americans in both the North and South, publishing in the Cincinnati *Daily Press*: “In Hayti he will have no superior. Here he can never dream of arriving at equality. Let the free Negroes emigrate by all means, and infuse American energy, skill and republicanism into the Hayti Republic. By so doing they will escape from their degraded and insecure position, and enter on a new and brilliant field that surpasses Liberia in every respect.”<sup>233</sup>

Among those who travelled to Haiti was Rodolphe’s brother, Pierre-Aristide, who would emerge as an important activist and poet during the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. While in Haiti, Pierre-Aristide frequently visited the grave of one of his idols, the Haitian poet Coriolan Ardouin, who Pierre-Aristide cherished for playing “the very fibers of his heart” like a “lyre.”<sup>234</sup> He also studied Haitian Vodou at a relative’s home.<sup>235</sup> Based on notes in his ledgers, Bell concludes that “the young [Pierre-Aristide] Desdunes found Vodou irresistible during his Haitian visit in the 1850s. He was clearly impressed with his ‘Compère (godfather) Jean Josephe,’ an adherent of the religion and a veteran grenadier in the army of Haitian revolutionary Alexandre Pétion.”<sup>236</sup> Godparents shared a singular importance in several Haitian-Louisiana families; Jelly Roll Morton remembers his godmother, the Haitian-descended Eulalia Echo (also known as Laura Hunter), as a pillar of his childhood who supported his musical education and provided stability after Morton’s

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<sup>232</sup> *Cleveland Morning Leader*, Sept. 16, 1858; Dan Vernhettes et al., “The Desdunes Family (Unpublished Manuscript)” (2020).

<sup>233</sup> *The Daily Press* (Cincinnati, Ohio), April 19, 1859; Dan Vernhettes et al., “The Desdunes Family (Unpublished Manuscript)” (2020).

<sup>234</sup> Pierre-Aristide Desdunes Ledgers, vol. I, 207-10; quoted in Caryn Cossé Bell, “‘Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens’: The Poetry of Pierre-Aristide Desdunes, Civil War Soldier, Romantic Literary Artist, and Civil Rights Activist,” in *Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens: La Poésie de Pierre Aristide Desdunes*, by Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (Shreveport, LA: Les Éditions Tintamarre, Centenary College of Louisiana, 2011), 6.

<sup>235</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young - Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 110–23; Caryn Cossé Bell, “Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (1844-1918), Creole Poet, Civil War Soldier, and Civil Rights Activist: The Common Wind’s Legacy,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 55, no. 3 (2014): 282–312.

<sup>236</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, “Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (1844-1918), Creole Poet, Civil War Soldier, and Civil Rights Activist: The Common Wind’s Legacy,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 55, no. 3 (2014): 287.

grandmother disowned him for playing jazz. (Echo was also a Vodou practitioner, and may have introduced the young Morton to Mamie Desdunes, who lived on her block.<sup>237</sup>) That Pierre-Astride had a godfather in Haiti suggests the depth of this transatlantic community.

Additionally, Pierre-Aristide's identification with Vodou was suggestive of his class politics, for as Rashauna Johnson notes, "spirituality in the African diaspora became 'an emblem of divergence:' Relatively privileged blacks associated themselves with Christianity and left African-derived spiritual systems to the lower orders (at least in public)."<sup>238</sup> Pierre-Aristide was a lifelong student of the liberation movement; he wrote essays on Marx's philosophy of capitalism and the French Revolution alongside his prolific output of poetry.<sup>239</sup> Pierre-Aristide's study of Haitian Vodou reveals that both he and the Desdunes family at large understood their alignment with the Black republic in both political and spiritual terms.

In addition to Vodou, Pierre-Aristide probably witnessed a *rara* pilgrimage, in which large assemblies of parishioners during carnival season travel through townships and countryside, making processional stops along the way. Made spectacular through musical, dance, and theatrical performance, *rara* pilgrimages actively incorporate an iconography that include both Republican and royalist honorifics: parishioners might include a "President," a "treasurer," a "king," a "queen," a "general." According to McAlister, these offices emerged in concrete struggles of the Haitian peasantry against state leaders, and their processions represent the uprisings that led to the

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<sup>237</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, "Vodun and Jazz: 'Jelly Roll' Morton and Lester 'Pres' Young - Substance and Shadow," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 110–23.

<sup>238</sup> Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 122.

<sup>239</sup> Pierre-Aristide Desdunes's two ledgers, given by Mr. Tureaud to Howard University, contain an essay about the French Revolution and Karl Marx's philosophy in the form of a letter to Charles Testier, his French correspondent, in the Pierre-Aristide Desdunes Ledgers, A. P. Tureaud family papers. Thank you to Dan Vernhettes for making me aware of this.

Haitian Revolution.<sup>240</sup> It is worth considering how such performances, and inversions, of state authority are repeated amongst the honorifics shared by early jazz musicians: Lester “Prez” Young, who was introduced to a variant of Haitian Vodou through his mother,<sup>241</sup> “King” Oliver, “Empress” Bessie Smith, “Duke” Ellington, and “Count” Basie are just a few examples of a parallel pantheon. One possible link for this tradition may be found in New Orleans brass band culture, for as Freddi Williams Evans and Zada Johnson suggest, “As in the [New Orleans] second line and [Santiago de Cuba’s] Congas, the references in Raras to royalty and militarism index resistance against oppression.”<sup>242</sup> A centerpiece of Mardi Gras processions includes the figure of the “King of the Zulus” whose representation has been similarly politically charged.<sup>243</sup> This “surrogation” was a Haitian derivation.

Reconstruction culture bears strong traces of descent to *Rara* processions and Haiti’s politicized processional music. After Pierre-Astride returned to Louisiana and fought in the Civil War, Creole of Color and African American activists worked to incorporate brass bands and music into their political activities. Several events through the 1860s and 70s index the intense involvement of marching bands in Reconstruction spectacle. When New Orleans Sheriff and Confederate Army Veteran opened fire on Republican activists in 1866, killing dozens, he claimed in sworn testimony that he was triggered by the presence of a “marching band.”<sup>244</sup> The use of brass

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<sup>240</sup> Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>241</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young - Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 110–23.

<sup>242</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 31–42.

<sup>243</sup> Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>244</sup> Jerry Brock, “Notes on New Orleans Brass Bands,” *OffBeat Magazine*, July 1, 2001, <http://www.offbeat.com/articles/notes-on-new-orleans-brass-bands/>. See also Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

bands in the struggle to claim public space, what I call “brassroots democracy,” is discussed at length in Chapter 5, but for now it is important to emphasize how these sonic repertoires further cemented the alliance between free-before-the-war Creoles of Color and freed slaves. Brass bands had long been an important part the antebellum military service performed by Creoles of Color, but now they held an utterly different meaning in the movement to overthrow slavery and the plantation system. In both Haiti and Louisiana, collective Black music fused with social movements, a symbolic register for both supporters and detractors of the historic autonomous space within collective performance. These aesthetic practices were mobilized to express and enact a renewed vision of society, a subject to which we now turn.<sup>245</sup>

#### **2.4 Civil War Imaginations: the Unfinished Haitian Revolution**

*But the concept of race, indispensable to justify the slave trade, was not solely France's invention. The entire Western community generated it. Therefore, self-reliance on the part of former enslaved workers should be viewed as a confrontation with European capital in its entirety, and the defeat inflicted upon the French expeditionary army in November 1803 should be reduced to no more than a skirmish in a titanic confrontation with the architects of the racialization of the human species.*

- Jean Casimir<sup>246</sup>

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Haitian Revolution was on the minds of both African-descended free men and freedmen as they battled with former planters, conservative

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<sup>245</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Band Music of the First Battalion of Free Men of Color and the Siege of New Orleans, 1814-1815,” *American Music* 10, no. 3 (1992): 348–69.

<sup>246</sup> Jean Casimir, “The Sovereign People of Haiti during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *The Haitian Declaration of Independence: Creation, Context, and Legacy*, ed. Julia Gaffield (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 184.

Union generals, and northern capitalists in their struggle to construct a counter-planation republic. In this section, I present evidence for this Atlantic antiphony and some of its possible political and aesthetic impacts. Some scholars have suggested that the Haitian Revolution unintentionally prolonged slavery in the United States,<sup>247</sup> but the steadfast invocation of Haiti by Creole of Color activists to overthrow slavery suggests that its impact swung in both directions. Several historians have recently recast the United States Civil War as a variant of North American slave rebellion catalyzed by the Haitian Revolution.<sup>248</sup> Steven Hahn, for example, argues that the United States Civil War would be better understood by placing the rebellion of the slaves front and center, much as we should understand the 1792 uprising. As Hahn writes, “In both Saint-Domingue and the Civil War South” one can find both “free people of color [who] had important roles in setting the direction of political conflict and influencing the goals for a postemancipation world” and that “flight from the plantations—maroonage—was integral to the rebellions and crucial to the growth and maintenance of liberating armies.”<sup>249</sup> These two themes eloquently express a shared political culture across two centuries, and point to two animating class forces during Reconstruction. The presence of Haitian-descended radicals in Louisiana certainly did not impede this resonance.

These two classes quickly developed frameworks for organizing together. Leaders among New Orleans’ residents of African descent who had been free before the war grew increasingly radicalized during the war years. They understood the need to forge a broad, grassroots political alliance with freedpeople as early as the winter of 1864. At a mass-meeting in December of this

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<sup>247</sup> Alfred Hunt argues that the Haitian Revolution may have prolonged slavery in the United States because it hardened planter conservatism and paranoia. See Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2006).

<sup>248</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, “Africa and the American Civil War: The Geopolitics of Freedom and the Production of Commons,” in *The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War*, ed. Jörg Nagler, Don Harrison Doyle, and Marcus Gräser (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 127–48.

<sup>249</sup> Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 98.

year, Oscar J. Dunn, born enslaved but emancipated before the war, initiated the assembly by boldly declaring that “We regard all black and colored men as brothers and fellow sufferers.”<sup>250</sup> The second speaker that night, Dr. J. P. Randolph of New York, proclaimed that he no longer represented mulattos but now stood proudly as an “African.”<sup>251</sup> After a mass meeting in mid-January, the *Tribune* celebrated how “seated side by side [were] the rich and the poor, the literate and educated man, and the country laborer, hardly released from bondage.”<sup>252</sup> Initially, some leaders presumed that they formerly enslaved would be foot soldiers, deferential to freeborn leadership. Yet to overstate these airs of “*noblesse oblige*” would be to overlook the deep progressivism and profound idealism that underlay these efforts to transcend longstanding racial, class, legal, and caste divisions, and unite “all classes of society... whether black, yellow or white... in a common thought: the actual liberation from social and political bondage.”<sup>253</sup>

Supporting Hahn’s thesis of parallel paths between the United States South and Haiti, activists consistently invoked the iconography of the Haitian Revolution to represent the alliance of free people and freedpeople. One charismatic carpenter who attended the January meeting, named James H. Ingraham, had been born into slavery and taught himself how to read. In the pages of the *Tribune*, he was hailed as the “Mirabeau of the men of color of Louisiana,” a reference to the fiery Jacobin statesman who proselytized against slavery and colonial society during hearings on the Haitian uprising. Likewise, when the New Orleans *Tribune* called for “both banks of the Mississippi River [to be] peopled by...well-armed and well-drilled cultivators,”<sup>254</sup> they used a

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<sup>250</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, December 3, 1864.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, January 15, 1865.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* For Creole of Color radicalism during the Civil War period, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 62–65; Blasingame, *Black New Orleans*, 56–57; Herman Belz, “Origins of Negro Suffrage During the Civil War,” *Southern Studies*, 17 (Summer 1978), 115–30; Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 215, 226–233.

<sup>254</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1864.

word—*cultivateurs*—that was specific to Haiti’s political lexicon; it referred to Western Hispaniola’s rural workers who had fled from plantation labor and become an autarkic “reconstituted peasantry,” whose social and ecological models I will explore in Chapter 4.<sup>255</sup> In fact, *cultivateurs* are mentioned frequently in the mid-nineteenth century writings of Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin, the brother of the poet Coriolan who had made such an impact on Pierre-Aristide.<sup>256</sup> This Haitian-Atlantic imagination amongst Creoles of Color animated their class politics, generating an eagerness to welcome freedmen into their ranks. In Haiti, they saw an anticapitalist notion of “citizenship from below,”<sup>257</sup> an identity rooted in embracing “fellow sufferers.” They grasped that their struggle against slavery and its sequels was regional. They understood that free people of color and enslaved rebels united to overthrow both slavery and French colonial rule in “the country of Dessalines,” and they attempted to reproduce its success in southern Louisiana.<sup>258</sup>

There were countless examples of this symbolic imaginary, and it had concrete impacts on the politics of Creoles of Color and their radical proposals. Almost immediately at the onset of union occupation of the South in 1862, radical Creole of Color activists founded the newspaper *L’Union*, which announced itself as the “progressive organ of the free colored population,” and

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<sup>255</sup> For one of the earliest uses of the term, see Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin’s *Études Sur l’Histoire d’Haïti*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry, Madeleien et Ce, 1860), 15. For “reconstituted peasantries,” see Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 146. For literature on Haiti’s counter-plantation peasantry, see Laurent Dubois and Richard Lee Turits, *Freedom Roots: Histories from the Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2019); Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Jean Casimir, “On the Origins of the Counterplantation System,” in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Laurent Dubois et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

<sup>256</sup> Ardouin, *Études*, 15; Caryn Cossé Bell, “‘Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens,’” 1–19.

<sup>257</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>258</sup> Jean-Charles Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune: A Memoir of the Civil War Era* (1872; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 96-97. For “country of Dessalines,” see the above letter from Desdunes to Du Bois.

framed their struggle against slavery as a legacy of the Haitian Revolution. In one of its first issues, it published a correspondence between Haitian writer Eugène Heurtrelou and the famous French romantic Victor Hugo. In this published exchange in military-occupied New Orleans, readers of the *L'Union* could read Hugo professes his love for Haiti—"I love your country, your race, your liberty, your revolution, your republic...it has crushed despotism. It will help us to destroy slavery!"—and contrast it to the "despotic" United States, with a polemic that compared John Brown's assassination to "Washington slaying Spartacus."<sup>259</sup> Years later, Victor Hugo himself wrote a letter to *L'Union*'s successor, the New Orleans *Tribune*, and praised the efforts of the Louisiana Haitian-descended activists and the Black freedom struggle at large.<sup>260</sup> When the periodical ran serials on revolutionary abolitionists across the Atlantic world, such as "John Brown, le Christ des Noirs," even this was part of a Haitian-Louisiana culture, since Haiti had created both a national day of mourning and a monument to honor John Brown, and the Haitian people had organized a national drive to donate money to the martyred abolitionist's family.<sup>261</sup> Another serial was devoted to revolutionary free man of color Vincent Ogé, whose 1790 rebellion against French colonial authority in Saint-Domingue was met with brutal torture by white colonists. This article, contributed by the Afro-Creole Guadeloupean Melvil Bloncourt, is as significant for its author as its content.<sup>262</sup> Bloncourt was a prominent activist who organized for abolition in both Guadeloupe and France. He had participated in the Paris Commune of 1844 as a

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<sup>259</sup> Victor Hugo, "To the Editor of the London News," *London News*, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1859.

<sup>260</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 163.

<sup>261</sup> *Pine and Palm*, 12 June 1862m 10 July 1862; Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 133.

<sup>262</sup> Fabre, "The New Orleans Press and French-Language Literature by Creoles of Color," 40.

student; he was instrumental in France's antislavery decree in 1848; he was elected deputy of Guadeloupe, in 1871, but was soon banished to Switzerland for his radicalism.<sup>263</sup>

*L'Union's*, later the *Tribune's*, Atlantic readership and contributors speaks to a sophisticated cultural diplomacy that lent visibility to the Reconstruction struggle in the international arena; it also reflected a certain class politics. As Anna Brickhouse writes, these writers "presented [their] own Haitian affiliation not...as a matter of shared aristocratic, slave-holding privilege, but instead as a shared revolutionary heritage on which [the paper's] readership could draw for political inspiration in the present."<sup>264</sup> The role of these freedom dreams in all of this was critically important, and several scholars have highlighted how imagination was a crucial tool that the oppressed wielded. "The political premises of Reconstruction were revolutionary," argues Caroline Senter, "and imagining a nation of equality was necessary to carry people's spirits through the violence and disappointment that lay ahead. Invoking the dream of Reconstruction to remind, inspire, and shame readers, the *Tribune* poets created visionary works."<sup>265</sup> These works touched African Americans across the country. In October of 1865, Frederick Douglass wrote to the *Tribune*: "I am proud that a press so true and wise is devoted to the interests of liberty and equality in your Southern latitude...every upward movement at the South in our behalf is instantly felt here. You may depend upon me to do what I can in the right direction here."<sup>266</sup>

Afro-Creoles' transatlantic radicalism quickly led to conflict with Union military forces and the Lincoln administration. In mass meetings with freedpeople, Creoles of Color denounced

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<sup>263</sup> François Manchuelle, "Le rôle des Antillais dans l'apparition du nationalisme culturel en Afrique noire francophone," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 32, no. 127 (1992): 375–408.

<sup>264</sup> Brickhouse, "L'Ouragan de Flammes," 1106.

<sup>265</sup> Caroline Senter, "Creole Poets on the Verge of a Nation," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 278.

<sup>266</sup> Frederick Douglass in the New Orleans *Tribune*, October 27, 1865.

the “Banks oligarchy,”<sup>267</sup> a reference to General Nathaniel Banks’s policy of requiring slaves to labor on the same plantations whence they had been enslaved. They demanded the abolition of the army’s “Bureau of Freed Labor” for this abusive conscription of freedpeople in a state “not far removed from slavery.”<sup>268</sup> Their now-bilingual newspaper, the *New Orleans Tribune*, intended to communicate this critique, and their counter-plantation vision, to freedpeople. It wrote that the wartime labor system threatened to turn freedmen into “serfs for the Union,” a sentiment that undoubtedly rang true to freedpeople as they deserted plantations and resisted plantation labor in large numbers.<sup>269</sup> Creole of Color agitation hit a nerve amongst the military brass, and they were dramatically prohibited by General Banks from Reconstruction decision making. In New Orleans in the summer of 1864, Banks organized an all-white Unionist state constitutional convention, “largely populated with lawyers and small-scale businessmen,” who uttered “repeated expressions of open racial hostility,” and passed a constitution which had no suffrage clause and continued plantation business as usual.<sup>270</sup> This cadre of Creole of Color radicals took aim not solely at the military government, however, but the entire class structure of Southern society. The former slaves, the *Tribune* insisted in 1864, “are entitled by a paramount right to the possession of the soil they have so long cultivated.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Nathaniel Banks was a Union general during the Civil War who was instrumental in early military Reconstruction efforts in Louisiana. The term “Banks oligarchy” was a term used repeatedly in the *Tribune* to the military’s policy of conscripting former slaves to continue working plantations or building fortifications, and refusing entry in the military. Carolyn Cossé Bell “‘Une Chimère’: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Creole New Orleans,” in *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>268</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, January 15, 29, February 18, 23, March 1, 31, 1865; Houzeau, *My Passage*, 37.

<sup>269</sup> Michel Fabre, “The New Orleans Press and French-Language Literature by Creoles of Color,” in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 41. For enslaved resistance to the wartime economy, see Paul K. Eiss, “A Share in the Land: Freedpeople and the Government of Labour in Southern Louisiana, 1862-65,” *Slavery & Abolition* 19, no. 1 (1998): 46–89.

<sup>270</sup> Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 124.

<sup>271</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, 1864; quoted in Caryn Cossé Bell, “Haitian Immigration to Louisiana in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*, ed. The

As Desdunes remembers in *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, such articles were published at danger to the writers, and were considered quite controversial in a wartime arena. He speaks of “his long, perilous battle at the *Tribune*” and hailed the “courage” of editor Louis Charles Roudanez, a Creole of Color doctor of Haitian descent.<sup>272</sup> As Brickhouse notes, “The *Tribune*’s demands can hardly be considered facile or merely rhetorical: the journal entered the public sphere at no small risk to those associated with its pages, making its case against slavery and for universal citizens’ rights in a climate of intense violence against the oppositional press.”<sup>273</sup> During the 1866 Mechanics’ Institute massacre discussed earlier, a portion of the white mob called for its followers to proceed “to the *Tribune*!,” only to find the *Tribune* offices guarded by a regiment of armed Black and white republicans. Rodolphe was probably one of those armed.<sup>274</sup>

At the national level, Creoles of Color attempted to outmaneuver the military generals who operated Louisiana’s wartime plantation economy, and pushed for radical changes in the direction of Reconstruction. While General Banks had seemingly won the local struggle, he could not maintain the blockade of Creoles of Color at the national level. For the first time in history, Haitian descended activists such as Roudanez and Arnold Bertonneau met with members of Congress, President Lincoln, and prominent abolitionists in order to push the country dramatically to the left on questions of Black suffrage and land ownership. The two met with Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and other abolitionists in Boston, and concluded their meeting with the singing of

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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York Public Library Digital Gallery, 2005), <http://www.inmotionaame.org/print.cfm?migration=5>, 16-18.

<sup>272</sup> Desdunes, *Our People*, 131.

<sup>273</sup> Brickhouse, “L’Ouragan de Flammes,” 1109.

<sup>274</sup> Jean-Charles Houzeau. *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune: A Memoir of the Civil War Era*, ed. David C. Rankin. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 159; Mark Charles Roudané, “Mechanics’ Institute Massacre - Stop 3 of 9 on The New Orleans Tribune: America’s First Black Daily Newspaper Tour,” New Orleans Historical, accessed August 3, 2020, <https://neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/1541?tour=104&index=2&fbclid=IwAR3dzRIyIxQ3gXIPGbnq6GkvnOB0rLnZIMYxzxo-h8xlyznpeATQcy-Rx1A>.

“the John Brown Song.”<sup>275</sup> They made a considerable impression on Robert Hamilton, the editor of the widely circulated *Anglo-African* based in Baltimore.<sup>276</sup> Their work expanded the debate on Black freedom across the country, as they pushed back against emigration plans and focused their allies on the fight for land and justice in the United States. These activists were adept at code-switching for various audiences, for while it is true that, as Eric Foner notes, this “cultured, economically successful group...doubtless influenced Lincoln’s own evolution toward a more egalitarian approach to Reconstruction,”<sup>277</sup> when they met Black activists and white radicals they invoked their own Haitian heritage in order to contribute to a “Civil War culture that revolved around the memories of the Haitian Revolution.”<sup>278</sup>

Partially because of their efforts, Black suffrage became a pressing issue in the session of Congress that assembled in December 1864, and congressional Radical Republicans thwarted General Banks’ attempt to ratify a proposed Louisiana constitution that failed to grant Black suffrage. One of the voices in the ear of Massachusetts senators Charles Sumner (who led a crippling filibuster against the proposed constitution) was the Louisiana utopian socialist, Thomas Durant, himself closely affiliated with Creoles of Color.<sup>279</sup> In the end, Congress refused to seat Louisiana’s congressional delegation and nullified their electoral votes in the next election, a fatal blow to Banks’ project of an “unreconstructed” Louisiana. These were major political victories, not only for New Orleans’s freedpeople-free people of color alliance, but for freedpeople across

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<sup>275</sup> Boston, *Daily Advertiser*, April 13, 1864, as quoted in *Liberator*, April 15, 1864.

<sup>276</sup> Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, “The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State Museum, 1992), 226.

<sup>277</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 169.

<sup>278</sup> Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>279</sup> Durant to Salmon P. Chase, December 4, 1863, in Salmon P. Chase Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C; quoted in David Rankin, “Introduction,” in Houzeau, *My Passage*, 5.

the country as it set a precedent against toothless Reconstruction. It colored the as-yet unconcluded Civil War as one for suffrage and Black citizenship.<sup>280</sup>

While Roundanez, Durant, and Bertonneau worked to influence public opinion in the North, Rodolphe and Pierre-Aristide Desdunes continued organizing in Louisiana to undermine Banks' lily-white coalition and create its antithesis: interracial economic democracy. In this regard, Rodolphe Desdunes was a tireless organizer. His participation in the ongoing activism was especially pronounced during the 1870s: he was one thousands of activists who assembled in Lyceum Hall on October 4, 1872 during the people's Parish Convention;<sup>281</sup> in 1875, he served as president of the Republicans of the Eleventh Ward;<sup>282</sup> in March 1876, he was elected president of the delegates to the Parish committee;<sup>283</sup> and on July 13, 1876, he presided at a special meeting that took place at the Eleventh Ward Central Hall to ratify the Republican state ticket, and as chairman, he addressed the Republicans at a mass meeting at the Mechanics Institute in August.<sup>284</sup> He also presided at the fourth and last Republican mass meeting at Clay Square on October 21<sup>st</sup> of that year: "Mr. Desdunes thanked the meeting for the honor he enjoyed in being called to preside over so large a body and expressed his gratification in the assurance it gave that all meant to stand by the leading spirits of the Republican party."<sup>285</sup>

This zigzag of activism made for an excruciating schedule. "Rodolphe Desdunes," surmises Rebecca Scott, "blended his republicanism with support for labor activism in the countryside; he viewed repression of rural workers as of a piece with white supremacist assaults

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<sup>280</sup> Rick Beard, "Louisiana's Stillborn Constitution," *The New York Times*, September 11, 2014, sec. Opinion, <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/louisianas-stillborn-constitution/> accessed July 15, 2020.

<sup>281</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 5, 1872.

<sup>282</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, December 7, 1875.

<sup>283</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, August 27, 1876.

<sup>284</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, March 21, 1876.

<sup>285</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 22, 1876.

on the civil, political, and public rights of men and women of color.”<sup>286</sup> His activism connected the sugar parishes, New Orleans, and the struggle for suffrage and a redefined political economy, and his coalitional activism was articulated by one of his colleagues. “[Perhaps we once] held ourselves aloof from the slaves,” an unnamed Creole of Color told Whitelaw Reid in 1865, but now “we see that our future is indissolubly bound up with that of the negro race in this country; and we have resolved to make common cause, and rise or fall with them. We have no rights which we can reckon safe while the same are denied to the field hands on the sugar plantations.”<sup>287</sup>

The reference to sugar plantations is telling, for the politics of the counter-planation deeply colored their demands and the spirit of solidarity. For instance, in one article, “The Colored Soldiers to Take the Place of the Planters,” the *Tribune* called for cooperatives in land and finance. They denounced not only “the slavery system” but also “the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few planters,” both of which were to be overthrown forever. Arguing against capital as an institution and its link to plantation agriculture, they proposed a cooperative structure. “As capitalists needed capital to work the plantations, let the people themselves make up this capital. Our basis for labor must now be put on a democratic footing. There is no more room, in the organization of our society, for an oligarchy of slaveholders, or property holders.” They framed the situation as an “emergency,” one which could not be solved with “the money of the few” but rather only through a “democratic association [that] looks to small shares, with a large concourse of adherents.” They announce that this “Bank of Laborers” would be discussed “before the

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<sup>286</sup> Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 75.

<sup>287</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Tour of the Southern States, May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1866), 244.

Freedmen's Aid Association, at their next meeting." They projected that at least 5,000 Creoles of Color and African Americans would be in support of such a cooperative.<sup>288</sup>

These efforts caused much chagrin to military planners. General Fullerton, in 1864, issued a missive to freedpeople: "There is no way for you to live but by hard work. There is no possible way by which you can procure houses and land for yourselves but by working hard and saving your wages...Government will not do more for you than for the white laborers who are your neighbors."<sup>289</sup> But Creoles of Color acknowledged that both groups were deprived by the plantation complex, and provided an alternative vision. The *Tribune* advocated the division of plantations into five-acre plots to be "partitioned among the tillers of the soil."<sup>290</sup> The next year, in 1865, General Hubert directly attacked Creoles of Color for organizing to implement cooperative agriculture: "If instead of assembling in mass meetings and wasting your time in high sounding resolutions, you would devote yourselves to assisting in the physical and moral improvement of the freedmen, you would do some practical good...There has always been a bitterness of feeling among the slaves and the free colored people."<sup>291</sup> General Hubert's critique is a familiar one. As Rebecca Scott has noted, Creole radicals were often attacked from the right for their skin tone as a way of delegitimizing their activism's integrity. This "line of attack aimed at associating the radicals with personal light-skin privilege, and with indifference to the real interests of former slaves," a claim made by conservatives of the epoch and now repeated by many contemporary scholars. This ignores the legacies of "many of the radicals pushing for equal public rights [who] were also concerned with reforming the tax structure to make land more easily

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<sup>288</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, March 1, 1865.

<sup>289</sup> *Crescent*, Oct. 20, 1865; quoted in Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana*, 242.

<sup>290</sup> *Tribune*, September 24, 1864; quoted in Bell, *Revolution*, 269-270.

<sup>291</sup> Quoted in Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 458-459.

available for rent or purchase by the freedpeople.”<sup>292</sup> Hubert’s attack on “mass meetings,” in particular, seems that he was especially threatened by the intra-caste, intraclass organizing among thousands of activists to build a new society.

At least one Creole of Color powerfully repudiated Hubert. He introduced himself sardonically as “Junius, not a rich Creole,” signaling his awareness of, and implicitly denouncing, class privilege. In the *Tribune* he wrote:

Even under the administration of Major General B. F. Butler, when slavery was [still] recognized by the authorities of the United States government, free public schools were opened under the auspices of the free colored people, and no distinction was made in regard to the former status of the pupils—and numerous other evidences can be produced showing that no sooner was slavery killed and the Black Code destroyed in this state, all who were formerly afraid to do anything in the direction of moral or physical assistance of the former bondsmen, entered into the work vigorously, and have accomplished great good.<sup>293</sup>

Junius and other Creoles of Color present themselves as a cadre of organizers, social workers, educators, and agenda-setters, boldly foregrounding economic and redistributive justice as central to their vision of Reconstruction. He suggests that the political instincts of the free population were always aligned with enslaved Afrodescendants, but they were unable to confront the Goliath of planter power and slave patrols. Obviously, Junius fails to address the phenomenon of Creoles of Color who owned slaves.<sup>294</sup> But in a public letter to a United States general who was committed to maintaining a docile labor force, perhaps this reflected not delusion but simply strategy.

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<sup>292</sup> Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 130.

<sup>293</sup> Quoted in Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 459.

<sup>294</sup> By 1860, amongst a population of over 10,000, some 700 free people of color in Louisiana owned slaves, most fewer than five. Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 44.

At least one military official agreed with Junius: Thomas Conway, Superintendent of the Bureau of Freed Labor, wrote to Benjamin Flanders of the Treasury Department. Conway was of the opinion that “The capitalist, who employs labor should understand that there are considerations of justice which are as applicable to the laborers as to him.” Complaining that “Most of the planter have a disposition to *grind* the negroes,” he suggested instead the army should work with those “intelligent men...among the negro population” who “appreciate the claims of the poor laborers.” He had read their calls for cooperatives: “From the statements of some of these men of color, and from others who study the welfare of the negro, I am inclined to think a meeting...should be called.” Conway’s proposals were turned down, but it reflected that the perceptions of Creoles of Color as opportunist or truly committed were rooted more in the ideological lens of the observer.<sup>295</sup>

Junius’s letter, the call for cooperatives, and the missives and support of conservative and radical army officials demonstrate that the radical Creoles of Color were deeply attuned to questions of land, labor, and class during Reconstruction. They were not only fighting for inclusion into the public sphere, but to transform the economic conditions of Southern society so that Black emancipation would have a material basis. This meant that the economies that required hyper-exploited Black labor to function had to be abolished.

The activists would have a chance to implement their vision of economic democracy at the Constitutional Convention of 1868. One measure they fought for was successful: they worked to prohibit land monopolization in the majority-Black Sugar Bowl by prohibiting the purchase of tracts larger than 150 acres at distress sales, which would have facilitated Northern land grabs for

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<sup>295</sup> Thomas W. Conway to Hon. B. F. Flanders, 22. Nov. 1864; in Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Lower South*, vol. 2, 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 560.

“modernized” plantation production.<sup>296</sup> Yet national forces were at work which forecasted against the kind of cooperative agriculture they envisioned. In the same year of 1868, the Belair Plantation was acquired by Dymond and Lally, a New York firm, when it was auctioned at a sheriff’s sale. John Dymond, the main partner of the firm, moved to Louisiana shortly thereafter, and founded the *Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer*, a publication that ran sixty-nine volumes between 1869 and 1922. Over its tenure, the periodical was a mouthpiece for the interest of the planter class; it advocated Black repression, technological investment, and United States imperialism.<sup>297</sup> He also co-founded the Louisiana Sugar Planters’ Association (LSPA), which included both Northern capitalists and Southern aristocrats.<sup>298</sup> While Dymond was a lifelong Democrat and eagerly made common cause the state’s white supremacist faction, the pro-plantation moderate Republican faction was led by the twenty-four year old Henry C. Warmoth. Born in Illinois, Warmoth became an officer during the Civil War and was appointed to New Orleans, remaining in Louisiana for the rest of his life. As historian John Rodrigue notes, Warmoth’s goal was to “create a centrist, bipartisan political coalition...[by] gaining the support of respectable and influential conservatives among Louisiana’s population.”<sup>299</sup> He was invested in the plantation status quo and became a successful sugar planter himself after he left office.

Southern agriculture’s connection to the centers of finance and political power to the north and east did not bode well for cooperative economics. Freedpeoples’ visions of jubilee included, at their core, comprehensive land reform; instead, as Hahn notes, emancipation “gradually created

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<sup>296</sup> *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention for Framing a Constitution for the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1867-1868), 110, 276, 306.

<sup>297</sup> Damon C. Woods, “The Sugar Industry in Haiti,” *The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer* 69 (December 2, 1922): 408.

<sup>298</sup> Philip Davis Uzee, “Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900.” (PhD Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1950), 111.

<sup>299</sup> John C. Rodrigue, “Introduction,” in *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*, by Henry Clay Warmoth (Columbia, S.C.: Univ of South Carolina Press, 2006), xxviii.

a class of workers who, while now claiming ownership of their persons, were stripped of means to produce or subsist on their own account,” which, mixed with legislation like vagrancy laws and the coercive power of police, “left [them] with few alternatives to laboring in the fields for the landowners.”<sup>300</sup> Yet these changes affected white farmers, too, some of whom had previously existed outside the reach of the plantation system: “The ways in which the results of the War of the Rebellion transformed the southern countryside and advanced the development of capitalist agriculture could also be seen...[amongst] small-scale yeoman farmers.” New instruments of debt, competition with international markets, and the incursion of the railroad ate away at their autonomy.<sup>301</sup>

Radical Creoles of Color opposed these forces threatening the democratic potential of Reconstruction, and thereby earned support from some poor white farmers in opposition to the LSPA. In 1873, during the “Unification Movement,” Creoles of Color such as Roudanez and freedpeople such as Ingraham attempted to unite with white Louisianans against the Warmoth faction of the Republican party. These included, as Robert Shugg notes, “A representation of the poor whites,” who “joined this agrarian bloc with the suggestion that uncultivated land be taxed double the rate of land in use.”<sup>302</sup> This “Unification Committee” put out some impressive language: they demanded that “no distinction shall exist among citizens of Louisiana in any of our public schools,” as well as in hiring and access to credit; they also included a lengthy missive that called for:

[B]y every means in our power, our colored citizens in the rural districts to become the proprietors of the soil...and we further

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<sup>300</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 328.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>302</sup> Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), 243.

recommend to all landed proprietors in our State the policy of considering the question of breaking up the same into small farms, in order that the colored citizens and white emigrants may become practical farmers and cultivators of the soil.<sup>303</sup>

The Unification Committee is important because fifty powerful white businessmen, including some Confederate veterans, helped craft this language, in dialogue with fifty Black and Creole of Color representatives. They included former Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard, then the president of the New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad, and James I. Day, president of the Sun Insurance Company. Their motivation was to win Black support away from the Republican party and were prepared to make concessions, at least in writing, to effect this change.<sup>304</sup> But, despite the years of interracial organizing by the Knights of Labor, the Greenbackers, and other rural labor organizations, white leaders in the sugar and cotton parishes were not inclined to negotiate with Black labor.<sup>305</sup> The response of the *Shreveport Times*, a leading white supremacist periodical, spoke for many white Louisianans who were prepared to fight: “The battle between the races for supremacy...must be fought out here...boldly and squarely; the issue cannot be satisfactorily adjusted by a repulsive commingling of antagonistic races, and promulgation of platforms enunciating as the political tenets of the people of Louisiana the vilest Socialist doctrines.”<sup>306</sup>

On the other side of the political divide, transplanted “carpetbagger” governors Kellogg and Warmoth may have lukewarmly supported suffrage, but they were adamant in their opposition to the radical land reform measures demanded by the Creole of Color and freedpeople alliance.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> *House Reports*, 43 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 261, Part 3, “Louisiana Affairs,” 1037-38; also reproduced in the *New Orleans Times* and the *Picayune*, June 17, 1873; T. Harry Williams, “The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873,” *The Journal of Southern History* 11, no. 3 (1945): 361.

<sup>304</sup> Williams, “The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873,” 349–69.

<sup>305</sup> Matthew George Hild, “Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer -Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Atlanta, Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2002).

<sup>306</sup> *Shreveport Times*, July 19, 1873.

<sup>307</sup> Bell, *Revolution*, 307.

For this, and for his general corruption, Desdunes called the years of the Warmoth administration the “era of knaves and adventurers.”<sup>308</sup> During his years in Louisiana, Warmoth became a wealthy planter, and betrayed the rank and file activists that empowered his rise. He was successfully impeached for corruption in 1872, but maintained a strong presence in Louisiana as the owner of the Magnolia plantation.<sup>309</sup> Desdunes maintained a hostility to Warmoth’s brand of plantation capitalism and “bipartisanship” throughout the decades, and when Warmoth attempted to return to politics in 1891 after his corruption scandal, it was Desdunes who happened to be secretary of the Republican convention that year. He sabotaged Warmoth’s efforts at redemption, opposing him with the anti-Warmoth faction.<sup>310</sup>

Despite the defeat of comprehensive land reform, and Reconstruction more broadly, the Desdunes brothers continued their activism well into the 1890s. The *Comité des Citoyens* represented a continuation of their organizing experiences during Radical Reconstruction, and both Rodolphe and Pierre-Aristide helped found the *Crusader*, a new organ dedicated to advancing the civil rights cause. Yet they were not only concerned with “public rights,” but also issues of land reform, workers’ rights, and Haitian history. When the paper was founded, Pierre-Aristide explained that:

We shall pay much attention to industrial and economic questions...and particularly we shall devote space to questions of labor. Our special aim, in fact, shall be to make a great Republican-Labor organ through which the working classes can at all times be heard and have their grievances made known and their wrongs righted.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Desdunes, *Our People*, 46.

<sup>309</sup> John C. Rodrigue, “Introduction,” in *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*, by Henry Clay Warmoth (Columbia, S.C.: Univ of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>310</sup> *Indianapolis Journal* and the *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio) December 20, 1891.

<sup>311</sup> Bell, “Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens” 15.

Indeed, the *Comité* worked hard to organize with labor. In April of 1892, two months after Daniel's arrest, Rodolphe Desdunes spoke at a "large meeting" at Screwmen's Hall, where the powerful Black dockworkers union met.<sup>312</sup> In addition, Haiti was never far from the brothers' minds. In July through October 1895, during the height of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* organizing with the *Comité*, Rodolphe published translated excerpts from Joseph Saint-Rémy's five-volume work, *Pétion et Haïti*, for the *Crusader*.<sup>313</sup> Haitian President Alexandre Pétion, it should be noted, was distinguished by his extensive land reforms.<sup>314</sup> These studies in history were signposts for their political work.

Decades later, ex-governor Warmoth expressed his antagonism towards the Desdunes brothers and their comrades in his autobiography. "They thought to establish an African State Government," he wrote of the radical Creoles of Color, who "urged the negroes of Louisiana to assert themselves and follow Hayti."<sup>315</sup> Warmoth invokes Haiti to discredit his opposition from the left, but there is a truth in his perception of this faction's politics. Their model for post-emancipation social change and a reconstituted political economy simply did not exist in the United States. As Karl Marx once commented, "In order to understand a particular historical age we must go beyond its outer limits."<sup>316</sup> The political praxis of Louisiana's radical Creoles of Color reflected this maxim. Their political sense of the "possible" was not confined to the United States; they were aware, and receptive to, the complex and revolutionary changes to Haiti's political

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<sup>312</sup> *New Orleans Item*, April 2, 1892; Dan Vernhettes et al., "The Desdunes Family (Unpublished Manuscript)" (2020).

<sup>313</sup> Bell, "'Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens': The Poetry of Pierre-Aristide Desdunes, Civil War Soldier, Romantic Literary Artist, and Civil Rights Activist."

<sup>314</sup> Richard A. Haggerty, ed., "Land Tenure and Land Policy," in *Haiti: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989).

<sup>315</sup> Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 52, 51.

<sup>316</sup> Georg Lukás, "Legality and Illegality," in *History and Class Consciousness*, 1920, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/ch06.htm>; accessed on September 18, 2020.

economy that shattered its plantation complex. The *Tribune*, in its own words, challenged its readers “to broaden their visions to areas beyond the English-speaking world.” They pointing to the examples of the Haitian and French Revolutions and asked: do “our proposals” truly “sound like the impossible dreams of poetry and fiction?”<sup>317</sup> This spirit of transcending the “outer limits” of a historical era, to believe in “impossible dreams,” would animate the work of Daniel Desdunes.

## 2.5 Music and Mutual Aid: Reconstruction Legacies in Omaha

Daniel Desdunes’s command of brass band repertoire and his innovative approach to interpreting time made him a significant figure in the New Orleans music scene. But he made an arguably bigger impact in his adopted home of Nebraska. Eight years after the defeat of Louisiana’s equal rights provisions with *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, Desdunes, perhaps exhausted with legalized prejudice, joined an overlooked but significant wing of the Great Migration to the United States’ Northwest. Daniel and his wife, Madia Dodd, his eight-year-old son, Clarence, and his parents, Rodolphe and Mathilde, moved to Omaha in 1904.<sup>318</sup> Starting as a janitor, within three years Daniel Desdunes had built one of Omaha’s leading Black bands. But what earned him accolades from Paul Whiteman, John Philip Sousa, and Calvin Coolidge was his creation of what was probably the early twentieth century’s most impressive interracial music program.<sup>319</sup> Based at a

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<sup>317</sup> Editorial, *Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orleans*, September 4, 1866; Houzeau, *My Passage*, 91; Logsdon and Bell, “Americanization of Black New Orleans,” 238; Senter, “Creole Poets on the Verge of a Nation,” 279.

<sup>318</sup> Richard M. Breaux, “The New Negro Renaissance in Omaha and Lincoln, 1910-1940,” in *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro’s Western Experience*, ed. Cary D. Wintz and Bruce A. Glasrud (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>319</sup> Jesse J Otto, “Dan Desdunes: New Orleans Civil Rights Activist and ‘The Father of Negro Musicians of Omaha,’” *Nebraska History* 92 (2011): 106–17.

Catholic orphanage, known as “Boys Town,” the “Desdunes Band” toured the country, invited to play at events for organizations across a wide ideological and demographic spectrum, from Black mutual aid societies to the KKK (an invitation he declined).<sup>320</sup> The Desdunes Band received accolades from all walks of society.<sup>321</sup> The following section traces this second half of Daniel’s life, and his especially important role as the proverbial “father of negro musicians of Omaha.”<sup>322</sup> Both Desdunes’s music but also his important role as a community educator bore imprints of his upbringing as a radical Creole of Color and his early civil rights activism.

When considering where the Desdunes’s common wind would have resonated, Omaha may not have been a first guess. But Omaha played an important role in the early-mid twentieth century African American cultural scene in the Midwest and the United States at large. George Lipsitz has criticized jazz historians’ tendency to focus on New Orleans, Kansas City, Chicago, and New York, and has foregrounded how “Omaha was a rich source of inspiration and education about jazz all on its own.”<sup>323</sup> Jesse Otto notes that, “Many of the musicians who played in black orchestras in Omaha went on to become big names in the history of jazz,” including alto saxophonist Preston Love and drummer Buddy Miles.<sup>324</sup> Love himself described the city as an important “hub” for Black musicians: “If New York, Chicago, and Kansas City were the major leagues of jazz, Omaha was the triple-A. If you wanted to make the big leagues, you came and played in Omaha.”<sup>325</sup> Love, who performed regularly with Count Basie and Billie Holliday,

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<sup>320</sup> *The Helena Independent*, Jul. 26, 1925

<sup>321</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, “The Desdunes Family,” *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 25–45.

<sup>322</sup> University of Nebraska Omaha, Criss Library. Special Collections. Repository April 28, 1937: <http://unomaha.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15301coll1/id/321>. Thank you to Daniel Vernhettes for sharing this source with me.

<sup>323</sup> Preston Love, *A Thousand Honey Creeks Later: My Life in Music from Basie to Motown—and Beyond* (Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), xx-xxi.

<sup>324</sup> Otto, “Dan Desdunes,” 107.

<sup>325</sup> Preston Love quoted in Otto, “Dan Desdunes,” 107.

certainly had the pedigree to back up this claim. Like the Desdunes family, the Loves boasted a multigenerational family history combining music and activism. Love's son, Preston Love Jr., was also a lifelong organizer and worked alongside Jesse Jackson.<sup>326</sup> Omaha developed a culture unique to itself, as David Krasner argues, Black modern culture in Omaha and Lincoln was “a complex mixture of ideas and movements—migratory, urbanized, intellectualized, fragmentary, literary, oral, folk, jazz, blues, rhythmic, Western, and Afrocentric—that created a complex, hybrid form.”<sup>327</sup> Creating complex, hybrid forms was a task at which the Desdunes family excelled, and Daniel laid a foundation for both local musicians and other New Orleans up south migrants, like Nat Towles, to move and build a musical life in this midwestern city.<sup>328</sup>

It is difficult to overstate Desdunes's contribution Nebraska largest city. Omaha's Black bandleaders had long upheld a tradition of nurturing and producing prominent musicians, many of whom had been attracted there from other parts of the country. In the words of Jesse Otto, “Dan Desdunes was largely responsible for beginning this tradition.”<sup>329</sup> He influenced not just a particular musician or institution but a whole culture, setting a model as a community-based artist and educator as the midwestern wing of the Great Migration achieved critical mass. He led a dizzying array of bands: the “Desdunes Orchestra,”<sup>330</sup> a marching band named “the First Regimental,” his “famous saxophone orchestra,”<sup>331</sup> his “colored jazz orchestra,”<sup>332</sup> another called

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<sup>326</sup> Love, *A Thousand Honey Creeks Later*, 19.

<sup>327</sup> David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama, and Performance in the Harlem Renaissance, 1910-1927* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 10.

<sup>328</sup> Ross Russell, *Jazz Style in Kansas City and the Southwest* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 69-70.

<sup>329</sup> Otto, “Dan Desdunes: New Orleans Civil Rights Activist and ‘The Father of Negro Musicians of Omaha,’” *Nebraska History* 92 (2011): 106–17.

<sup>330</sup> *The Kansas City Sun*, November 28, 1914.

<sup>331</sup> *The Monitor*, October 27, 1917.

<sup>332</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, May 18, 1919.

“Dan’s Jazz Hounds,”<sup>333</sup> and his “syncopated syncopators,”<sup>334</sup> to name just a few. The First Regimental, in particular, became Omaha’s most popular marching band during the 1920s and had a huge local following. That a Creole of Color musician who had led a direct action sit-in and desegregation campaign was, thirty years later, a prominent musical figure in an overwhelmingly white city was an irony that seems to have been lost on Woodrow Wilson, the president who re-segregated the federal government.<sup>335</sup> The band's performance during Wilson’s 1916 visit to Omaha reportedly “thrilled” the President, while Gen. John J. Pershing (also on the trip) praised them as “one of the best trained bands I have ever heard.”<sup>336</sup>

Daniel Desdunes was not only an at-hire performer. He produced his own concerts that dramatized emancipation and the struggle against slavery. The *Indianapolis Review* wrote a glowing review of a concert in Omaha that located Daniel’s output within his father’s activist legacy:

Perhaps one of the most helpful colored men in our midst is Mr. Daniel Desmumes [sic], the son of the distinguished writer and historian, Mr. R. L. Desdunes, of New Orleans. When Mr. Desdunes came to Omaha four years ago [sic] there was no musical organization among the colored people. He organized the Desdunes orchestra, and later, making a combination of Omaha talent in his race, he produced [the play] *Forty Years of Freedom*, which was a distinct success. He appeared as a soloist in a joint concert between the Episcopal churches of the city, and won high praise as a violinist. Later he successfully produced his *Lady Minstrels*, his *Buster Brown* and his signal triumph, which made a record in juvenile shows for Omaha, *Manager Buster Brown*. During the Grand Encampment of the Knights of Pythias at Kansas City, Mo., last year, in the musical contest between eight bands, Mr. Desdunes’ band won second prize.

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<sup>333</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, October 30, 1921.

<sup>334</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, March 3 and 17, 1921.

<sup>335</sup> Eric Steven Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson’s America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>336</sup> “Dan Desdunes Band,” *The Monitor*, Aug. 4, 1921.

His plays, which he composed and presented, have been pronounced by the press and public as artistic successes.<sup>337</sup>

Desdunes also frequently played for Emancipation Day festivities; at one particularly large scale celebration, he performed with a chorus of 150 voices which sang “Negro spirituals.”<sup>338</sup> Nor did he abandon politics: when he played for a Republican meeting in 1920, he lost his job in a real estate business, and was forced to put up an ad to sell his silver-plated Besson French trumpet and, a few months later, his Victrola.<sup>339</sup>

Not only did Daniel continue to uplift the emancipation struggles of Black Americans, but he continued working in similar mutual aid and benevolent society circles which he had entertained membership in New Orleans. The Colored Knights of Pythias, of whose New Orleans branch Homer Plessy was a member,<sup>340</sup> hired Desdunes to form a band shortly after the cornetist had moved to town; by 1915, he had created and trained “an elite group of African-American musicians” who became the official band of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce.<sup>341</sup> Desdunes’s cultural leadership in Omaha may even explain how the word “jazz” was introduced to the city. Its first print appearance, in *The Monitor*, Omaha’s Black weekly newspaper, was in an advertisement for a charity ball where the “Desdunes Jazz Orchestra” was scheduled to play on November 3, 1917.<sup>342</sup> (This was only a few months after the first jazz recordings were made.) Dan Vernhettes has argued that, based on this assorted coverage, “Dan Desdunes was mainly responsible for the fact that jazz played an important part in the history of Omaha.”<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, July 16, 1910. Thank you to Daniel Vernhettes for making me aware of this article.

<sup>338</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, September 13, 1927.

<sup>339</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, March 20, 1920.

<sup>340</sup> Keith Medley, *We As Freeman: Plessy V. Ferguson* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2012).

<sup>341</sup> Hugh Reilly Reilly and Robert Reilly, *Historic Omaha* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2003), 51.

<sup>342</sup> “Grand Charity Ball! For Benefit of The Old Folks Home,” *The Monitor*, Nov. 3, 1917

<sup>343</sup> “Daniel Desdunes,” *Jazz Puzzles*, Vol. 4, 2020.

Press coverage from Desdunes's decades in Omaha ring with praise. Reading their accounts, it seems that his influence and diversity of styles knew no bounds. The Omaha *Monitor* claimed that "There were other Negro instrumentalists in Omaha, but there were none with more music."<sup>344</sup> He received national press, too: Desdunes continued to tour, and in 1914, at a performance on Thanksgiving night at Kansas City's Convention Hall, the *Kansas City Sun* celebrated "Capt. Dan Desdunes, easily the greatest Negro bandmaster in America, and a composer of recognized ability."<sup>345</sup> *The Chicago Defender* would comment on Desdunes's broader impact on the regional Black music scene of the 1920s: "Dan Desdune, [*sic*] whose band is one of best known in Omaha, Neb....is the father of success to many musicians now ranking [as] top notchers. He is a good trainer in this line."<sup>346</sup> He maintained connections to Creole of Color communities in New Orleans, for in December 10, 1927, the *Defender* noted that "Dan Desdune's Entertainers" [*sic*] were making their annual tour, and that "All of the gang speak French fluently."<sup>347</sup> This suggests that Desdunes was successful at recruiting New Orleans talent to live in Omaha. His connections to the Omaha Chamber of Commerce and regular performance schedule certainly would have helped up-south migrants get a footing. Jeff Smith, a virtuoso cornetist who moved to Omaha from New Orleans had previously played with the famous comedian Billy Kersands, explicitly credited Daniel's assistance and encouragement for his move.<sup>348</sup> Throughout the 1930s and 40s, Omaha swing-era jazz musicians such as Nat Towles (who was also a New Orleans

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<sup>344</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, April 30, 1929.

<sup>345</sup> *The Kansas City Sun*, November 28, 1914.

<sup>346</sup> *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1926.

<sup>347</sup> *Chicago Defender*, December 10, 1927.

<sup>348</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, November 24, 1918.

transplant) followed in this model and successfully recruited top Black talent to live and play in Omaha.<sup>349</sup>

Yet perhaps the most salient continuation of his father's legacy was Daniel Desdunes's organizational work, particularly through his efforts to combat inequality through a mutual aid institution known as "Boys Town." In December 1917, Father Edward J. Flanagan, an Irish immigrant priest, established Boys Town as a racially integrated antipoverty center for young boys who were homeless or formerly incarcerated. Flanagan "went to great lengths to seek out and bring in the neediest and most helpless — even boys who were in prison for serious crimes."<sup>350</sup> Judges began to release delinquent orphans into his care in 1917.<sup>351</sup> Many of those he took under his wing were young boys of color. Poverty in the city was prevalent among African Americans, as noted by the authors of the 1932 WPA study *The Negroes of Nebraska*. As they summarize, "in the industrial life of Nebraska Negroes are faced, as in their entire economic life, with the problem of an inferior status."<sup>352</sup> Flanagan voiced strong opinions about this inequality: he called wealth a "dangerous enemy," and wrote of Omaha's elite:

Without being conscious of its insidious influence, they [the elite] permit it [wealth] to glorify them in the scarlet cloak of pompous worldliness, of an exaggerated and, often, domineering influence, using that power of money which a mere accident may have invested them in, to the detriment of the cause of God's chosen ones — the poor and the suffering. Such people lack the light of religion to reveal to them their great responsibilities, and fall short of their great stewardship.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Jesse J. Otto, "Contemporaries: Black Orchestras in Omaha before 1950" (Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2010), 6.

<sup>350</sup> "Father Edward J. Flanagan," Boys Town, accessed September 19, 2020, <https://www.boystown.org/about/father-flanagan/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>351</sup> Jacqueline Ann McGlade, "A Boys Town Hall of History: A Case Study in Public History and Exhibition Methods" (Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1986), 82.

<sup>352</sup> WPA, *The Negroes of Nebraska* (1932), 21.

<sup>353</sup> *Father Flanagan's Boys' Home Journal*, (1920, March). 3(3), p. 2.

Flanagan caught a lot of flack for making these sorts of statements, among constituents who he was theoretically raising money from. But according to Reilly and Warneke, he did have at least one “early admirer”: Daniel Desdunes. According to Flanagan’s biographers, Desdunes convinced Flanagan that an alternative to soliciting funds from the city’s wealthy was to create a “show wagon troupe” where students could perform on the road to raise money for the center. Desdunes trained fifteen of Flanagan’s youth for a minstrel show in January of 1921. It was considered a huge success and the students “enthusiastically wanted more;” and so, Desdunes returned and drilled the students for several months. By April of the next year, Desdunes announced: “We now have a band of thirty-two pieces that any school in the West would be proud to possess. On May 1st this band will start to tour the States through the summer months and thus help raise funds for their permanent home which is now being built on Overlook Farm.”<sup>354</sup> The 16-acre farm Desdunes refers to was located ten miles west of Omaha. Flanagan envisioned this space as a commune for the youth, and claimed it would have capacity to house and employ to up to five hundred boys at a time. He boasted that it was “One of the finest farms in Nebraska, it has 89 varieties of fruit trees, five varieties of grapes and is stocked with cattle, horses, calves, pigs, chickens, etc.... Beautifully located on a hill, the farm will provide a splendid setting for the new home and will afford our boys plenty of room to play and the finest of fresh air and sunshine, so necessary to their growing bodies.”<sup>355</sup> Flanagan promised to the boys that it would be the “mecca of their dreams,” and he held it as a viable alternative to incarceration: “[T]here are no iron bars,

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<sup>354</sup> “Mr. Dan Desdunes Instructor of Our Band,” *Father Flanagan’s Boys’ Home Journal* 5, no. 1 (April 1922), 5.

<sup>355</sup> Jim Bissett, *Agrarian Socialism in America: Marx, Jefferson, and Jesus in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1904–1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 1.

no steel windows here, we win over a boy through a planned program of activities to develop his mind and broaden his interests."<sup>356</sup>

His plans, and Desdunes's fundraising, seemed to bear fruit. Using teams of mules, boys planted corn, alfalfa, and potatoes; they also tended the fruit orchard and vegetable gardens. When a severe drought hit the Midwest in 1933, the boys formed "bucket brigades" to water vegetables. By the late 1930s, increased crop yields and livestock production made the farm nearly self-sufficient. Music was integrated into the daily life of the farm: boys awoke to the "trumpeter's reveille" at 6:30am; radio listening was encouraged; plays, musicals, and band instruction were part of their ongoing activities. Also by the late-1930s, a form of (probably supervised) self-government was practiced by the youth, with slates of candidates and self-administered justice system whose punishment was limited to additional chores.<sup>357</sup> This project was not only alleviating poverty: the very practice of managing such institutions trained a generation. As Hossein notes, "Collectively run institutions can deepen the theory and practice in the social economy for Black people."<sup>358</sup> Lipsitz echoes the idea, noting that in cooperatively-run spaces communities engage in the "social learning" function of social movements, both through "acts of social contestation" and through the building of an alternative ethos and economy.<sup>359</sup> For these youth, and for their adult supporters, communalism was made real, and it was powered by music.

While Father Flanagan was motivated to create an alternative to the rapidly expanding system of mass incarceration, other ideologies informed the creation of Boys Town and Overlook

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<sup>356</sup> McGlade, "A Boys Town Hall of History," 84.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> Caroline Shenaz Hossein, "Daring to Conceptualize the Black Social Economy," in *The Black Social Economy in the Americas: Exploring Diverse Community-Based Markets*, ed. Caroline Shenaz Hossein (New York, NY, U.S.A: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

<sup>359</sup> George Lipsitz, *A Life In The Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*, Revised edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 228.

Farm. Both the agricultural model and Flanagan's critique of conspicuous wealth were clearly influenced by the ideals of agrarian socialism which had spread like wildfire throughout the nation's heartland in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "It comes as something of a surprise," writes Jim Bessett, "that the strongest state expression of socialism occurred, not in the urban citadels of the American working class, but in the remote towns and hamlets of rural Oklahoma." Oklahoma's Socialist Party was a major force in elections throughout the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; its organizers included at least one former New Orleans labor activist, the German-born Oscar Ameringer, who had previously worked with the Black and white dockworkers' unions. "At the height of the movement," recalls Ameringer, "the Socialist Part commanded close to one-third of the total vote of Oklahoma, elected six members to the state legislature, and a number of county officers."<sup>360</sup> An offshoot of the Socialist Party, the Nonpartisan League, promoted a platform of a state control of banks, factories, agricultural enterprises, and the railroad; it captured the governorship and the state legislature in North Dakota with 79% of the vote in 1916.<sup>361</sup> Its cadre were then sent to Nebraska: "After careful planning," organizers arrived in 1917 and "began the systemic recruitment of members...secur[ing] more than thirteen thousand memberships for sixteen dollars each and establish[ing] a newspaper, the *Nebraska Leader*, to promote the campaign for state ownership...of industry." The intervention of World War I gravely wounded their campaign, as smears of "antipatriotic" began to stick.<sup>362</sup>

More than political office, however, these movements were influential because of their innovative cooperative economics and their ability to mobilize economically diverse sectors of

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<sup>360</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 269.

<sup>361</sup> Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 145-147.

<sup>362</sup> Burton Folsom, "Immigrant Voters And The Nonpartisan League In Nebraska, 1917-1920," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 160.

Midwestern society—including those traditionally defined as capitalists. Ameringer described Socialist Party’s “summer encampments,” and how funds were raised with help up “loyal” bankers. “What? Chambers of commerce, merchants, bankers, supporting such subversive activities as socialist encampments? Why not? A good number of them were members of the faith.”<sup>363</sup> In a similar vein, Desdunes’s connections to the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the colored Knights of Pythias, and the Republican Party were not contradictory to his work with Boys Town and Overlook Farm. They were all extensions of the Desdunes’s multi-generational project: to achieve social justice and dignity for the oppressed through diverse coalitions mobilized by a vision for expansive, interracial democracy.

Daniel’s musical practice modeled his passion for the communal uplift and economic democracy that his work with Father Flanagan represented. His marching band at Boys Town, which became named the “Father Flanagan's Boys Band,” was drilled up to be one of the best youth bands in the country. Tours happened each summer, sometimes reaching New York and California. It was a sophisticated, and arduous, operation: In 1922, Four wagons, four sets of horses, two adults and ten boys travelled twenty miles a day to reach show destinations.<sup>364</sup> The band made an impression on John Phillip Sousa, who claimed that their rendition of his composition “Stars and Stripes Forever” had touched him more deeply than any other rendition he had ever heard.<sup>365</sup> Paul Whiteman, the white entrepreneurial big band behemoth known as the “King of Jazz,” guest-conducted Father Flanagan's Boys' Band in 1928, and was stunned by their accomplishments: “[I]n all my travels, and they have been far and many, I have yet to see a musical

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<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>364</sup> McGlade, “A Boys Town Hall of History,” 77.

<sup>365</sup> “Boys' Home Has One of the Best Juvenile Bands in U.S.,” *Father Flanagan's Boys' Home Journal*, May 1927.

band composed of comparative youngsters go through some of the most difficult pieces like veterans.”<sup>366</sup> The band played for Calvin Coolidge, receiving a private invitation to perform at his Spearfish Canyon, South Dakota “summer Whitehouse.”<sup>367</sup> Its national renown foregrounded Black youth and poor people, all while raising money for the educational components of Boys Town.

Desdunes did all of this as a volunteer.<sup>368</sup> His work kept Boys Town afloat, since, in those early years of Band, “other than private donations, the revenue generated by the show troupe was the only income the home had.”<sup>369</sup> The band also confronted negative stereotypes against jazz. In 1922, during a decade when jazz was associated in many white spaces with African American depravity,<sup>370</sup> the school’s newsletter celebrated Father Flanagan's Boys’ Band proudly, and described how Desdunes had prepared the boys to play “some real jazz music.”<sup>371</sup> Not everyone was pleased. In 1922, for instance, the racially mixed troupe received death threats from rural Ku Klux Klan chapters, resulting in several cancelled shows that left the band stranded without funds to get home.<sup>372</sup> Perhaps Desdunes’s planned performance at a KKK-hosted picnic in Iowa in 1925 was an attempt to keep the peace, but we will never know, since an “avalanche of public opinion” convinced him how ill-advised this particular booking was.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> “Paul Whiteman Directs Father Flanagan's Band,” *Father Flanagan's Boys' Home Journal*, January 1929.

<sup>367</sup> “Father Flanagan's Boys' Band Visits President Coolidge,” *Boys' Home Journal* (September 1927), 8-9.

<sup>368</sup> Otto, “Dan Desdunes,” 19.

<sup>369</sup> Hugh Reilly and Kevin Warneke, *Father Flanagan of Boys Town* (Omaha, NE: Boys Town Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>370</sup> Walter Kingsley, “Whence Comes Jazz? Facts From the Great Authority on the Subject,” *New York Sun*, August 5, 1917, 3; “The Appeal of the Primitive jazz,” *The Literary Digest*, August 25, 1917, 28-29; quoted in Robert Walser, ed., *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>371</sup> “Our Band,” *Father Flanagan's Boys' Home Journal*, April 1922; quoted in Otto, “Dan Desdunes: New Orleans Civil Rights Activist and ‘The Father of Negro Musicians of Omaha,” 114.

<sup>372</sup> “Juvenile Entertainers Scrapbook,” Boys Town Hall of History, 1-30; quoted in McGlade, “A Boys Town Hall of History,” 194.

<sup>373</sup> “Negro Band Cuts Ku Klux Picnic,” *The Helena Independent*, July 26, 1925.

Desdunes's partnership with an interracial orphanage was part of a specific New Orleans tradition. During almost every generation of Creole of Color activism and institution building, orphanages and schools were spaces of cooperative, progressive learning amongst racially and economically diverse student bodies. For instance, in 1865, the Haitian-descended Creole of Color opera singer Eugène-Victor Macarty organized concert benefits for Third District Freedmen's Orphan Asylum at a "prominent Confederate's Esplanade Avenue Home" which had been seized by the Union Army.<sup>374</sup> Macarty and the formerly enslaved pianist-composer Basile Jean Bares threw extremely successful concerts, curating utopian imaginations through their music; they performatively "captured" these sites of plantocracy power and antebellum hierarchy, reenvisioning them as spiritualized grounds for Black education and mutual aid. Black and Creole of Color legislators in Louisiana's state congress, such as Representative Robert H. Isabelle, fought to secure funding for these institutions during sessions of state congress in 1867. Isabelle proposed turning an old sugar house into an orphanage that also taught shoemaking and other trades.<sup>375</sup> This literal repurposing of plantations into spaces of solidarity speaks to the creative ethos of the counter-plantation. The former regime of sugar and slave overwork could be converted into sites of uplift.

In many ways, Eugène-Victor Macarty can be seen as a kind of archetype for Daniel Desdunes. He was a prominent Black opera singer who performed fundraisers for orphanages on appropriated plantations. Macarty trained in Paris, but had a career in New Orleans and fought for

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<sup>374</sup> Lester Sullivan, "Composers of Color of Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The History behind the Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (1988): 68.

<sup>375</sup> Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana during Reconstruction* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 105.

the cause of emancipation; was a leading figure of the 1867 convention.<sup>376</sup> Macarty led a sit-in 1869: his ejection from *The Barber of Seville* at the New Orleans Opera House for sitting in the section reserved for white patrons led the historic lawsuit *Eugene Victor Macarty v. E. Calabresi*, which he won. He would later be elected to a term in the state house of representatives from 1870 to 1872.<sup>377</sup>

Rodolphe and Pierre-Aristide directly benefited from the type of institution Macarty, Bares, and Isabelle were working to build during Reconstruction. Pierre-Aristide and Rodolphe Desdunes had gone to the Couvent School they were younger, which was known at the time as Faubourg Marigny's *L'institution Catholique des orphelins indigents*. Founded in 1848, it was chartered through the will of a formerly enslaved woman, and a forced migrant from Haiti, named Madame Couvent. In *Nos Hommes*, Desdunes celebrates that Madame Couvent had been born in Africa. Couvent became manumitted and had a large inheritance, which she had allocated in her bequest for the creation of a free school for New Orleans's orphaned children of color.<sup>378</sup> It was here that Rodolphe and Pierre-Aristide were inoculated with a Radical Republican, pan-Caribbean perspective. Historians today agree that the Couvent School was the "nursery school for revolution in Louisiana." Its "highly politicized teaching corps" instructed their students in the "democratic advances of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions."<sup>379</sup> As Bell notes, "Given their Haitian identity, their familial ties to the Caribbean, and the oppression they suffered in Louisiana's increasingly repressive slave regime, the Desdunes brothers wholeheartedly embraced that

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<sup>376</sup> Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 140.

<sup>377</sup> Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 81; William I. Horne, "Victor Eugène Macarty: From Art to Activism in Reconstruction-Era New Orleans," *The Journal of African American History* 103, no. 4 (2018): 501.

<sup>378</sup> Desdunes, *Our People*, 16, 22, 10.

<sup>379</sup> Melissa Daggett, *Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The Life and Times of Henry Louis Rey* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

message.”<sup>380</sup> Molly Mitchell has noted that this “Catholic Institution was the Cornerstone of the Afro-Creoles’ political work,” and it was, in the words of Daggett, a space where, as “The first generation of Saint-Domingue [Creole of Color] émigrés began to pass away” that “members of the second generation assumed leadership roles within their communities.”<sup>381</sup> Pierre-Aristide served on the board of directors of the Couvent School during the end of the nineteenth century, when he and other activists of his generation attempted to refashion it as an alternative to the resegregated public school system.<sup>382</sup>

Given the close link between mutual aid societies, orphanages, and Black-led initiatives during Reconstruction to build autonomy and economic democracy, Daniel Desdunes’s decision to contribute to such a project in Omaha, and become its volunteer bandmaster, has a special symbolic resonance. These connections were not some ethereal inheritance: Rodolphe Desdunes was alive during his son’s work with Boys Town, and the elder Desdunes was very much a part of Black Omaha’s cultural fabric. He contributed regularly to the city’s Black newspaper, the *Omaha Monitor*; on at least one occasion, he used the platform to attack a conservative Black New Orleanian, Rev. Alfred Lawless, Jr., who had publicly embraced the doctrine of segregation.<sup>383</sup> Desdunes also published French poetry in the *Omaha World Herald*.<sup>384</sup> Desdunes made friends with John Albert Williams. Williams, whose mother escaped slavery, was an influential minister in the Nebraska Episcopal Church. He was also journalist, and a political activist; he praised Desdunes as “Omaha's Blind Negro Poet,” a testament the degree to which he was now claimed

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<sup>380</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, “Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (1844-1918), Creole Poet, Civil War Soldier, and Civil Rights Activist: The Common Wind’s Legacy,” in *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 55, no. 3 (2014): 290.

<sup>381</sup> Melissa Daggett, *Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The Life and Times of Henry Louis Rey* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

<sup>382</sup> Vernhettes and Hanley, “The Desdunes Family,” 35.

<sup>383</sup> Dan Vernhettes et al., “The Desdunes Family (Unpublished Manuscript)” (2020).

<sup>384</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, Saturday, October 6, 1917

as one of Omaha's own.<sup>385</sup>

Rodolphe approved of Daniel's tireless efforts to build mutual aid through musical training within this semi-autonomous space for destitute youth across the color line. Daniel Desdunes was not passive in his interactions with this antipoverty institution. He changed the character of Boys Town by creating spaces of empowerment and leadership training through music.<sup>386</sup> As in New Orleans, music served important communal functions and brought working-class Black and white youth into the public sphere. These young, impoverished Black and white men proudly marched alongside one another in parades held across the country, battling classist and racist stereotypes while projecting a confident collective identity through sonic performance. Boys Town foregrounded the ways in which these homeless and formerly incarcerated youth, once destined for social death, were able to utilize brass band culture to articulate their identities to a post-Reconstruction public; they became "citizens of sound,"<sup>387</sup> led by a seasoned New Orleanian musician and activist who had historically asserted his own right to move about public space some three decades earlier.

Rodolphe Desdunes passed away to cancer of the larynx in August of 1928; his son Daniel passed away a nine months later to meningitis in April of 1929. At Daniel's funeral, his impact on Omaha was made plain. His funeral drew huge crowds where "prominent Omaha businessmen mingled with colored mourners"; both the Desdunes band and the Father Flanagan's Boys band performed.<sup>388</sup> Rodolphe's remains were transported back to New Orleans, where he was buried in

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<sup>385</sup> "Omaha's Blind Negro Poet". *Omaha World-Herald*, September 12, 1917.

<sup>386</sup> "Our Band," *Father Flanagan's Boys' Home Journal*, April 1922..

<sup>387</sup> Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

<sup>388</sup> "Homeless Boys Mourn Dan Desdunes' Death"; "Dan Des-dunes Dies"; "Dan Desdunes' Funeral Attended by Hundreds," *Omaha World-Herald*, Apr. 30, 1929. Quoted in Jesse J. Otto, "Dan Desdunes: New Orleans Civil Rights Activist and 'The Father of Negro Musicians of Omaha,'" in *Nebraska History Quarterly* (Fall 2011), 107-116.

in the family tomb in St. Louis Cemetery, next to his Creole of Color comrades.<sup>389</sup> The Boys Town Band (later renamed the Desdunes Boys Town Band) continued to play well after Daniel Desdunes' passing into the 1960s. Praise by one particular commentator seems to suggest a sustained impact on Omaha's Black activists. Harrison J. Pinkett, a civil rights lawyer with the NAACP and friend of W.E.B. Du Bois, lived in Omaha. Pinkett celebrated Daniel Desdunes as "the father of negro musicians of Omaha" in his 1937 manuscript, *An Historical Sketch of the Omaha Negro*. Pinkett further elaborated that he was a "fine, cultured gentleman who found time to aid the Negro people in all of their worthwhile fraternal and civic efforts," and who was personally responsible for elevating almost every Omaha orchestra leader to start their career.<sup>390</sup> Pinkett, an activist himself, likely knew of Desdunes's work with the *Comité des Citoyens* – he would have certainly known of Plessy's work that followed. He thus understood that Desdunes's commitment to communal transformation through music was central to his life's work.

While Daniel did not say much as to why he committed so much of his life in Omaha to Boys Town--he never produced a written statement that explained his rationale for his work--his son, Clarence, expressed both his father's and grandfather's ideology when he argued for citizenship and political rights on the basis of musical accomplishment. Clarence Desdunes had been born in New Orleans in 1896 but moved with his parents to the Midwest and graduated from High School in Omaha. He was a successful violinist, touring the South and becoming popular in New Orleans as well as Omaha, and he published a book on violin performance. Omaha trombonist Elmer Crumley, who toured Europe with Sammy Price in the 1950s, remembered Clarence as "a

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<sup>389</sup> Medley, *We As Freeman*, 217.

<sup>390</sup> University of Nebraska Omaha, Criss Library. Special Collections. Repository April 28, 1937: <http://unomaha.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15301coll1/id/321>.

marvelous bandleader and a fine violinist.”<sup>391</sup> In a 1920 column in *The Monitor*, Clarence wrote that “The black man has the brains as well as the spiritual endowment necessary to understand and appreciate music in a high degree; he can point with pride to the musicians who emphatically deserve to be called artists, and another quarter century of artistic striving will bring them into the front ranks of artistic achievement.”<sup>392</sup> While Daniel’s father, Rodolphe, identified as a radical Creole of Color of Haitian descent who allied with Louisiana’s Black freedmen as a fellow member of the African diaspora, Daniel’s son Clarence was unequivocal in asserting his Blackness. Clarence shows us that Creoles of Color did not simply disappear, but rather, over the three generations between Reconstruction and Jim Crow, their unique political traditions became more fully identified with African Americans and more fully conjoined their struggle and their musical aesthetics.

## **2.6 Conclusion: Counter-plantation Echoes in Land, Labor, and Haitian-Louisianan Music**

At the 2020 memorial for the late congressman and freedom rider John Lewis, one of the Civil Rights movement’s chief strategists, James Lawton, sought to correct an oft-repeated narrative about the goals of 1950s-60s nonviolent activism:<sup>393</sup>

I think we need to get the story straight, because words are powerful. History must be written in such a fashion when it lifts up the spirit of the John Lewises of the world... The media makes a mistake when John is seen only in relation to the voting rights act of 1965. However important that is, you must remember that in the 60s, Lyndon Johnson and the congress of the United States passed the

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<sup>391</sup> “Elmer Crumbley-his story as told to Franklin Driggs,” *Coda 1* (February 1959): 9.

<sup>392</sup> Clarence Desdunes, quoted in Otto, “Dan Desdunes,” 116.

<sup>393</sup> For a discussion of James Lawton, see Richard A. Hughes, *Pro-Justice Ethics: From Lament to Nonviolence* (New York: Peter Lang Incorporated, 2009), 226.

most advanced legislation on behalf of “we the people” that was ever passed: Head Start...We passed Medicare. We passed antipoverty programs...we will not be silent while our economy is shaped, not by “freedom,” but by plantation capitalism which continues to cause domination and control rather than liberty and equality for all.<sup>394</sup>

Lawton’s point hit home with the Atlanta audience, and it hits home here, as well. Histories of the Civil Rights movement have tended to focus on suffrage and the ideal of liberalism in the narrow sense, while downplaying its core vision of economic justice. Similarly, the history of the Creoles of Color’s participation during Reconstruction has often been reduced to the fight for the vote. Their exploration of alternative economic infrastructures and fight for communal land cooperatives is one of the most neglected aspects of their history. Many commentators unsympathetic to the radical legacy of Creoles of Color echo the words of Daniel Brook: “Given their tremendous diversity of color, wealth, and status, the African-American delegates [at the Constitutional Convention of 1868] were hardly a unified block. Freedmen clamored for land reform while antebellum freemen were more concerned with equal access to public accommodations like theaters, restaurants, and riverboat cabins.”<sup>395</sup> Labor historian Eric Arsenen suggests that in Louisiana, the “economic vision of the free black elite combined the ideology of free labor with an emphasis upon economic and moral uplift,” seemingly glossing over the impressive history of coalitional organizing to enact an agrarian republic, or the prevalence of mutual aid initiatives.<sup>396</sup> Of the scattered pieces that explicitly address Creole of Color

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<sup>394</sup> Jonathan Raymond, “James Lawson Remarks at John Lewis Funeral | 11alive.Com,” 11 Alive (Atlanta, GA), July 30, 2020, <https://www.11alive.com/article/life/people/john-lewis/james-lawson-john-lewis-funeral/85-353bbce3-d876-4903-8371-6ce0764c9a4c>.

<sup>395</sup> Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 108. See also Justin A. Nystrom, “Racial Identity and Reconstruction: New Orleans’s Free People of Color and the Dilemma of Emancipation,” in *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War*, ed. Paul Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 122–39.

<sup>396</sup> Eric Arsenen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 17-18.

commitment to land reform, few make the connection to Haiti's own counter-plantation politics. Michel Fabre notes that the *Tribune* criticized "the measures taken by General Banks that threatened to turn the freedmen into 'serfs for the Union'...It made proposals for a cooperative running of the plantations, reflecting Charles Fourier's socialist principles."<sup>397</sup> The influence of Charles Fourier is also suggested by Eric Foner in his history of Reconstruction.<sup>398</sup>

But even these assertions do not go far enough. Writing on the radical politics of Louisiana's Creoles of Color, Georgette Mitchell critiques the tendencies of scholars to assume European mimicry for their dissident ideals. "Contrary to popular belief, this uprooted, aqueous being is not a mere offspring of Romantic thought that has been transplanted in the French Caribbean along with colonial rule."<sup>399</sup> These European genealogies for Black movements have "attributed the impetus for the [Haitian] revolution to a trickle down of political and philosophical ideas from the French Revolution."<sup>400</sup> And Hilary Beckles has identified a historiographical tendency that paints African diasporians as "devoid of [their own] ideas, political concepts and an alternative socio-political vision."<sup>401</sup> This could not be further from the truth. In her discussion of the "Black social economy," a cooperative economic ethos informed by Black peoples' historic entry to the capitalist market as commodities, Hossein points out that "Africans and the African

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<sup>397</sup> Michel Fabre, "The New Orleans Press and French-Language Literature by Creoles of Color," in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 29–49.

<sup>398</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 600.

<sup>399</sup> Georgette M. Mitchell, "Autour d'une Rosette: Insularity and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Poetry of New Orleans, Haiti, and France" (PhD Dissertation, New Jersey, Rutgers University, 2019), iii.

<sup>400</sup> Crystal Nicole Eddins, "Runaways, Repertoires, and Repression: Marronnage and the Haitian Revolution, 1766–1791," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 4.

<sup>401</sup> Hilary Beckles, "Caribbean Anti-Slavery: The Self Liberation Ethos of Enslaved Blacks," *Journal of Caribbean History* 22, no. 1/2 (1988): 16.

diaspora were creating social economies long before the French concept of the *économie sociale* even emerged.”<sup>402</sup>

In a similar vein, jazz is often described as the fusion of “African” and “European” components. But it should be clear that the brass band traditions adopted by Creoles of Color had their own resonance and meanings that transcended their European genesis. To reduce “La Marseillaise” as “European” misses the complex association between revolution and Afro-Creole identity in the nineteenth century Caribbean. And the categorization of the dynamic rhythmic substrates that intertwined and broke back out again in the seemingly limitless process of creolization in the plantation world as “African” again substitutes historical change and slave agency for continental storytelling. In this narrative, jazz is a story of an inevitable hybridity between Europe and its unwilling workforce, and jazz musicians seem to have no social consciousness, no awareness of the world, no desire to fight for freedom or a more just future.

The story of the Desdunes family disrupts each of these narratives. The legacy of cooperative economics, the influence of Haitian internationalism, the struggle for social change through musical performance all reflect a profoundly Atlantic legacy. When we reevaluate the musical changes in 1892—in what made “swing” swing—we can contextualize the bursts of Haitian musical-performance culture that appear like brilliant auras in the testimonies and rhythmic creolization within Louisianan musical histories. The politicized social consciousness heard in Daniel Desdunes’s musical activism was more than coincidental; it was an expression of the common wind’s fire in another register. Daniel brought these lessons to Omaha’s African American cultural scene and contributed to a renaissance of Black culture in the Upper Midwest; he self-consciously utilized his skills and his commitment to economic democracy to create a

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<sup>402</sup> Hossein, “Daring to Conceptualize the Black Social Economy,” 1-14.

dynamic self-sufficient orphanage and farm. These projects live squarely in the tradition of Creole of Color anticapitalist experiments during Radical Reconstruction.

Daniel Desdunes is not only the most important jazz musician you've never heard of; he is also the first documented activist-jazz musician, and he was never far from his father who proudly and intensely identified with Haiti through the end of his days. As we continue to trace these transformations of the common wind, we turn in the next chapter to Daniel's sister, Mamie Desdunes, who revolutionized the blues in New Orleans's Storyville district, creating cooperative economic structures while simultaneously reinventing the blues with her introduction of Haitian-derived rhythmic practices. Despite Daniel's impressive and relentless career, Mamie had an equal, if not greater, impact on the music and its counter-plantation imaginaries.

### 3.0 Mamie Desdunes and the Reconstructed Erotic

*Number 219 took my babe away.  
Number 219 took my babe away.  
Number 217 gonna bring her back someday.*

- Mamie Desdunes, “Mamie’s Blues,” as performed by Jelly Roll Morton

*I got a husband and I got a kid man too  
I got a husband and I got a kid man too  
My husband can't do what my kid man can do.*

*I like the way he cook my cabbage for me  
I like the way he cook my cabbage for me  
Look like he set my natural soul free.*

- Mamie Desdunes, alternate lyrics to “Mamie’s Blues,” as performed by Jelly Roll Morton

### 3.1 Introduction

Jazz has an unsung postcolonial scribe in the Argentine modernist author Julio Cortázar. Considered a master of experimental literature, he lived much of his life in Paris, first as an Argentine citizen, and then, after 1973, when Cortázar signed over the proceeds from his novel *El libro de Manuel* to aid political prisoners disappeared by Argentina’s military junta, as an Argentine exile.<sup>403</sup> Called the “modern archetype of the Latin American exile in Paris,” he held a special place for jazz in his literature to express his own justice-informed migrations and his

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<sup>403</sup> Harold Bloom, “Introduction,” in *Julio Cortázar*, by Julio Cortázar, ed. Harold Bloom (Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 14.

critique of capitalist modernity.<sup>404</sup> This is particularly true in Cortázar's famous "anti-novel" *Hopscotch*, considered a hallmark of Latin American modernism.<sup>405</sup> In this work, Rodolphe's daughter, Mamie Desdunes, makes a stunning appearance.

In one particularly lucid stream-of-consciousness, Cortázar's characters listen to Jelly Roll Morton's performance of "Mamie's Blues." *Hopscotch*'s narrator describes this song in terms that emphasize migration, rootedness, and the violent contingencies of history. They explain that "Mamie's Blues...[is a] bird who migrates or emigrates or immigrates or transmigrates, roadblock jumper, smuggler," a song which "is inevitable, is rain and bread and salt, something completely beyond national ritual, sacred traditions, language and folklore: a cloud without frontiers, a spy of air and water, an archetypal form, something from before, from below". It is a piece that delivers listeners "back to a betrayed origin," a musical ethos that demonstrates that "perhaps there have been other paths and that the only one they took was maybe not the only one or the best one, or perhaps that there have been other paths that made for softer walking and that they had not taken those."<sup>406</sup>

This chapter traces these other paths that Cortázar hears in "Mamie's Blues" by situating Mamie Desdunes within a resistance movement embodied by New Orleans blues women and sex-worker proletariat who toiled in New Orleans red light district known as Storyville. And like

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<sup>404</sup> Stephen Henighan, *Sandinista's Nation: Ernesto Cardenal and Sergio Ramírez Writing Nicaragua, 1940-2012* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 552. Cortázar was a well-known advocate of the Cuban and Sandinista revolutions.

<sup>405</sup> Its impact has been called "seismic" by Mario Llosa, and in the words of José Lezama Lima, "decapitate[s] time so that time can hold a new head." Mario Vargas Llosa, "The Trumpet of Deyá," in *Julio Cortázar*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 219; José Lezama Lima, "Cortázar y El Comienzo de La Otra Novela," in *Julio Cortázar, Rayuela*, ed. Julio Ortega and Saúl Yurkiévich, vol. 16 (Nanterre, France: ALLCA XX, 1996), 712.

<sup>406</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (1963; New York: Pantheon, 1987), 195-198; see also Nicholas Roberts, "Subverted Claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz," *The Modern Language Review* 104, no. 3 (2009): 730-45, and Dustin Illingworth, "The Subtle Radicalism of Julio Cortázar's Berkeley Lectures," *The Atlantic*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/03/the-subtle-radicalism-of-julio-cortazars-berkeley-lectures/520812/>, accessed July 18, 2020.

Cortazar, I also hear in her landmark composition a song that migrates and transmigrates. I trace its connections to the reinvented performances cultures resulting from the Haitian Revolution and its involuntary diaspora by examining both performance practices and lyrical content. In both musical aesthetics and poetic genealogy, “Mamie’s Blues” merged the two counter-plantation musical traditions of Black revolt during the long nineteenth century, those that eventuated from the Black U.S. South and the Haitian-derived “cinquillo complex.”<sup>407</sup> Not only were these factors pre-conditions for the blues’ emergence, but by reading these contributions within Storyville’s spectacularized hierarchy of sex, race, and gender, we can see how blues women were “talking back” by talking *about* the social conditions that harnessed their sexualities for the market.<sup>408</sup> By exploring how the *cinquillo*-derived rhythmic network of Mamie Desdunes was a part of this backtalk, I hope to reveal a “fluid and multivalent network” of Afro-Atlantic associations linked to uprising, revolution, sexual commentary, and the consciousness-raising of their communities.<sup>409</sup>

As with the prior chapter, I attempt move beyond the paradigm of duality in which Black and Creole of Color cultural exchange is understood in terms of opposition over collaboration. I explore the importance of Haitian musical themes in Mamie Desdunes’s work through an analysis

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<sup>407</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, “Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean,” *American Music* 17, no. 1 (1999): 1–38; Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012); Sara E. Johnson, “Cinquillo Consciousness: The Formation of a Pan-Caribbean Musical Aesthetic,” in *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 35–58; Christopher Washburne, *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Christopher Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 59–80.

<sup>408</sup> In the idea of “talking back” I am influenced by Jenson’s invocation of Haitian women “playing the dozens.” Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 297. As Robin D.G. Kelley notes, “evidence suggests that young women engaged in these kinds of verbal exchanges as much as their male counterparts, both with men and between women. And they were no less profane.” Robin D. G. Kelley, “Looking for the ‘Real’ Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto,” in *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2007), 127–28.

<sup>409</sup> “Fluid and multivalent network” is how Houston Baker Jr. describes the blues in Houston A. Baker Jr, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5.

of Jelly Roll Morton's interpretations of her work, as well some of his other selections. My goal here is not argue that the Spanish tinge, a Haitian hue, or the African American blues were more or less important than each other. Rather, in the spirit of Mamie, Rodolphe, and Daniel Desdunes's ongoing musical and political work, I hope to explore how these traditions were dialectically intertwined and self-consciously remixed as part of a cultural matrix which spoke of the polyrhythmic, polyvocal, and resistant cultures of the Afro-Atlantic world—reproducing the “autonomous sovereign space in the heart of the European exploitive system” that Jean Casimir describes as the counter-plantation.<sup>410</sup>

In the previous chapter, I explored the intersection of a Haitian-Louisianan political tradition as embodied in both brass band culture and Reconstruction activism. The spaces I foregrounded were overwhelmingly, sometimes unanimously, male. In this chapter, I center the gendered resistance to the plantation complex through by analyzing the music and social history of an influential and erased blues pianist: Mamie Desdunes. Jazz musicologist Vic Hobson has concluded that “there is some evidence to support the view that Mamie Desdunes was among the first of the women blues singers.”<sup>411</sup> Born out of wedlock in 1881 to Rodolphe Desdunes and Clementine Walker, Mamie Desdunes was privileged enough to receive piano training as a child, but also sufficiently disadvantaged that, at some undetermined point in the mid to late 1890s (while she was still a teenager), she began working as a pianist, singer, and part-time sex worker in New Orleans's red-light district, Storyville.<sup>412</sup> Over the following decades, she mysteriously lost two of

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<sup>410</sup> Jean Casimir, “On the Origins of the Counterplantation System,” in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Laurent Dubois et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

<sup>411</sup> Manuel Manetta, “Interview Digest, March 28, 1957,” edited by Robert Campbell William Russell, Nesuhi Ertegun and Richard B. Allen (New Orleans, LA: Hogan Jazz Archive): 13, spelled as “Desdume” in the Digest; quoted in Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 7.

<sup>412</sup> I base this periodization on Vic Hobson's argument that “Mamie's Blues” was likely written in 1895. He bases his argument on the composition's reference to Texas oil boom towns, which were operational by then. See Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27. I do not know at what date her

the middle fingers on her right hand, gained a legion of (local) fans and devoted students, and transformed jazz by introducing a new style of blues which foregrounded both Haitian-Caribbean rhythms and women's voices.

Writing about Mamie Desdunes is difficult because outside of her death certificate and few census records, we lack any "hard" archival evidence to prove many claims made about her. We do know that she died in 1908 of tuberculosis at the age of 31, a disease that disproportionately claimed Black and female victims, manifesting New Orleans's health disparities.<sup>413</sup> She died about a decade too soon to have any of her performances recorded. She left no sheet music, and her name does not appear in ads for Storyville's bordellos. Yet it is precisely this archival gap that makes her presence in assorted interviews so suggestive. The reason we know Mamie Desdunes's name was because she profoundly influenced a coterie of early jazz musicians who attest to both (a) her importance as a mentor and (b) the importance of her innovative signature composition, "Mamie's Blues." The song's unashamed celebration of Black women's sexuality ("I like the way he cook my cabbage for me") and denunciation of sex trafficking (as we will see, the 2:19 referred to a train infamous for its trafficking of vulnerable sex workers to oil boom towns on the Texan Gulf Coast<sup>414</sup>) was a refrain for a generation of Storyville's blues people. Musicologist Vic Hobson comes to the conclusion, based on an exhaustive search of possible archives and oral histories, that

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work in the sex industry as a madam or a prostitute began. Piano training was common for Creole of Color women in the late nineteenth century and part of a construction of femineity. See Doubleday's analysis of the piano's gender politics amongst Creoles of Color through her study of Jelly Roll Morton in Veronica Doubleday, "Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17, no. 1 (May 2008): 3–39.

<sup>413</sup> Louis Armstrong believe his mother protected him from tuberculosis with a tradition of Afro-Louisianan herbal medicine. See Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 76.

<sup>414</sup> Elijah Wald, "Mamie's Blues (219 Blues)," *Old Friends: A Songobiography*, June 15, 2016, <https://www.elijahwald.com/songblog/mamies-blues/>.

“Mamie’s Blues” was the first twelve-bar jazz blues,<sup>415</sup> while in the words of Buddy Bolden’s trombonist, Willie Cornish, this was a blues that a working musician “had to know” in early twentieth-century New Orleans.<sup>416</sup> “Mamie’s Blues” also reinforces how central blues was to early jazz, but with a variation that may be unexpected: its use of Afro-Haitian rhythmic devices.<sup>417</sup> Several scholars, such as Christopher Washburne, have emphasized how the “Caribbean influence was so tied to its [jazz’s] developmental stages that that rhythms became the foundational part of jazz.”<sup>418</sup> This chapter’s intervention into this literature is to emphasize the Haitian-specific aspects of this creolization—an overlooked wing of the “Spanish tinge” hypothesis.<sup>419</sup>

In addition to addressing a gap in the existing scholarship, Haitian diasporic influence is important to foreground in “Mamie’s Blues” because the song can be read against other musical forms generated by Haitian-descended women in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and throughout the Americas. “Crucial to the bodily negotiation of emancipation” amongst Saint-Domingue refugees was their performance of an “embodied freedom,” and this practice had repercussions in the many Caribbean locations where enslaved Haitians were forced to migrate (or, in the case of several free women of

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<sup>415</sup> “Unless evidence comes to light from an earlier date, this is not only the earliest evidence of ‘blues-inflected jazz,’ it is also the earliest evidence of the 12-bar blues being performed by a jazz band.” Hobson, *New Orleans Jazz and Blues*, 12.

<sup>416</sup> Cornish remembered that there were “two blues you had to know” as a professional musician in New Orleans: “2:19 Blues” and “Careless Love.” Frederic Ramsey Papers, MSS 559, Box 16C, Historic New Orleans Collection. Quoted in Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27

<sup>417</sup> The relationship of blues to jazz has been discussed for decades and, in the interest of space and scope, I will not take it up directly here. Sterling A. Brown, “Spirituals, Blues, and Jazz,” in *Jam Session: An Anthology of Jazz*, ed. Ralph J. Gleason (New York: Putnam’s, 1958), 12–26; Vic Hobson, *Creating Jazz Counterpoint: New Orleans, Barbershop Harmony, and the Blues* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

<sup>418</sup> Christopher Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 75. More recent scholarship on this subject includes Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>419</sup> John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); John Doheny, “The Spanish Tinge Hypothesis: Afro-Caribbean Characteristics in Early New Orleans Jazz Drumming,” *The Jazz Archivist* XIX (2005-2006).

color, were reenslaved) following the Haitian Revolution.<sup>420</sup> These dissident performative documents address themes that Angela Davis suggests were underrepresented in United States Black antebellum musical traditions, namely, the ability to talk about sex.<sup>421</sup> These migrant women's invocations of the erotic were both playful and deadly serious, with songs of biting satire sometimes the only weapon the oppressed wielded against ghastly encounters of sexual violence. In this Afro-Atlantic genre, enslaved and free Afro-descended women poets theorized the Black body as a primary site of contestation, and developed a language to speak about and contest slavery's "gigantic sexualized repertoire."<sup>422</sup> Amongst Caribbeanists and Haitianists, these subjects are widely discussed and acknowledged. Lisa Ze Winters, for instance, has identified these musical traditions as part of an Afro-Caribbean "diasporic practice" whose "subversive negotiation of sexual and racial economies imposed by European colonialism and American slavery" foregrounded Black women's social commentary and Black women's intellectual leadership in the parallel but distinct sexual economies of Haiti, Saint-Louis (in French-controlled Senegal), and New Orleans.<sup>423</sup>

While historians such as Emily Clark and Lisa Ze Winters have foregrounded Creole of Color sexualities in New Orleans as part of a diasporic Haitian genealogy, scholars of New Orleans

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<sup>420</sup> Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, "Rosalie of the Poulard Nation: Freedom, Law, and Dignity in the Era of the Haitian Revolution," in *Assumed Identities: The Meanings of Race in the Atlantic World*, ed. John D. Garrigus and Christopher Morris (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 116–43; David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014).

<sup>421</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

<sup>422</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81.

<sup>423</sup> Lisa Ze Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 61. Another Atlantic analysis that compares these sexual economies is Emily Clark and Hilary Jones, "Transatlantic Currents of Orientalism: New Orleans Quadroons and Saint-Louis Signares," in *New Orleans, Louisiana, and Saint-Louis, Senegal: Mirror Cities in the Atlantic World, 1659–2000s*, ed. Emily Clark, Cecile Vidal, and Ibrahima Thioub (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019).

jazz have rarely treated these themes, in large part because they rarely treat women. Writing on Storyville, jazz historian Thomas Brothers writes that “Many musicians seem not to have merely tolerated the [red light] district but to have absolutely enjoyed it. In Storyville, the musician's life fused with pimping and gambling as it could nowhere else, to produce one huge festival of work and pleasure.”<sup>424</sup> Brothers can read this dystopian sexual factory as a “huge festival of work and pleasure” because his exclusive sources are interviews and published accounts of male musicians and male observers. Singers and sex workers like Mamie Desdunes suggest a very different point of view. Their dissident songs and uncivil disobedience to Storyville’s violent political economy built a counter-plantation communitarian culture beyond objectification. By synthesizing the police records, lawsuits, and testimonies of musicians, my first task in this chapter is to foreground the resistance of an entertainment working class comprised of sex workers and musicians. Far from passive, Black men and women contested Storyville’s sexualized repertoire and created counter-plantation structures of communalism and mutual aid. These values were both reflected and enacted in the music produced by these women workers, creating a blues counterpublic that Daphne Duval Harrison calls “the assertion of black women’s ideas and ideals from the standpoint of the working class and the poor.”<sup>425</sup>

I thus try to situate Mamie Desdunes both within the long arc of the Haitian diaspora in New Orleans and as part of a specific time and place of Storyville. To begin this chapter, I explore the social relations of Storyville, its connection with other themes of plantation and counter-plantation politics, and the especially important interactions between musicians and sex workers.

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<sup>424</sup> Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 259.

<sup>425</sup> Daphne Duval Harrison, “Women in Blues: Transgressing Boundaries,” in *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation*, ed. Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).

I highlight a social movement that built solidarity/benevolence between prostitutes, madams, and musicians against police brutality. I then return to “Mamie’s Blues” and analyze its impact on Jelly Roll Morton and New Orleans at large. I trace how this song and women’s blues generally both shaped and reflected “class consciousness” amongst sex workers and musicians. Finally, I explore the Haitian genealogy of the “Spanish tinge” heard in “Mamie’s Blues,” and situate Haitian women’s critiques of plantation sexual economies as a kind of repertoire or “embodied knowledge,” one that Mamie Desdunes drew from.<sup>426</sup> This fusion of Black cultures from the Mississippi Delta and the Saint-Dominguan diaspora speaks to a demographic and cultural convergence of two distinct counter-plantation traditions which transformed and revitalized one another during a moment of profound transformation and crisis. Mamie Desdunes conveyed at an aesthetic level the types of intra-Black organizing being undertaken by Rodolphe and Daniel Desdunes, while simultaneously expanding and challenging their legacy. Her work opens our eyes and our ears in new directions within our study of jazz’s counter-plantation articulations.

### 3.2 The Political Economy of Storyville

W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of the decades after emancipation: “The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again into slavery.”<sup>427</sup> Pogrom-like scenes of gratuitous violence led by white militias were called “Redemption” and they smashed the grassroots, democratic movement of Black freedpeople, spurring a major outmigration from the rural parishes.

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<sup>426</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>427</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 30.

“White League” militias brutally repressed political dissent, labor organizing, Black land ownership, and, after the Thibodaux Massacre of 1887, they banned Black brass bands from performing in the sugar country.<sup>428</sup> The resulting outmigration was so dramatic that these de facto refugees came to represent over thirty percent of the population in several cities across the south between 1880 and 1910.<sup>429</sup> In New Orleans, as many as 40,000 made the transition from rural plantations to New Orleans’s urban ghettos, including bassist Pops Foster’s family, trombonist Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong’s mother Maryann Albert, blues singer Ann Cook, the pianist Albert Carroll, and John Robichaux, just to name a few.<sup>430</sup> Du Bois called the phenomenon “huddling in the Black Belt for self-protection.”<sup>431</sup> The white doctor and complex jazz enthusiast Edmond Souchon took a more a negative and racist tone about the neighborhoods near Storyville, describing them as “hotbed[s] of dark, uneducated cornfield Negroes.”<sup>432</sup> Souchon was apparently unaware that these migrants had organized and sustained one of the most audacious and comprehensive transitions from slavery to emancipation in the Atlantic world.<sup>433</sup> Many of them

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<sup>428</sup>Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); William Ivy Hair’s *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969) remains an important study of the “bourbon counterrevolution.” For the ban on Black marching bands in Thibodaux, see Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 134-135.

<sup>429</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 105.

<sup>430</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 337-38; Burton William Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 25; Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans*, 135; Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen” (New Orleans: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 2004), 215-217.

<sup>431</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 576.

<sup>432</sup> Edmond Souchon, “King Oliver: A Very Personal Memoir,” in *Jazz Panorama: From the Pages of the Jazz Review*, ed. Martin Williams (1964; New York: De Capo, 1979), 12–20; see also Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans*, 135.

<sup>433</sup> Steven Hahn notes that emancipation represented the largest liquidation of wealth in the world until that time, since, unlike even the Haitian Revolution, “property owners” were not compensated. See Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 103. For the profoundly mass and democratic nature of Reconstruction, see Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015). For a study of Reconstruction from a gendered perspective, see Elsa Barkley

were illiterate, but most of those in this “hotbed” possessed a hard-won political education that Souchon would never obtain (a topic which will return in Chapter 4).

Many of these migrations intersected with gender and sexual power structures. As Jacqueline Jones notes, “Recent in-migrants included large numbers of single women who could not support themselves and their children by working as field-hands or tenant farmers; these women had lost their spouses in the country, not in the city.” Such solo Black mothers were the most economically vulnerable group.<sup>434</sup> When they arrived in New Orleans, many women found their best possible employment was in the oldest profession. During the 1910s in Chicago the average income of a prostitute was approximately \$1300 per year, an income that was more than quadruple a typical female factory worker’s pay of \$300.<sup>435</sup> In the first two decades of twentieth century New Orleans, average income data is scant, but the best paid prostitutes at Willie Piazza’s brothel could earn \$1,000 to \$2,000 a year, compared with the thirty to ninety dollars a year that women domestics could expect to earn.<sup>436</sup> Describing an experience that would lead her to accept sex work, one Mary Ann Duelber explained, following the passing of her mother and father at a young age, “she was made to go barefooted during the coldest days in winter to sell apples on the street” by her abusive aunt, and “would be unmercifully beat if she didn’t bring [home] \$1.50 a day.”<sup>437</sup> Mary A. Deubler was born to German immigrant parents, but her experience would not

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Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 107–46.

<sup>434</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 105.

<sup>435</sup> “Organized Vice As a Vested Interest,” *Current Literature*, March 1912, 294, quoted in Mara Laura Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890–1933* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 81-83.

<sup>436</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 52-53.

<sup>437</sup> Succession of Mary A. Deubler, Docket No. 107603, Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, Division C, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library; quoted in Long, *Great Southern Babylon*, 214-215.

have been unrepresentative of African American women. On top of pay disparities, in New Orleans, very few jobs were open to Black women.<sup>438</sup> In 1900 there were “about 1500 prostitutes” working in Storyville, according to the mayor and chief of police, and this number “largely increased in the winter, say by 500 more.”<sup>439</sup> The itinerant nature of the work meant that it might provide some level of autonomy, especially for artists. As the historian of Black sex workers in New York cities, LaShawn Harris, notes, “[W]ith its flexible and fluid structure, the informal labor sector offered employment and economic opportunities that complemented black women’s desire to secure occupational mobility.”<sup>440</sup> Sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh has suggested that these urban women, far from being passive victims, “were reaching beyond their preordained lot in life.”<sup>441</sup>

Nonetheless, it was a new regime of enclosures, both in rural and urban spaces, which compelled Black women to find work in Storyville. A network of well-connected financiers powered this spectacle, according to a souvenir edition of the district’s infamous guidebooks: “Romantic playboys and big-shot financiers alike must have found them irresistible, for the swankier houses are reputed to have paid off like gold mines to their financial backers.”<sup>442</sup> Storyville became the New South’s most prosperous tourist district, processing hundreds of thousands of dollars annually and becoming the “the chief winter resort of those who journey

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<sup>438</sup> “In 1870, according to a city directory, 3,460 “blacks” (probably including Creoles of Color) worked as carpenters, cigar makers, painters, clerks, shoemakers, coopers, tailors, bakers, blacksmiths, and foundry hands, while by 1904, under a tenth of that number held those jobs, although the number of blacks in the city had increased by 50 percent.” Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 24.

<sup>439</sup> Quoted in Alicia Long, *Great Southern Babylon*.

<sup>440</sup> LaShawn Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners: Black Women in New York City’s Underground Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 2.

<sup>441</sup> Sudhir Venkatesh, *Floating City: A Rogue Sociologist Lost and Found in New York’s Underground Economy* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 24.

<sup>442</sup> Thurman W. Reeves, *From the Scarlet Past of Fabulous New Orleans: Souvenir Edition of the World Famous Tenderloin Directory “The Blue Book” with a Brief Story of Storyville* (New Orleans: T. W. Reeves, n.p., 1951), PAM HQ 146 .N4 .R4 1951, Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection.

southward to escape the winters in the North.”<sup>443</sup> This ensured that the city’s commercial elite, such as the president of the Whitney Bank and other “men of capital” who invested in and lobbied to pass the Story Act, earned enormous profits.<sup>444</sup> The district was its own form of enclosure, as it was built in a sixteen-square block area that had previously been a low-rent neighborhood comprised almost entirely of African American working-class families. The real estate mogul Bernardo Galvez Carbajal evicted these families after the Story Act was passed, and his new tenants paid substantially higher rents.<sup>445</sup> Carabal’s profits more than doubled, part of a wave of gentrification that displaced many Black residents.<sup>446</sup> At 322 Marais Street, the Colored Veterans Benevolent Association had held weekly meetings since the 1870s. After that area became redistricted as Storyville, the property owner filed a nuisance complaint against his tenants, and the mayor declined to renew the Association’s permit.<sup>447</sup> When the city constructed its new train system in 1910, it was built right at the foot of Storyville at the intersection of Canal and Basin streets. The train’s elevated tracks entering and leaving the city ensured that the magnificent bordellos of Storyville were abundantly visible and within walking distance for tourists.<sup>448</sup> Black cultural institutions, businesses, and communities were destroyed by these new invasions of capital, fueling the job market with sex workers.

Amongst jazz scholars and enthusiasts, Storyville remains an often discussed but a deeply under-researched social space, especially regarding the politicization of its sexual proletariat.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Julian Ralph, “New Orleans, Our Southern Capitol,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (February 1899): 365–85.

<sup>444</sup> Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 145.

<sup>445</sup> Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 119-120.

<sup>446</sup> Nikolas Oscar Sparks, “Lost Bodies/Found Objects: Storyville and the Archival Imagination” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University, 2017), 29.

<sup>447</sup> City Council Records (1899), City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; quoted in Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 229-230.

<sup>448</sup> Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 235; Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 160.

<sup>449</sup> An important exception to this is Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*.

This is especially unfortunate since Storyville, as Tucker notes, “may provide instructive glimpses into diverse gender systems and women’s participation in early New Orleans jazz.”<sup>450</sup> Indeed, the sonic liberation choreographed by Desdunes and other blues women became all the more important as Storyville developed. The district’s energetic dystopia bore an increasingly nightmarish weight on the gender ideologies that reduced the Black woman’s sexual body, as in slavery, to a market transaction, albeit within a changed legal landscape. Nonetheless, as Emily Epstein Landau notes, “The racial order of the slave plantation was reinscribed in the early twentieth century though the sexual organization of Storyville,” a product of a particular brand of capitalism whose principal commodity, “female sexuality,” was “put at the service of the white male patron...the only kind of Black sexuality allowed.”<sup>451</sup> Landau’s analysis forces us to grapple with how “Storyville repackaged coercion as servile sex (or wage labor), reproducing for the liberal economy the sexual economy of the slave plantation.”<sup>452</sup> This social reality was grasped and critiqued by Mamie Desdunes and other blues women whose bodies were the point of sale.

An intense police presence ensured that the investments of this neo-plantation were protected, a common consequence of gentrification.<sup>453</sup> As Danny Barker recounts, “there was a charge, that a person could be arrested for, called ‘D and S’ (dangerous and suspicious) whereby the police had the power to arrest anyone who could not walk to the phone booth to call his or her employer.” As one can imagine, those with informal or self-employment often had no such

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<sup>450</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Jazz History Remix: Black Women from ‘Enter’ to ‘Center,’” in *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation*, ed. Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 330.

<sup>451</sup> Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 229..

<sup>452</sup> Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 149.

<sup>453</sup> For an analysis of present-day dispossession and policing, see Margaret M Ramírez, “City as Borderland: Gentrification and the Policing of Black and Latinx Geographies in Oakland,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 147–66.

recourse. “Most arrests were Negroes who frequented barrooms and gambling joints during working hours.”<sup>454</sup> Barker also recalled that “It was the custom of the police to whip, kick and brutalize the young pimps when they were arrested and locked up for vagrancy, loitering and having no visible means of support.”<sup>455</sup> Such determinations would have been race and class based, since wealthy white proprietors such as Tom Anderson did not go to jail for their involvement in legally sanctioned sex work. These forces of white supremacy were omnipresent. Jelly Roll Morton remembered that “Police were always in sight, never less than two together.”<sup>456</sup> Police brutality was a major concern for Black residents and Black musicians in New Orleans. Bassist Pops Foster recalls that “[w]hen I’d go to work I’d be careful to stay on the side of the street where I knew the cops...in those days if you were drunk out on the streets the cops would put you in jail until you sobered up.”<sup>457</sup> Public drunkenness, needless to say, was not considered a crime when its practitioners were wealthy white tourists from New York or Europe.

Both male and female musicians drew attention to this racialized disciplinary regime. Jazz historian Donald Marquis has shown through his checking the New Orleans Police Department’s arrest records that the lyrics heard on Jelly Roll Morton’s recording of “Buddy Bolden’s Blues” references the actual arrest of a friend of Buddy Bolden’s, Frankie Dusen, in 1904 for “loitering.” Marquis also confirms that others in Bolden’s circle were arrested for petty offenses, such as Cornelius Tillman, who was arrested for being drunk in Lincoln Park in 1904, and Henry Zeno (who, at one time, was Alice Zeno’s husband), a dockworker and cotton teamster who was arrested

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<sup>454</sup> Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 5-6.

<sup>455</sup> Danny Barker, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Continuum, 1998), 61.

<sup>456</sup> Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>457</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard*, ed. Tom Stoddard and Ross Russell (Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 40.

for “failure to straddle the car tracks” with his wagon. Such alleged crimes reeked of racial profiling, and Bolden made it a point to narrate this in his work.<sup>458</sup> These tensions led to a boiling point, and Black Union Army veteran Robert Charles led a one-man insurrection against the police in 1900, killing four officers and triggering days of antiblack mob violence. Several musicians were ensnared in this pogrom. The Robert Charles ballad, which commemorated the Black revolutionary, was resonant in popular musical circles during Mamie Desdunes’s career.<sup>459</sup> The incredible police presence in Storyville spoke to a regime of capital and tourism which worked overtime to ensure that Black entertainers, sex workers, and would-be activists were kept in line.

As many historians of resistance and Black social movements have noted, a strong police state does not indicate the absence of resistance, but rather should be understood as a symptom of fragile or nonexistent ruling-class hegemony.<sup>460</sup> Black women, in particular, resisted the new alliance of capital and disciplinary power, the core of a new generation of outspoken Black leaders who challenged southern-style apartheid and the linked power of planters and capitalists. Women-led strikes and a culture of militancy were felt all across the South, from the Atlanta washerwomen’s strike of 1881,<sup>461</sup> to New Orleans women forcibly destroying the cart and mule getups of strike-breaking scab longshoremen in 1907.<sup>462</sup> During the 1907 strike, wives and mothers of strikers furnished food supplies to their families through any means necessary. “Many of them [Black wives of dockworkers] worked in white men’s kitchens, and supplies they carried home at

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<sup>458</sup> Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 110.

<sup>459</sup> K. Stephen Prince, “Remembering Robert Charles: Violence and Memory in Jim Crow New Orleans,” *Journal of Southern History* 83, no. 2 (2017): 297–328.

<sup>460</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 76.

<sup>461</sup> Jones, *Labor of Love*, 105; Daniel M Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 57–70.

<sup>462</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Rosenberg cites the Allen T. Woods, *Woods Directory: A Classified Colored Business, Professional and Trade Directory* (New Orleans: Allen T. Woods, 1912).

night under their aprons contributed greatly toward holding out,” remembered the German immigrant labor organizer Oscar Armiger.<sup>463</sup>

In Storyville, sex strikes were a remote possibility, so Black women expressed defiance in other ways, most frequently by causing public disturbances, antagonizing police, and stealing from their white upper-class clientele. One African American woman named Adeline Smith, who worked as a prostitute, was arrested on January 1, 1908, for disturbing the peace, using obscene language, resisting arrest, and publicly reviling police. Queen Venerable, a 28 year-old Black woman who worked as a prostitute at Lulu White’s Mahogany Hall, was arrested the next day for fighting with a white salesman.<sup>464</sup> This outlash at the representatives of white discipline and commercial power is consistent with what Robin D. G. Kelley calls attention to the “daily, unorganized, evasive, seemingly spontaneous actions [which] form an important yet neglected part of African-American political history.” As Kelley notes, it is only when we explore these “daily conflicts and the social and cultural spaces where ordinary people felt free to articulate their opposition,” he argues, that we will be able to “rewrite the political history of the Jim Crow South” to highlight not only Black victimization but also agency.<sup>465</sup> It suggests that sex workers were not afraid to challenge the forces of capital and patriarchal racism which structured daily life.

Theft was also a common practice amongst sex workers. In April later that year, Alabama businessman Newton C. Woods stopped in New Orleans on the way to Texas and went to a

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<sup>463</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005).

<sup>464</sup> Arrest Books, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. In the 1920s Queenie Venerable was arrested for operating her own disorderly house. Docket Books, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. Venerable was one of Lulu White's "boarders" in the 1910 census. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Schedule 1 —Population, Enumeration District 58, page 6. Quoted in Emily Epstein Landau, “‘Spectacular Wickedness’: New Orleans, Prostitution, and the Politics of Sex, 1897–1917” (Ph.D., New Haven, Yale University, 2005).

<sup>465</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 76.

Storyville brothel. After some sexual intercourse and a few hours sleep, he walked back to the train station only to find his wallet had been stolen.<sup>466</sup> Such activity seems to have been organized. Among Danny Barker's "different kind of joints," he lists one as a "Clip joint," where, "while one jives you, another creeps or crawls in and rifles your pockets."<sup>467</sup> Clipping was not only synchronized, with a division of labor, but also class-conscious in its targets, and did not target other entertainment or sex workers. As pianist Clarence Williams remembered, "there was never a holdup or robbery that I could remember. You could drink and never be afraid that anybody'd taken your money."<sup>468</sup> These thefts were not reported between the Black and Creole of Color working class musicians and sex workers in the district.

These scenes of decentralized rebellion were preceded and responded to with indiscriminate violence against these women. In one instance, the police poisoned the sex workers of Willie Piazza's brothel, causing hospitalization.<sup>469</sup> Police brutality of this sort should be read not as a sign of state hegemony, but rather of a contested battlefield. As Elizabeth Parish Smith notes, "the common women of the Crescent City became a cipher through which public order and political authority were contested...their behaviors exposed municipal leaders' limited ability to 'keep the peace'".<sup>470</sup>

On several occasions, this boiling temperature of discontent became organized into more legible forms of political activity. Sex workers and musicians gathered to protest police violence in a mass meeting in 1918. "The police in New Orleans were making it tough for the madames and

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<sup>466</sup> City v. Freddie Crockett, et al. (1908), Criminal District Court, Docket No. 18,051 [18,061], City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; see Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 291.

<sup>467</sup> Danny Barker in Hentoff and Shapiro, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 10.

<sup>468</sup> Clarence Williams in Hentoff and Shapiro, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 12-13.

<sup>469</sup> *New Orleans Item*, December 22 and 24, 1906, quoted in Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 281-82.

<sup>470</sup> Elizabeth Parish Smith, "Southern Sirens: Disorderly Women and the Fight for Public Order in Reconstruction-Era New Orleans" (PhD Dissertation, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2013), iii.

their girls to make a dollar (that is, a peaceful one),” explains Danny Barker. “So they spread the news and called a meeting of all the big shots in the District, the pimps, madames, whores, gamblers, hustlers, bartenders and all the owners of joints.” Barker omits in this litany the ever-important class of musicians, who also attended. Held at Peter Lala’s, “the District’s number one cabaret,” on a Sunday evening, the event included speeches and performances by Joe Oliver’s band. Danny Barker’s memory remembers that the organizers of this event strategically used specific songs and styles produced by Joe Oliver to arouse the sentiments of their audience:

[Madame] Ready Money told Joe Oliver to play the blues real sad, which he did. Then, when the crowd returned to their seats, she had the drummer Ratty Jean Vigne, roll his snares and she pleaded sadly with tears in her big blue eyes for attention. You could hear a pin drop as she informed the gathering of the many humiliating abuses she had constantly received from the brutal police of New Orleans which they all knew so well. She then told them of her plan to organize them. She proposed that each person present come up to the table where she stood, sign their name and pledge twenty dollars as an active member, which most of them did. She had Joe Oliver play the spiritual Down by the Riverside so the crowd could march up to her and rally to the cause...She blew kisses to the crowd and yelled, "We'll show them goddamned police!" Everybody screamed, yelled and clapped their hands and they balled till the next morning to the music of Joe Oliver.<sup>471</sup>

Much like “Mamie’s Blues,” Oliver’s contribution simultaneously aestheticized a profound pain and celebrated a liberated future. The coordination between Oliver and Madame Ready Money is presented by Barker as a piece of theater, suggesting more than a passing familiarity among sex workers with blues and jazz songs, sounds, and their emotional impacts. This event was so successful that the following week, another iteration was put together, this time under the

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<sup>471</sup> Barker, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*, 67-68.

helm of a highly organized formation that was structured as a benevolent society. An advertisement saved by Barker reveals its level of detail.<sup>472</sup>

“Black Sis” is the organization’s president; “Rotten Rosie,” its Vice President; and “Lily the Crip,” a “delegate.” These sex workers (“sporting girls”) with leadership positions in this organization. In their very presence on this pamphlet, they announce their intentions as political subjects and resist intimidation and stigmatization. They demand recognition as workers, women, and human beings. These events reveal not only self-organization but a politicized self-conception amongst sex workers and musicians. Joe Oliver’s presence at both of these events is significant because it suggests that musicians worked alongside sex workers in ways that were not merely exploitative or ancillary. This was the environment that “Mamie’s Blues” contributed to and was shaped by. Just as Desdunes evinced a concern for the unnamed women shuttled away to Beaumont, Texas, to work far from home in conditions they could not control, so too did the “Helping Hand Benevolent Association” and its Vice President, “Rotten Rosie” express a commitment to furnish “aid and protection” for the “sick, needy, helpless, persecuted, disabled, aged and persecutes sporting girls and Madames,” who could be “confined” to hospitals as well as penitentiaries. The focus on disability and the implicit critique of hospitals and mental institutions (where Buddy Bolden was then languishing<sup>473</sup>) as sites of disciplinary power anticipates Foucault. These activists’ language also is a “pre-echo” of 21<sup>st</sup> century movements that fight for the rights of sex workers and people with disabilities. For instance, the Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía (Association for Human Rights in Andalusia) wrote, “We firmly believe that it is not prostitution per se that is truly unacceptable, but rather the injustices to which sex workers are

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<sup>472</sup> Barker, *Last Days of Storyville*, 68.

<sup>473</sup> Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005); Danny Barker, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Continuum, 1998).

subjected because they cannot count on legislation or the justice system to effectively protect them against abuse from clients, pimps, members of organized crime gangs, and the security forces of the state itself. This is a reality for all sex workers.”<sup>474</sup>

The Helping Hand Benevolent Aid and Protective Association was thus quite a visionary formation, created within one of the most violent, repressive spaces in the United States. These dissident utterances were part of a “common sense” among sex workers, and this is why the critiques we hear in early blues are so important: they were uttered by a politicized, self-conscious subject within an extremely organized capitalist sexual economy. Political activists such as “President” Black Sis were, in a way, lifting the veil that enabled commercialized interracialized sex to play such an important ideological function in the New South, centering their working conditions and their abuse by law enforcement.

A final incident of revolt revolves around a curious and complicated fact for New Orleans’s Jim Crow government: namely, Storyville had developed a culture of working-class fraternization across racial caste. “Many of the clubs operated as ‘black and tans’—some run by African Americans—where integrated audiences were tolerated by law enforcement and many whites eagerly consumed black culture,” notes the Historic New Orleans Collection. “These establishments served as the unofficial hangouts for prostitutes and pimps.”<sup>475</sup> This is quite a sanitized reading of white consumption of Black sexual bodies, but it is true that the music had an appeal to white consumers unto itself. White children, for instance, came to hear the newest

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<sup>474</sup> Estefanía Ación González, “Ethnography and Human Rights: The Experience of APDHA with Nigerian Sex Workers in Andalusia,” in *Citizenship, Migrant Activism and the Politics of Movement*, ed. Peter Nyers and Kim Rygiel (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 95.

<sup>475</sup> “The Club Scene,” The Historic New Orleans Collection, accessed August 19, 2020, <https://www.hnoc.org/virtual/storyville/club-scene>.

developments of Black music.<sup>476</sup> Eventually, church groups and a white “citizen’s committee” began protesting Black musical gatherings in organized campaigns in sync with a “muckraking” press. The target was often the perceived sexuality of the music.<sup>477</sup> A ban on white and Blacks drinking together was codified in 1908 with the passage of the Gay-Shattuck Law. This regulation was violated constantly, as documented by the numerous citations for this crime.<sup>478</sup>

Sex across the color line, while the principal commodity of the district, also threatened white supremacy in complex ways. Creole of Color and mixed-race brothel owners, including Lulu White and Willie Piazza, presented a problem for New Orleans’s political-economic elite. The ideological work performed in these state-sponsored acts was a double-edged sword for white elites, especially for the so-called “progressive” reformers who sought to end, in Porsha Dossie’s words, “two centuries of tolerance for sex across the color line [which] was an institution in New Orleans and [which] created a buffer against Jim Crow for the time being.”<sup>479</sup> All of this added up to one thing, according to Alicia Long: “Storyville had become notorious,” not because of prostitution per se, but “largely because of its well-known toleration of interracial intimacy and socializing.”<sup>480</sup>

Storyville’s prized commodity, interracial sex, did not lead to an antiracist vision amongst the partakers of flesh; to the contrary, several scholars have theorized it was a continuous with the planter prerogative of raping their human “property,” a symbolic way of creating white working-

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<sup>476</sup> Edmund Souchon, “King Oliver: A Very Personal Memoir,” *Jazz Review* 3, no. 4 (May 1960): 6–11.

<sup>477</sup> *New Orleans Item*, November 23, 1902; see also Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 230-31.

<sup>478</sup> Act No. 176, House Bill No. 307, Substitute House Bill No. 95, by Mr. Shattuck. For violations, see Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 230-45.

<sup>479</sup> Porsha Dossie, “Animal-Lik Animal-Like and Depraved: Racist Stereotypes, Commercial Sex, and Black Women’s Identity in New Orleans, 1825-1917” (Master’s Thesis, Orlando, FL., University of Central Florida, 2014),

<sup>480</sup> Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 274.

class unity in a period of intense anti-monopoly populism.<sup>481</sup> Nonetheless, it did complicate the efforts to segregate activities. Storyville's residents and workers fought to keep their places of employment and residence desegregated. Philip Werlien, president of the city's Progressive Union, had a long stated intention to remove the "negroes" from Storyville, but it was not until 1917, when Commissioner of Public Safety Harold Newman attempted to create separate white and Black vice districts did a new era commence and the next stage of the Jim Crow offensive reach Basin street. The creation of Storyville itself had roots in a social vision of hygiene, organization, and racial hierarchy in which progressives trafficked and which was framed as part of the "modernization" of New Orleans. This was a nationwide phenomenon that linked racial deviance and puritanical sexual mores, rooted in social Darwinian pseudo-science that dovetailed with the United States' imperial adventures in the Philippines, East Asia, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. For instance, according to historian Mary Ryan, "in San Francisco immigrants from Asia and prostitutes were singled out as the kinds of people whose place in the city demanded spatial confinement." When the city's board of health took steps, in 1873, "to contain venereal disease and prostitution" it "attempted the first instance of de jure segregation" in Chinatown. "The politics of Chinatown linked race, gender, and spatial segregation in ominous ways that were not unique to San Francisco."<sup>482</sup> In New Orleans, the creation of Storyville was timed to perfection to align with segregationist political strategies. "It is no coincidence that this vice district was created the year after the Supreme Court's final decision in the *Plessy* case," explains Alicia Long: "[the]

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<sup>481</sup> Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2013), 201-209; Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*.

<sup>482</sup> Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 220.

conceptual sexualization of African Americans provided much of the rationale for segregating blacks from whites in nearly every facet of life in the South.”<sup>483</sup>

The integrated nature of Storyville’s social life violated of the spirit and letter of Jim Crow, and motivated Louisiana’s legislature to pass Ordinance 4118 in 1917, which racially segregated Storyville. The New Orleans press celebrated.<sup>484</sup> Over the next several weeks, Alicia Long tells us, “policemen hauled dozens of dark- and light-skinned women of color into recorder’s court in an attempt to force them to move immediately into the district limits above Canal.”<sup>485</sup>

The Creole of Color brothel owner, Willie Piazza, took the city to court, challenging the constitutionality of this measure. *City of New Orleans v. Willie Piazza* was another case where a Creole of Color refused to move in the face of a racist law. She organized over two dozen women Black and Creole of Color women, and one man, to file in court. Her lawyer, Nathan H. Feitel, argued that “the discrimination in this case... is not due to any act or vice, but solely to defendant’s color—the color constituting the misdemeanor under this ordinance.” Like Daniel Desdunes and the *Comité des Citoyens*, Willie Piazza and her colleagues challenged the implications of “separate but equal” and the meaning of the equal rights provisions of the Constitution that the *Comité des Citoyens* had initiated.<sup>486</sup> She won her case, the only legal victory against segregation between

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<sup>483</sup> Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 103, 201.

<sup>484</sup> “[T]he negro inmates of the district were ordered to move into that part of the district originally set aside by the Story law as the place for their habitat,” while white prostitutes were permitted to stay below Canal Street. *Times-Picayune*, Jan. 24, 1917.

<sup>485</sup> Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 311.

<sup>486</sup> In addition to White and Piazza, other women of color who filed suit against the city in response to Ordinance 4118 C.C.S. include Goldie Stevens, Celeste Reed, Elizabeth Anderson, Carrie Gross, Jane Churchill, Mattie Mosely, Evelyn Marlen, Hattie Bob, Josephine Evans, Sarah Porter, Myrtle Tobias, Sarah Smith, Mary McDonald, Bertha Willard, Ella Williams, Augusta Grandpre, Agnes Morris, Louisa Lee, Patsy Lee, Juanita Mandez, Jennie Brown, Acey Langs, Mattie Frisbane, Lottie Stanton, and Josephine Evans. A man of color identified only as A. Churchill also filed suit, as did two white property owners, Gertrude Hammel, and Louis Quillon. Details of their cases can be found in the indices and records of New Orleans Civil District Court, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, and is discussed in Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 253, n 53.

Daniel Desdunes's and the midcentury Civil Rights movement, strengthening the equal rights provisions in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendment and "delay[ing] the passage of ordinances that required residential segregation based on race in New Orleans for many years."<sup>487</sup> Piazza's struggle against a re-segregated Storyville suggests that women and sex workers were aware that capital and the state were working in racial and gendered registers, and resisted further segmentation with a social mobilization that likely ensnared the whole district.<sup>488</sup>

Musicians were shaped by these struggles; many, like Joe Oliver, participated and supported these acts of disobedience and rejected Storyville's attempt to produce docile Black bodies for white consumption and control. This tore at the very heart of the system's disciplinary logic, as scholars have argued that Storyville's significance lay in its ability to reproduce an antebellum plantation social hierarchy, so that "the ownership of other bodies persistently remained a way in which white identity was organized and recognized," especially through interracial sex.<sup>489</sup> While Mamie Desdunes had passed away by the time of this case, she had often

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<sup>487</sup> Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 318. Later this year, Storyville would be shut down by federal order, possibility a way to circumvent the stunning victory that took the city's elite off guard. Despite their milestone victory, in Storyville have not been connected to the tradition of antiracist civil disobedience. "While all historians of the South and many citizens of the region recognize the importance of the decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case," notes Long, "the connections between that case and Piazza's have not been recognized." The obvious reason this story elides comment from scholars of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century civil rights movement is because of the complex ethical, legal, and even emotional questions that are called into being by considering the multiple dimensions of sex work in turn of the century New Orleans. Entangled in these as well as, idea about respectability, especially "as they applied to African American and mixed-race women." Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 318, 275. Later this year, Storyville would be shut down by federal order, circumventing the stunning victory that took the city's elite off guard.

<sup>488</sup> For a discussion of racial capitalism, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Paul Gilroy has a useful discussion, building off of Stuart Hall, of gender as a modality of race. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 85.

<sup>489</sup> As Adams notes, "The sexual and domestic dynamics rooted in the plantation as a model of power remained critical as a point of reference, even in the city" writes Adams, and the anxieties of both business and government leaders as well as contemporary commentators "reference the double-edged pleasures associated with owning human property, as they illustrate the nuances of white uneasiness." Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 35, 25. See also Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013).

played at Piazza's and Lulu White's brothels. She was part of a generation that politicized the erotic and the continued a tradition of women's resistance. As I show in the following section, self-reclamation of desire and the body, even as it was a marketed commodity, helped create the common sense to revolt illustrated above. This embodied freedom was core to "Mamie's Blues."

### 3.3 Blues and the Material Truth: Sex as Contested Terrain in Storyville and Beyond

*Memphis Minnie's music is harder than the coins that roll across the counter. Does that mean she understands? Or is it just science that makes the guitar strings so hard and loud?*

- Langston Hughes<sup>490</sup>

Mamie Desdunes and the women workers of Storyville responded to this dystopian playground through a new expressive culture called the blues. In this section, I argue that the social vision proposed by "Mamie's Blues" offered not only critique. As Farah Jasmine Griffin wrote about another important Black woman artist, the song "raise[s] a level of consciousness about the manner in which black women have come to know and feel about their bodies," thus "provid[ing] a path out of this prison."<sup>491</sup> Musicians were affected by the politicized consciousness of Black women who labored as Storyville's integrated cultural-sexual proletariat. While the dissection of representations of Blackness in these spaces has previously led to some fascinating studies,<sup>492</sup> I

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<sup>490</sup> Langston Hughes, "HERE TO YONDER: Music at Year's End," *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 1943, 14.

<sup>491</sup> Farah Jasmine Griffin, "Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women's Bodies, the Erotic and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery," *Callaloo* 19, no. 2 (1996): 534.

<sup>492</sup> Pieces that foreground the construction of Blackness, whiteness, and the politics of historical memory in New Orleans's sexual economies include Monique Guillory, "Under One Roof: The Sins and Sanctity of New Orleans Quadroon Balls," in *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffery A. Tucker (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 67–92; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*; Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill: The

step away from the realm of the white social imaginary (“the cultural elements from which we construct our understanding of the social world”<sup>493</sup>), and center how sex workers and musicians of color understood *themselves* and the values they carved out.

The Joe Oliver and Willie Piazza incidents serve as windows into the nature of the ideological and political battles that roiled New Orleans’s sex industry and its workers’ relationships with the state, police forces, and white civil society during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They certainly illuminate the issues and the players in the contest over spaces, dignity, and self-determination. But they do more. These stunning moments of rebellion underline a culture of disobedience and solidarity amongst the Black and Creole of Color working people of the district. This is not a narrative employed when jazz historians approach Storyville, but the archival evidence listed above certainly supports this reading, which I feel is both more interesting and more accurate than painting these spaces as dens of unproblematized Dionysian revelry. In this section, I argue that musicians within this group develop a shared identity as a class. In using this term, I am animated not only by their relationship to production but also Joan Scott’s definition: “Class and class consciousness are the same thing—they are political articulations that provide an analysis of, a coherent pattern to impose upon, the events and activities of daily life.”<sup>494</sup> Several commentators have argued that the blues helped shaped an African American working class identity and project and shape collective analysis. Daphne Duval Harrison locates blues women as “pivotal figures in the assertion of black women’s ideas and ideals from the standpoint of the working class and the poor,” as one of a group of “spokespersons and interpreters of the dreams,

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University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

<sup>493</sup> Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>494</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 56.

harsh realities, and tragicomedies of the black experience in the first three decades of this century.”<sup>495</sup> I locate Storyville’s women blues pioneers within this tradition by foregrounding “Mamie’s Blues.” Written between 1895-1900, it predates Harrison’s standard periodization, and its wide circulation suggests it had an outsized impact in building this coalitional politics. In this section, I hope to trace the meanings of “Mamie’s Blues” relative to the belief systems and concerns of musicians and how they related these within Storyville’s sexual economy.

Storyville was contested terrain, and Black women and men attempted to shape the terms and conditions of employment. Blues was a song form that emanated both within and without the working-class of a sex tourism economy, and from its inception it had a highly gendered slant. Jazz historian Lara Pelligrinelli has pointed to Jelly Roll Morton’s recollection that “chippies” or prostitutes, stood outside cribs and brothels, “singing the blues” to suggest that the blues emerged as a women’s vocal tradition, specifically among those directly involved in the sex industry. Pianist Manuel Manetta similarly claimed that it was “Women who sang mostly blues,” and this included “Mary Thacker, Alma Hughes and Ann Cook.”<sup>496</sup>

Ann Cook (c.1888-1962) was an African American blues singer who was born in Fazenville Road in St. Bernard Parish. She was part of Louisiana’s “internal” great migration discussed earlier.<sup>497</sup> At same point in her late teenage years, like Mamie Desdunes, she began regularly performing in Storyville, and eventually became a regular singer at Willie Piazza’s

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<sup>495</sup> Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 10.

<sup>496</sup> Lara Pelligrinelli, “Separated at ‘Birth’: Singing and the History of Jazz,” in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, ed. Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 31–47; Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27.

<sup>497</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen” (New Orleans: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 2004), 217.

bordello, which was likely one of the highest paying gigs in the District.<sup>498</sup> It is unclear if she both performed and worked as a prostitute; as Willie James noted, Ann Cook worked as a “hustler in the District,”<sup>499</sup> and it has been noted some of Piazza’s employees “were also skilled as professional musicians and songwriters.”<sup>500</sup> Sherrie Tucker relays Ann Cook’s possible meanings in Piazza’s brothel:

Piazza’s roster of entertainment had to span the gamut of white men’s racial stereotypes about refined and educated white womanhood and passionate and sexual black women. The stereotypes of sexual licentiousness that were associated with dark skinned women, and the cultural associations with barrelhouse blues singing as low class and bawdy, lead one to speculate that Piazza’s hiring of Ann Cook may have served to fulfill the more explicitly sexual end of the range of white men’s fantasies.<sup>501</sup>

Whatever fantasies she was serving up, Cook’s talent was undeniable. She emerged as New Orleans’s most in-demand woman blues artist. She was the only African American woman musician of New Orleans to record in the 1920s,<sup>502</sup> and her singing often “stopped the traffic on Rampart Street,” according to pianist Rosalind Johnson.<sup>503</sup> Cook points to the grey line between the district’s singers and sex workers, and the similarly liminal space between performing stereotypes of lascivious sexuality and undermining them.

In addition to Ann Cook, Manuel Manetta mentioned “Mary Jack the Bear” and “Mamie Desdume” [*sic*], specifically singling out the latter as “a madam [female pimp] who had a house

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<sup>498</sup> Mesha Maren-Hogan, “The Appalling Appeal of the Octoroon: The Shifting Status of Mixed Race Prostitutes in Early Twentieth Century New Orleans” (Senior Thesis, Asheville, University of North Carolina, n.d.), 17-18.

<sup>499</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 7, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>500</sup> Blue Book, THNOC acc. no. 19.3; Mesha Maren-Hogan, “The Appalling Appeal of the Octoroon: The Shifting Status of Mixed Race Prostitutes in Early Twentieth Century New Orleans” (Senior Thesis, Asheville, University of North Carolina, n.d.), 18.

<sup>501</sup> Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen,” 216.

<sup>502</sup> Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, NJ: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 74.

<sup>503</sup> Rosalind Johnson, Oral History, February 23, 1970, hand-written notes by William Russell, p. 15. Williams Research Center; quoted in Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen,” 217.

on Villere Street.”<sup>504</sup> Manetta’s interview adds evidence to support the consideration that Mamie Desdunes was herself a participant in the oldest profession. Trumpet player Bunk Johnson also remembered Mamie as a madam.<sup>505</sup> Sex workers populated the class of blues women innovators, foregrounding the dual employment of Memphis Minnie and Bessie Smith, both of whom were not only legendary blues singers but also prostitutes.<sup>506</sup> These occupations were not ancillary to their artistic output. Their work engaged with the heart of the logic of the marketplace. This was a class of artistic innovators who held the contradictory and impossible condition of the “commodity who screams.”<sup>507</sup>

Mamie Desdunes’s only recorded composition—which was among the most diffused and earliest songs of this movement—necessitates a thorough analysis as to the ideologies, discourses, and philosophies of life that animated the artistic expressions and values of this group. As explained in this chapter’s introduction, the song had an enormous impact on the history of jazz. Willie Cornish suggested that it was a New Orleans standard during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>508</sup> In this section, I explore the contours of its resonance and trace why Desdunes’s critique of commercialized sex, and her embrace of a liberated sexuality, were so central for understanding Black woman’s identity during this period of enclosure and transformation.

The song’s first stanzas narrate poverty, patriarchy, sexuality, and liberation:

I stood on the corner, my feet was dripping wet  
I stood on the corner, my feet was dripping wet  
I asked every man I met

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<sup>504</sup> Lara Pelligrinelli, “Separated at ‘Birth’: Singing and the History of Jazz,” in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, ed. Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 31–47; Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27.

<sup>505</sup> Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 7.

<sup>506</sup> See, for instance, Paul Garon and Beth Garon, *Woman with Guitar: Memphis Minnie’s Blues* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2014).

<sup>507</sup> Moten, *In the Break*, 12.

<sup>508</sup> Frederic Ramsey Papers, MSS 559, Box 16C, Historic New Orleans Collection. Quoted in Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27

Can't give me a dollar, give me a lousy dime  
Can't give me a dollar, give me a lousy dime  
Just to feed that hungry man of mine

I got a husband and I got a kid man too  
I got a husband and I got a kid man too  
My husband can't do what my kid man can do

I like the way he cook my cabbage for me  
I like the way he cook my cabbage for me  
Look like he set my natural soul free

Several points stick out about these lyrics that locate it within what Angela Davis identifies as a “blues legacy, [a] black-working class legacy” of Black blues feminism.<sup>509</sup> Mamie Desdunes narrates what was a familiar scene, as Mary A. Deubler’s earlier story testified: an impoverished women seeking money, a poverty exacerbated by intersecting social forces. As I demonstrated in the above section, this was not an uncommon fate for rural to urban women. Black women were often primary breadwinners in households, and many were heads of household. In multiple censuses, Mamie Desdunes was herself registered as the head of her household, even when she was married.<sup>510</sup>

Desdunes’s independence was reflected in her lyrics: while her song’s protagonist entertained a formal marriage, she does not shy from sexual pleasure (“cooked my cabbage”) outside of the relationship; in fact, it is only with her “kid man” that she feels that her “natural soul” is set free. Mamie openly advocates for sex outside of marriage, a topic that also may have had a connection to her own life. In 1898, Mamie Desdunes moved in with warehouse worker George Duque, and they married in 1900. It seems they almost immediately broke up, because

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<sup>509</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 25.

<sup>510</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, “The Desdunes Family,” *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 25–45.

within a year, they were living separately, and Mamie was living alone in the same home, using her maiden name in the 1901 Soard's directory of New Orleans. By the end of her life, Mamie and George had apparently smoothed things over; the 1910 city directory showed George as a resident of the house and Mamie's death certificate reads "Mamie Dugue." While there is no evidence that Mamie or George's sexual activity was driving these break ups, it is clear that they did not share a traditional nuclear family or household. In fact, other illegitimate children of Rodolphe and Clementine Walker lived with Mamie at different times, including her younger sister Edna and her younger brothers John and Louis. Flexible ideas on marriage and extended family households reflected a different vision of community outside of the heteropatriarchal nuclear family, and Desdunes's lyrics emphasize openness to life's many opportunities for emotional and sexual connection.<sup>511</sup>

The dual emphasis on poverty and sexual liberation has a long history in blues lyric, what Richard Wright identified as the blues' "lusty, lyrical realism charged with taut sensibility."<sup>512</sup> Gender and power were frequent targets and contexts of blues criticism. Writing about the so-called "Classic Blues" period of the twenties and early thirties, Hazel Carby writes that women's blues "explicitly addresses the contradictions of feminism, sexuality, and power," creating a powerful discourse "that articulates a cultural and political struggle over sexual relations: a struggle that is directed against the objectification of female sexuality within a patriarchal order but which also tries to reclaim women's bodies as the sexual and sensuous subjects of women's

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<sup>511</sup> Bill Edwards, "Mary Celina Mamie Desdunes Dugue," RagPiano.com, 2016; Claire Snook, "Mamie Desdunes," November 4, 2018, <https://clairesnook.co.uk/2018/11/04/mamie-desdunes/>; <http://ragpiano.com/comps/desdunes.shtml>; Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, "The Desdunes Family," *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 25–45.

<sup>512</sup> Richard Wright, "Foreword," in *Blues Fell This Morning: The Meaning of the Blues*, by Paul Oliver (London: Jazz Book Club, 1963), ix.

song.”<sup>513</sup> Such sexual poetics can be heard in Bessie Smith’s (1926) “Young Woman’s Blues” (“I ain’t gonna marry, ain’t gonna settle down / I’m gonna drink good moonshine and run these browns down,”) Ida Cox’s (1939) “One Hour Mama,” (“I may want love for one hour, then decide to make it two. / Takes an hour ’fore I get started, maybe three before I’m through,”) and Ethel Water’s (1925) “No Man’s Mamma Now.” (“I’m a girl who is on a matrimonial strike; Which means, I’m no man’s mamma now.”) Each of these songs openly discusses sexuality within patriarchal power structures; they also postdate “Mamie’s Blues” by nearly three decades.<sup>514</sup>

Returning to Mamie’s Blues, a second stanza shifts the emphasis of this song entirely, relocating sexuality from the domestic sphere and women’s pleasure and instead highlighting the violent and unequal power relations that undergirded the Gulf Coast’s sexual economy. In this alternate stanza, which may have been sung interchangeably with the original, Desdunes narrates the disappearance of a loved one through a sex trafficking network that linked New Orleans to the Texas gulf region, with the refrain “Number 219 took my baby away,” referring to a train that connected New Orleans with Texas oil boom towns such as Beaumont and Gladys City.<sup>515</sup> Charles Edward Smith recalled Morton explaining that the 2:19 was the train that “took the gals out on the T&P [Texas and Pacific railroad] to the sporting houses on the Texas side of the circuit... [and] the 217 on the S.P. [Southern Pacific] through San Antonio and Houston brought them back to New Orleans.”<sup>516</sup> The full alternate lyrics are as follows:

Number 219 took my babe away.

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<sup>513</sup> Hazel Carby, “It Jus Be’s Dat Way Sometime: The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues,” in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert O’Meally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 474.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 475-480.

<sup>515</sup> David C. Humphrey, “Prostitution,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jbp01>, accessed April 10, 2020.

<sup>516</sup> Quoted in Elijah Wald, “Mamie’s Blues (219 Blues),” *Old Friends: a Songbiography*, June 15, 2016, <https://www.elijahwald.com/songblog/mamies-blues/>, accessed July 23, 2020. Wald notes that another famous blues lyric mentions the 219, in “Trouble In Mind” (“Gonna lay my head on that lonesome railroad line/ Let the 219 ease my trouble in mind”), by Richard M. Jones, who was also from New Orleans.

Number 219 took my babe away.  
Number 217 gonna bring her back someday.

Standing on the corner, my feet are soakin' wet,  
Standing on the corner, my feet are soakin' wet,  
Askin' for help from everyone I've met.

If you can't give me a dollar, then give me a lousy dime.  
If you can't give me a dollar, then give me a lousy dime,  
It's gettin' mighty hard to feed that hungry babe of mine.<sup>517</sup>

With this foregrounding of the 2:19 train, the other stanzas completely change meaning. Poverty's locus is now in the unequal power relations within the prostitution industry and the economy at large. Not only does Desdunes connect feminized poverty to a repressive sexual economy, she lifts up the erased voices of vulnerable migrants. There is no historical record of trafficked migrant sex workers, destined for these boom towns, who called New Orleans home, but several scholars have studied these turn-of-the-century oil towns and the transient labor patterns of its sex-working class. As David Humphrey notes: "Although the managers of Texas brothels during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included a good many well-known madams...most prostitutes labored in relative obscurity...They were frequently on the go, prompted to move by the cyclical and seasonal fortunes of Texas towns and by recurrent surges of anti-vice activity."<sup>518</sup> These itinerant workers were especially vulnerable to exploitation, often with few social connections in the towns where they arrived. "Shrewd madams and prostitutes shared in some of the monetary treats, but not always; they were frequently victimized," notes Amy Balderach.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> From Jelly Roll Morton, "Mamie's Blues" (New York City, NY, 16. December 1939; General 4001-A)

<sup>518</sup> David C. Humphrey, "Prostitution," in *Handbook of Texas Online* (Texas State Historical Association, June 15, 2010), <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jbp01>, accessed July 23, 2020.

<sup>519</sup> Amy S. Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880–1920" (M.A. Thesis, Texas, Baylor University, 2005), 8.

“Mamie’s Blues” shines a light on all these social realities simultaneously. It both archives and aestheticizes these itinerant workers’ struggles. Desdunes foregrounds the social history of a class of invisible migrants whose pain lay at the intersection of commercialized sex, displacement, and modernity. These same forces animated the lifeways of those who made Storyville their new home. I suggest the pitched nature and extreme repression of political struggles in the sugar parishes—alluded to in the prior chapter and addressed in detail in Chapter 4—can help explain why a women’s blues vocal tradition emerge in New Orleans earlier than industrial centers in the North. Decades before the Great Migration populated urban centers such as Philadelphia, Chicago, and Harlem and inaugurated both official and unofficial registers of the “new negro,” New Orleans experienced what could be considered a first “great migration” whose primary vectors were not South to North but rural to urban.<sup>520</sup> The women of Storyville embodied this proletarianization in a sexual economy, and they were both the first audiences and the innovators of the music that became known as the blues. Desdunes developed a vernacular critique of capitalism and women’s captivity as it was emerging in its modern form.

“Mamie’s Blues” showcases the dark side of “progress,” and the use of the train is one metaphor that speaks to this objective. Many cities with a railway found that prostitution flourished in the years before World War I.<sup>521</sup> Trains and railroads are a long-standing signifier in blues songs. What was celebrated as industrial development by progressive reformers was experienced as a new entanglement of capital, enclosure, and economic displacement by others. Desdunes paints the 2:19 train in a negative light, as both symptom and cause of alienation, a comment on

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<sup>520</sup> Hahn develops this language in Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>521</sup> Codee Scott, “A Woman’s Place Is at Work: The Rise of Women’s Paid Labor in Five Texas Cities, 1900-1940” (M.A. Thesis, United States -- Texas, University of North Texas, 2017), 20.

modernity, capitalism, and violence against women.<sup>522</sup> She certainly pauses the claim made by McPherson that African Americans found in the railroad a “meaningful symbol offering economic progress and the possibility of aesthetic expression.”<sup>523</sup> Aesthetic expression, yes, but the progress that Desdunes bears witness to is not one of social or geographic mobility but rather the evolution of the plantation’s hold over the Black body. Desdunes’s spotlighting of these truly subalternized workers speaks to a genre of “decolonial poetics produced by diasporic communities,” a poetics which, in the words of Katherine McKittrick, “depict city death not as a biological end and biological fact but as a pathway to honoring human life.”<sup>524</sup> Her narration of dispossession and its emotional costs denormalizes “the fungibility of the captive body.”<sup>525</sup> She says: “enough.”

“Mamie’s Blues” thus had a dual imperative: reclaim sexuality from plantation relations while simultaneously documenting and theorizing the political meanings of Black woman’s sexual conscription. This is broadly in tune with the observations put forward by scholars of Black women’s history, who have suggested that the erotic and sexuality were markers of post-emancipation cultural transformation. Angela Davis, noting that freedpeople’s economic standing did not improve dramatically in the transition from slavery to freedom, argues that one’s choice of sexual partner was one of the few domains where Black communities exercised a degree of autonomy. “Sexuality thus was one of the most tangible domains in which emancipation was acted upon and through which its meanings were expressed,” she writes, constituting “an important

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<sup>522</sup> Carby observes the antimodernist meanings of trains in women’s blues singing in “It Jus Be’s Dat Way Sometime: The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues,” 476.

<sup>523</sup> McPherson, in Houston A. Baker Jr, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>524</sup> Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures,” *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (December 21, 2013): 14.

<sup>525</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23.

divide” between slavery and emancipation.<sup>526</sup> Saidiya Hartman wrote of Black Philadelphia during the great migration that “an everyday act of fucking” should be thought of as “a quasi-event,” that is, “part of a larger ensemble of intimate acts that were transforming social life and inaugurating the modern, which was characterized by the entrenchment and transformation of racism, emergent forms of dispossession, and the design of new enclosures, and by a fierce and expanded sense of what might be possible.” In this respect, “Girls on the cusp of womanhood” were a kind of vanguard for a new movement, “the center of this revolution in a minor key.”<sup>527</sup>

Other scholars of Black women’s history have given pause to any equation of sexuality and autonomy that does not acknowledge complicating variables. The legacy of slave breeding and the brutal intersection of the uncontested planter prerogative, forced reproduction and sexual violation, informs such reservations with redemption through the erotic. Farah Jasmine Griffin captures this tension:

The erotic is an important but problematic site of reclamation for black women...the burden of a historical legacy that deems black women "over-sexed" makes the reclamation of the erotic black female body difficult. Unless the way that body is constructed in history and the continued pain of that construction are confronted, analyzed and challenged, it is almost impossible to construct an alternative that seeks to claim the erotic and its potential for resistance.<sup>528</sup>

“Mamie’s Blues” performs the nuances that Griffin calls for. By foregrounding the body in pain as well as the body in pleasure, Desdunes insinuates the social and historical foundation of Black desire as well as Black suffering. She was at the forefront of a “revolution in a minor key”

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<sup>526</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 23-24.

<sup>527</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 117-18.

<sup>528</sup> Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women’s Bodies, the Erotic and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery,” *Callaloo* 19, no. 2 (1996): 526.

within Storyville, America's winter tourist capital and where interracial sex was an exquisite commodity. The embrace of her song by Jelly Roll Morton, Bunk Johnson, and countless others suggest that this social articulation was widely disseminated. As Clyde Woods has argued about "the blues epistemology," Desdunes contributes to a process by which "the African American working class has daily constructed their vision of a non-oppressive society," creating "an intellectual and social space in which they could discuss, plan, and organize this new world. The blues are the cries of a new society being born."<sup>529</sup> But for the blues epistemology advanced by Mamie Desdunes, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and others, this new world needed also to address violence against the Black body and create space for female fulfillment. As Michelle Russell notes, blues women were "the expression of a particular social process by which poor Black women have commented on all the major theoretical, practical, and political questions facing us and have created a mass audience who listens to what we say, in that form."<sup>530</sup> Mamie Desdunes's work portends to the power of women's radical cultural tradition to sustain a Black counterpublic sphere in the midst of highly regimented capitalist sexual economy. This counterpublic honors and acknowledges Black women's pain as the basis for building an intersectional, interethnic movement for social justice and counter-plantation values. Perhaps what demonstrates this most powerfully is the observation that Mamie Desdunes was but one of several Storyville musicians grappling with this complex confrontation between history and desire. In the following section, I explore how both female and male musicians responded more broadly to the social reality of

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<sup>529</sup> Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998), 39.

<sup>530</sup> Michelle Russell, "Slave Codes and Liner Notes," in *But Some of Us Are Brave*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1982), 130.

Storyville and the overlapping social worlds and working conditions of entertainment and sex workers.

### 3.4 A Class in Itself”: The Pre-Political do Political Economy, or, Musicians as Workers

*Money...transforms fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, master into servant, idiocy into intelligence, and intelligence into idiocy...[it] serves to exchange every quality for every other, even contradictory, quality and object: it is the fraternisation of impossibilities. It makes contradictions embrace.*

- Karl Marx<sup>531</sup>

*Si travy te bon bagay, moun rich la pran l lontan.  
[If work were a good thing, the rich would have grabbed it long ago.]*

- Haitian Proverb<sup>532</sup>

Mamie Desdunes succumbed to tuberculosis in her early thirties, and most of our accounts of her musical legacy comes from her prodigal student, Jelly Roll Morton. He remembered her composition as being “among the first blues that I’ve ever heard,” and he marveled that it “happened to be a woman...she really could play this number.”<sup>533</sup> In the introduction of one of his recorded performances, Morton explains that it “the first blues I no doubt heard in my life. Mamie Desdunes, this is her favorite blues. She hardly could play anything else more, but she really could

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<sup>531</sup> Karl Marx, “The Power of Money,” in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2007).

<sup>532</sup> Charles Arthur and Michael Dash, eds., “Proverbial Wisdom,” in *Libète: A Haiti Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), 287–88.

<sup>533</sup> These quotes are taken from Jelly Roll Morton letter to Roy Carew, December 18, 1939, reproduced in William Russell, “*Oh, Mister Jelly*”: *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Copenhagen: JazzMedia ApS, 1999), 223; and Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 21. See also Dan Vernhettes and Peter Hanley, “The Desdunes Family,” *The Jazz Archivist* XXVII (2014): 39.

play this number.”<sup>534</sup> *Down Beat* wrote that “Mamie Desdume (Desdunes), a blues singer, was Morton’s first inspiration, and after hearing her perform, he began studying the blues intently.”<sup>535</sup> This is probably true. Morton was eleven years old at the time, and Mamie may have been the first Creole of Color musician the young pianist met who identified deeply with this emerging African American rural-to-urban style.

Jelly Roll Morton, while a teenager working as a roustabout on the docks, went to extreme lengths to study with her. He changed professions: “Of course, to get in on it, to try to learn it, I made myself the...the can rusher,” a person responsible for bringing heavy barrels of beer from breweries to the brothels where pianists like Mamie Desdunes played.<sup>536</sup> The thought of a young Morton, age eleven, carrying heavy barrels of beer to the most upscale brothels in the United States through a highly policed red light district would be almost comical if it did not also reveal the twisted deprivation in which Black artistry was forced to toil. Apparently, Morton was not the only prospective student who opted for the can-rushing route to gain proximity to Desdunes. The African American trumpet player Bunk Johnson, who became associated with the New Orleans revival in the 1950s, also recalled playing and studying with Mamie Desdunes. Johnson told Alan Lomax in a recorded interview in March 1949, that he “knew Mamie Desdoumes [Lomax’s spelling] real well. Played many a concert with her singing those same blues. She was pretty good looking – quite fair and with a nice head of hair. She was a hustling woman. A blues-singing poor girl. Used to play pretty passable piano around them dance halls on Perdido Street.”<sup>537</sup> Jazz historian Peter Hanley, based on census data, has suggested that Bunk Johnson and Mamie

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<sup>534</sup> Jelly Roll Morton, *Mamie’s Blues*, J.S. 695 (New York: Commodore Records, 1938).

<sup>535</sup> “Immortals of Jazz,” *Down Beat*, Monday, 15th April 1940, Vol. 7, No. 8, page 10.

<sup>536</sup> Jelly Roll Morton, *Mamie’s Blues*, J.S. 695 (New York: Commodore Records, 1938).

<sup>537</sup> Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950).

Desdunes were next-door neighbors, and that “There seems little doubt that Bunk and Jelly Roll knew each other well in their early youth and probably competed with each other for the job of Mamie Desdunes’ ‘can rusher.’”<sup>538</sup> Morton and Johnson maintained a friendship throughout their lives, and they both claimed to have “invented” jazz. Perhaps their early training with Mamie Desdunes gave them the confidence to make such an assertion. For all of Morton’s eagerness to lay claim to creating a variety of widely shared songs and conventions, he is extremely deliberate in crediting Mamie Desdunes for “Mamie’s Blues” on every possible occasion. As he explained in a letter to his label representative, “Mamie Desdume [*sic*] wrote Mamie’s Blues in the late 90s. I don’t like to take credit for something that don’t belong to me. I guess she’s dead by now, and there would probably be no royalty to pay, but she did write it.”<sup>539</sup>

Why did this song have such an outsized impact on Morton, Johnson, and countless others? How did it express and contribute to the quotidian resistance of Storyville’s sex workers? These musicians in general channeled the life experiences and sonic vocabularies of what Marcus Rediker calls the “motley crew.”<sup>540</sup> Indeed, Joe Oliver’s performance for the Helping Hand Protective Aid and Benevolent Association is one powerful performance of a class identity in which musicians identified sex workers’ plight as their own. “King” Joe Oliver borrowed from the songs of railroad and dockworkers, who frequented the lower-class brothels. Longshoremen in particular attended and organized the dances held at the Black Longshoremen’s Union at Longshoreman Hall (the subject of Chapter 6), which frequently employed the city’s most popular

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<sup>538</sup> Peter Hanley, “Bunk Johnson,” *Doctor Jazz*, 2002, <http://www.doctorjazz.co.uk/portnewor.html>, accessed July 23, 2020.

<sup>539</sup> Jelly Roll Morton letter to Roy Carew, December 18, 1939, reproduced in William Russell, “*Oh, Mister Jelly*”: *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* (Copenhagen: JazzMedia ApS, 1999), 223.

<sup>540</sup> Marcus Rediker, “Afterword: Reflections on the Motley Crew as Port City Proletariat,” *International Review of Social History* 64, no. S27 (2019): 255–62.

jazz-blues musicians such as Buddy Bolden. Armstrong described Henry Zeno as a “fine drummer” and a pimp popular with “the prostitutes—pimps—gamblers—hustlers and everybody,” but who was the “everybody” he was referring to? Who made up their audience and community? Danny Barker, writing on the his experiences growing up at Animule Hall, explained that “The men and women who patronized the hall were very hard-working people: stevedores, woodsmen, fishermen, field hands and steel-driving men, and the women were factory workers, washerwomen, etc.”<sup>541</sup> Another occupation was added to this list by a police report of March 1903, when two men got into a fight at a dance at the Masonic and Odd Fellows Hall. The police, inexplicably, detained all one hundred and six attendees, and their ages, names, and occupation were recorded. They ranged from thirteen to forty-four years old, and jobs included sailor, stevedore, bricklayer, teamster, housekeeper, barber, cook, and prostitute.<sup>542</sup>

The musicians who worked in the district were aware of the intersection of wealth, sex, and race; they understood the Black body was coerced by market relations, and commented on it constantly in recorded interview. Louis Armstrong took note of the “Rich men [that] came there from all parts of the world to dig those beautiful Creole prostitutes.... And pay big money.”<sup>543</sup> Clarence Williams remembered that “those sportin’ houses...were just like millionaires’ houses. And the girls would come down dressed...like they were going to the opera...places like that were for rich people, mostly white...a bottle of beer was a dollar.”<sup>544</sup> Such conspicuous consumption also affected Manuel Manetta—he recalled vividly the “big-timers” who paid a dollar for a bottle

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<sup>541</sup> Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Springer, 2016), 12.

<sup>542</sup> New Orleans Police Department Arrest Records, First Precinct, March 10, 1903, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, quoted in Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005), 64-67.

<sup>543</sup> Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 8.

<sup>544</sup> Clarence Williams in Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 11.

of beer or \$25 for a bottle of champagne.<sup>545</sup> Jelly Roll Morton estimated that one mirror in Madam Lulu White's Basin Street bordello was worth \$30,000—roughly \$800,000 in today's currency.<sup>546</sup>

These descriptions of wealth and glamour should be read not as markers of excitement or an infatuation with luxury, but with deep ambivalence. Many of these male musicians lived on the brink of poverty, and those who worked outside of the district were often subject to equally fraught working conditions. Morton described his day job as a roustabout as something akin to slavery.<sup>547</sup> Clarinetist George Lewis suffered two arm injuries working on the docks in the 1920s which almost ended his career.<sup>548</sup> Louis Armstrong's mother was a prostitute herself in "Black Storyville."<sup>549</sup> Storyville historian Emily Landau has discussed at length the district as a particular economic and ideological space which linked prostitution to the rosy dawn of consumer society: "Storyville did nothing if not celebrate commerce and commercialism...[it was] a modern market; it marketed miscegenation and prostitution by commodifying women as sex."<sup>550</sup> Indeed, Storyville was, from the outset, "the extreme example of the idolatry of commerce, wealth, the new riches and what could be bought with them."<sup>551</sup> "I'm telling you," Morton explained, "this Tenderloin District was like something that nobody has ever seen before or since. The doors were taken off the saloons there from one year to the next. Hundreds of men were passing through the streets day and night. The chippies in their little-girl dresses were standing in the crib doors singing the

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<sup>545</sup> Manuel Manetta, Oral History Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

<sup>546</sup> Jelly Roll Morton, in Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin'*, 6–7.

<sup>547</sup> Jelly Roll Morton, quoted in Martin T. Williams, *Jazz Masters of New Orleans*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 44.

<sup>548</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010).

<sup>549</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 77.

<sup>550</sup> Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 119.

<sup>551</sup> Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 168-171.

blues.”<sup>552</sup> Such amenities seemed to have worked their charm. Writing in 1899, a reporter for *Harper’s* declared that New Orleans was “the chief winter resort of those who journey southward to escape the winters in the North.”<sup>553</sup> But for Black women and men, blues were a form of address and declaration that resisted the dehumanizing economy of turn of the century New Orleans.

As Morton’s account reminds us, women were not only the point of transaction, but they produced music that commented on their condition, and these lyrics made an impact on their male colleagues. This is why these gendered songs spoke to male musicians; their heartfelt descriptions of these otherworldly spectacles of race, power, and suggest something akin to trauma. Danny Barker explained his sociological interest of this bizarre laboratory: “I’ve been keeping a scrapbook [about Storyville], based on what I remember and on what other musicians have told me.” Inside this “scrapbook” Barker included “different types of joints” that outlaid an organized division of labor. One such a joint, a “house of assignation,” was described as a space where “women pull shifts and report where they are needed.”<sup>554</sup> Louis Armstrong remembered that a “Lot of the prostitutes lived in different sections of the city and would come down to Storyville just like they had a job...there was different shifts for them.”<sup>555</sup> Kid Ory also described the shift system. “Down the block ’twas cribs, you see. They’d make a few dollars, they’d close up, you know, and say, I’m going cabareting awhile.’ They’d come in, you know, pick up some guy and then go back, you see.”<sup>556</sup> Ory explained that this action was “like clockwork,” a metaphor that took on a specific meaning in a new age of mechanization and proletarianization.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>553</sup> Julian Ralph, “New Orleans, Our Southern Capitol,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (February 1899): 365–85.

<sup>554</sup> Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>555</sup> Louis Armstrong in Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear me Talkin’*, 5.

<sup>556</sup> Kid Ory, Oral History Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

<sup>557</sup> Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 111, 130; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 294 n33.

Sex workers and non-sex working musicians were both experiencing the birth of consumer society, albeit from different vantage points. Sex workers' conditions of labor and life were relevant to the development of musicians' consciousness because musicians and sex workers shared a community, perhaps even a class identity. As discussed earlier, King Oliver played at the fundraiser for whores and madams.<sup>558</sup> Pops Foster recalled that "Mondays at the lakes was for the pimps, hustlers, whores, and musicians. We'd all go out there for picnics and to rest up. At night they had dances in the pavilions out on the piers." Recovery and revelry were ritualized on the lakes, and sometimes became excessive: a clarinet player named Leb almost "choked to death" from eating too much fried chicken. Foster's words point to a common social space where prostitutes and musicians saw themselves as parts of a community of working people, who would have picnics and "rest up" together during their time off.<sup>559</sup> Danny Barker remembered that this culture crossed the color line: "It was said and verified that a few white whores and madames sent Clerk [Wade, a Black pimp] money and presents by their professors [piano players], maids and servants."<sup>560</sup> This gift economy between sex workers, musicians, and brothel owners is an intriguing acknowledgement, and cultivation, of interdependence.

These are but a few examples of quotidian support shared between prostitutes and musicians at the workspace. At performances, sex workers supported the musicians with encouragement and tip-raising. Manuel Manetta recalled that in the brothels the "ladies would always say, 'give the professor something,'" encouraging patrons to tip.<sup>561</sup> According to Louis

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<sup>558</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>559</sup> Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke*, 8; Oliver interview; Barker, *Buddy Bolden*, 63, 68–69; Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 35.

<sup>560</sup> Danny Barker, *Buddy Bolden and the Last Days of Storyville*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Continuum, 1998), 61. Thank you Charles Hersch for making me aware of this citation.

<sup>561</sup> Manetta, Oral History Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

Armstrong's autobiography, his friend "Cocaine Buddy" Martin offered Armstrong his first gig at the pimp Henry Pence's bar. When Armstrong initially objected that he was not good enough, Buddy explained to Armstrong that, "All you have to do is put on long pants at night, play the blues for the whores that hustle all night until 'fo' day' [four] in the morning... When you play the blues, [prostitutes] will call you sweet names and buy you drinks and give you tips."<sup>562</sup> Sex workers provided encouragement and support to emerging artists, shaping the music of Armstrong and countless, nameless others.<sup>563</sup>

They also contributed as vocalists. Jelly Roll Morton remembered one place that swung all night for after-hours sex industry workers. "After four o'clock in the morning, all the girls that could get out of the houses they were there," in addition to the musicians, pimps, and visitors who came from "all over the country." There were times, he recalled, "that you couldn't get in," for the size of the crowd and the line out the door. On the inside, Morton remembered the club having the atmosphere of "one big happy family," with everyone sitting "at different tables at any place that they felt like sitting. They all mingled together as they wished to." The music would "go on from four o'clock in the morning at a tremendous rate of speed, with plenty money, drinks of all types, till maybe twelve, one, two, three o'clock in the daytime."<sup>564</sup> Willie Piazza advertised that her employees were "the most handsome and intelligent girls in the Tenderloin district...they are all cultivated entertainers—for singing and dancing they have no equal," suggesting that artistic

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<sup>562</sup> Louis Armstrong, quoted in Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 111.

<sup>563</sup> Writing in 1993, Lawrence Levine highlighted how cultural historians have failed to "comprehend the dynamic relationships that exist between the audience and the expressive culture they interact with...Indeed, the audience remains the missing link, the forgotten element, in cultural history." Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," in *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 302. More recently, jazz musician and scholar Raddam Schwartz has criticized the tendency of jazz history to "analyze Black music from the point of view of white audiences," but rarely "from the point of view of Black audiences. Raddam Schwartz, private communication, July 25, 2020.

<sup>564</sup> Morton, Interviews with Alan Lomax, disc 1, track 8, transcript page 13; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*,

competence was a requirement to work at her brothel.<sup>565</sup> It is hard to imagine that these performers would not have participated at the jam sessions that carried into dawn.

In the most materialist and perhaps most cynical interpretation, such cultures of affinity could be read as expressions of self-interest, since musicians and sex workers depended on each other for commerce and clientele. The trumpeter Bunk Johnson remembered that Mamie Desdunes's following ensured that sex workers would have a good night. "When Hattie Rogers or Lulu White would put it out that Mamie was going to be singing in their place, the white men would turn out in bunches and them whores would clean up."<sup>566</sup> In addition, many musicians worked in the sex industry themselves. Henry Zeno was a drummer and a pimp. Pianists, including Mamie Desdunes, often worked as pimps (or madames). "Most of the P.I.s [pimps] were gamblers and pianists," said Clarence Williams. "The reason so many of them were pianists was because whenever they were down on their luck, they could always get a job and be close to their girls—play while the girls worked."<sup>567</sup>

Sometimes musicians betrayed the well-being of these sex workers they worked with by snitching to their pimps. Pops Foster kept an eye on a prostitute that was employed by the clarinetist Big Eye Louis Nelson when both played with Magnolia Band. He was able to report to Nelson how many clients she had in a night from the bandstand (Foster played upright bass and could see outside of the club's window to her workplace across the street) because he could see that "every time she'd turn a trick [have sex with a client] she'd clean herself with some water and throw it out the door." One evening, she underreported her earnings, and Nelson, armed with

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<sup>565</sup> *Blue Book*, quoted in Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 51.

<sup>566</sup> Bunk Johnson, in Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin'*, 6.

<sup>567</sup> Clarence Williams, in Shapiro and Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin'*, 12.

Foster's intel, retorted to her "You're a damn liar."<sup>568</sup> Foster does not tell us what came of that interaction, but it showed how Black male musicians did not always have the interests of their female co-workers at heart.

There were limits to the convergence of musicians and sex workers' interests, but they converged more often than not, and the two groups clearly shared a robust social and cultural life both on and especially off the clock. Songs such as "Mamie's Blues" resonated not only because they were well-written, but because they highlighted the concerns of the working women in the district: their victimization as prostitutes, the violent history of regional capitalism, and the reclamation of their body through a positive relationship with pleasure and desire. These songs, with their philosophy of desire and their critique capitalist domination, were not trifles; they directly threatened the white supremacist regime of New Orleans. When Philip Werlin and other progressive "reformers" attempted to resegregate Storyville, their issue was not prostitution but rather the public display and performance of sexuality.<sup>569</sup> The 1910 writings of the white southern sociologist Howard Odum claimed that the blues was "openly descriptive of the grossest immorality and susceptible of unspeakable thought and actions rotten with filth...the superlative of the repulsive." Must the blues musicians, he asked, "Continue as the embodiment of the fiendish filth incarnate in the tabernacle of the soul?"<sup>570</sup> When another Storyville "reformer," Reverend Cuddy, attempted to shut down the aptly-named Unexpected Dance Hall across the street from his new Door of Hope Mission in 1901, the sympathetic white press singled out the music for attack.

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<sup>568</sup> Foster, *Autobiography of Pops Foster*, 33-34.

<sup>569</sup> Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013).

<sup>570</sup> Howard Washington Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro: Research into the Conditions of the Negro Race in Southern Towns, a Study in Race Traits, Tendencies, and Prospects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910); quoted in Clyde Woods, "'Sittin' on Top of the World': The Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography," in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge: Between the Lines, 2007), 48.

According to the *New Orleans Item*, while Cuddy preached, “within the hall across the way the dark musicians tooted and thumped for the dancers.” The paper described “A bullet-headed negro with a far away look in his eye” who played guitar, “and a molasses-colored musician that blew the clarionet [*sic*] had to brace his feet against the railing of the players’ stand to prevent himself from being hurled backward by the strength of his breath.” This music disrupted the Mission’s work: “The converts hear the music and begin to waver and succumb to the temptation held out to them.”<sup>571</sup> It seems that some converts went across the street to dance. The foregrounded sexuality in this music and its resonant critique threatened the viability of New Orleans’s disciplinary regime and brought Black voices and Black bodies into the public sphere in ways that were not intended by Jim Crow.

Of course, there were other spaces where a class consciousness emerged, including a more traditional articulation among the organized labor movement. This was especially true of musicians who worked on the docks as longshoremen and screwmen, a topic taken up in more detail in Chapter 6. But values of solidarity and self-respect that the union movement cultivated also undergirded the alternative structures of communal support and musical interaction in Storyville, creating a space that Charles Hersch has called, following Foucault, a heterotopia.<sup>572</sup> Black and Creole of Color musicians were sensitive to the performance of class and whiteness of the district’s customers, on the one hand, and the industrially-organized commercial sex-entertainment district, on the other. Both male and female musicians worked to build an alternative to alienation, and the communal and interactive nature of the music was part of this process. In

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<sup>571</sup> *New Orleans Item*, June 15, November 16, November 23, 1902; quoted in Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 230-31.

<sup>572</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 75.

addition to the collectivity heard therein, early jazz and blues created a space for women to share their visions of embodied freedom, erotic agency, and their daily pain as triply oppressed by patriarchy, racism, and capitalism. Mamie Desdunes's cultural work contributed to the dissident class consciousness of sex workers and musicians which challenged the state's ability to produce a divided Black community, or docile Black bodies, for white consumption. This is why the blues has always been, first and foremost, a revolt of Black women, while also articulating a feminism for everybody.

### 3.5 The Spanish Tinge's Contribution to Storyville's Performance of Dissidence

*In the Blues...The song and the people is the same...Jazz content, of course, is [just] as pregnant.*

- Amiri Baraka<sup>573</sup>

*When I grind my hips, the smells of raw sugar fill the air.*

- Alfonso Camín, "La Mulata Candelaria"<sup>574</sup>

What did it mean that "Mamie could really play those blues," and how did it relate to the development of jazz? In this section, I trace the existence of a *habanera* and *tresillo* rhythms in this New Orleans standard. Several scholars have noted that *tresillo*, *habanera*, and *cinquillo* rhythms are all based on a similar set of rhythms which are rooted in different interpretations of a

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<sup>573</sup> Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," in *Black Music* (New York: De Capo, 1968),

<sup>574</sup> O. Alén Rodríguez, *De Lo Afro Cubano a La Salsa: Generos Musicales de Cuba* (La Habana: Ediciones ARTEX, SA, 1994); Shannon Hensley, "'It's the Sugar, the Honey That You Have': Learning to Be Natural through Rumba in Cuba," *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 195–215.

“4 against 3” hemiola. They are characteristic of several genres of Afro-Cuban and French Afro-Caribbean music.<sup>575</sup>



Figure 1: Notation commonly used to represent different interpretations of the Habanera rhythm.



Figure 2: This transcription of measures 8-11 of “Mamie’s Blues” as performed by Jelly Roll Morton. The left hand of the piano alternates between a Habanera and a Tresillo rhythm. Transcription done by myself.



Figure 3: Measures 12-15 of “Mamie’s Blues,” as played by Jelly Roll Morton. The red arrows outline where a three quaver lengths, or eighth notes, accents are placed above the Habanera/Tresillo bass line, suggesting multiple expressions of the “3 against 4” concept.

In the following discussion, I argue that Mamie Desdunes’s invocation of these Haitian-derived musical devices in “Mamie’s Blues” are deeply linked to a specific brand of erotic politics and antipatriarchal storytelling. This tradition resulted from a process of diasporic exchange,

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<sup>575</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, “Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean,” *American Music* 17, no. 1 (1999): 1–38; Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz.”

derived from a Haitian counterpublic sphere where enslaved and free Afro-descended poets and singers were able to critique the sexual relations of the plantation economy. While some may argue that Haitian women's music from the early nineteenth century and blues from the latter part of the century are altogether different and independent genres, Houston Baker Jr. reminds us to hear the blues not as a unified, singular tradition but as a cultural "matrix" that contains "corridors, main roads, and way stations." For Baker, the blues' intersectional approach "avoids simple dualities," opting instead for a "fluid and multivalent network," with profound consequences for what she calls the "blues code" of African American culture.<sup>576</sup> "Mamie's Blues" demonstrates that Haitian women's song is one of these corridors, as her song prefigured the celebratory and derogatory sexualities of latter blues singers like Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. In fact, Rainey spent significant time "wintering" in New Orleans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where she performed with musicians who shared Desdunes's circle such as Joe Oliver, Sidney Bechet, and others.<sup>577</sup>

Several scholars have traced the distribution of the *cinquillo*—the parent rhythmic cell of the *habanera*—as a by-product of the Haitian Revolution. The Haitian diaspora developed a distinct form of social criticism, as Sara Johnson has noted in her discussion of enslaved Haitian migrants in Jamaica. "[W]hile such music and dance were performed in 'playful' contexts, the songs [from Haiti] nevertheless are barbed observations about racial and sexual hierarchies and the violence that became a matter of course under such regimes."<sup>578</sup> As we will see, these "observations" travelled not only to Jamaica, but to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Louisiana. The music

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<sup>576</sup> Houston A. Baker Jr, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 6.

<sup>577</sup> Sandra R. Lieb, *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 15.

<sup>578</sup> Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 142.

of Saint-Domingue's enslaved and free women of color was able to provide a critical vocabulary to discuss sex and domination that Angela Davis argues Black antebellum music was unable to, both in its style of enunciation and in its use of diasporic rhythm connected to Black women's agency.<sup>579</sup> I am certainly not the first to suggest that specific rhythmic and movement traditions contain knowledge for social and political action onto themselves. As Yvonne Daniel has argued about Yoruba-derived sacred traditions in Haiti, Cuba, and Brazil, "the dance and music forms 'housed' not only physical information about the human body in dance mode but also theoretical, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual information. These data became blueprints with choices for possible action."<sup>580</sup>

Looking backwards from the period discussed earlier, of Storyville's confrontation between neo-plantation sexualities and a counter-plantation women's culture, I will illustrate how Haitian diasporic traditions created a way of talking about, and talking back, to gendered and sexual power structures. Clyde Woods opens up this possible interpretation of Louisiana's class struggle when he writes that "Enslaved Afro-Haitians torn from their nation on the eve of freedom...united with the Afro-Creole, Native American, and African American enslaved population to launch abolition movements against the plantation bloc."<sup>581</sup> One such abolition movement was the challenge to the plantation's sexual economy, and I argue this can be heard in Mamie's Blues and the countercultures it portended in turn-of-the century New Orleans. I trace the Haitian social meanings imparted on what Samuel Floyd Jr. has called the "cinquillo-tresillo

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<sup>579</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 15-25.

<sup>580</sup> Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>581</sup> Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 32.

matrix,” which “stands as a symbol of circum-Caribbean unity,” and suggest that gendered resistance was embedded in diasporic Haitian performance traditions.<sup>582</sup> I hear Mamie Desdunes’s invocations of *habanera* and *tresillo* rhythms are gestures rich with signification. At the same time that her lyrics commented on women’s sexualities, she simultaneously overlaid a rhythmic cadence that was specifically and semiotically evocative of Creole of Color identification with the Haitian diaspora in New Orleans.<sup>583</sup>

Does our only recorded reproduction of “Mamie’s Blues” faithfully render her piano style? It was, after all, recorded by Morton, not Desdunes. “Mamie Desdunes was the pianist and singer that Jelly Roll Morton often credited as influencing his approach to the blues in the early 1900s,” writes Sherrie Tucker, noting that “This approach was distinguished by the aforementioned fusion of blues with habanera or clave rhythm favored by Creole of color musicians.” While it is true, as Sherrie Tucker points out, that “We may never know exactly what Desdunes’s role was in this [rhythmic] development,” it is apparent that “she had an influence on Morton who, in turn, popularized the style.”<sup>584</sup> Indeed, several commentators have noted that “New Orleans Blues,” written by a young Jelly Roll Morton and one of his first compositions, is almost an endless array of *habanera* and *tresillo* rhythmic figures in the left hand. “Mamie’s Blues” predates this song and utilizes a similar set of rhythms, suggesting that Morton’s signature composition was, in a sense, an homage to his teacher. As Morton himself explained, “Although I had heard them [the blues] previously, I guess it was Mamie first really sold me on the blues.”<sup>585</sup> Such an admission, as noted

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<sup>582</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, “Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean,” *American Music* 17, no. 1 (1999): 29.

<sup>583</sup> For a discussion of piano training as an important part of Creole of Color femininity in New Orleans, see Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen” (New Orleans: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 2004), 41.

<sup>584</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen” (New Orleans: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 2004), 45. See also Raeburn, “Submerging Ethnicity.”

<sup>585</sup> Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 20–21.

above, was out of character for Morton. The Afro-Latin rhythms of *tresillo*, *cinquillo*, and *habanera* present in the style of Crescent City blues performers was a powerful aesthetic marker of the New Orleans's ongoing Caribbean linkages.<sup>586</sup> "Mamie's Blues," composed between 1895 to 1900, was one of the earliest blues to articulate this fusion of African American and Afro-Caribbean musical devices.

What distinguished New Orleans from other southern entrepôts was that its blues were played, according to one well-known drummer, "with a Spanish accent."<sup>587</sup> What does it mean that a woman of Haitian ancestry was Morton's first teacher that really helped him articulate this fusion? In order to provide some possible answers, it is important to address how this secondary creolization became marked with the curious adjective "Spanish." According to drummer Baby Dodds, "In the downtown district where the Creoles lived, they played blues with a Spanish accent...They lived in the French part of town and we lived uptown, in the Garden district. Our ideas for the blues were different from theirs. They had the French and Spanish style, blended together."<sup>588</sup> Jelly Roll Morton himself perhaps mostly widely popularized the concept and the phrase called the "Spanish tinge." In an interview with Alan Lomax, he explained, "Of course you got to have these little tinges of Spanish in it...in order to play real good jazz...I'll give you an idea what this, the idea of Spanish there is in the blues."<sup>589</sup> One of his collaborators, Walter "Foots" Thomas, recalled Morton's orientation as well: "I always felt his melodies came from New Orleans but that his rhythms came from the Latin countries."<sup>590</sup> Musicologist Peter Narváez has

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<sup>586</sup> Washburne, *Latin Jazz*; Peter Narváez, "The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African-American Blues Musicians," *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (2002): 175–96.

<sup>587</sup> Bill Russell, *New Orleans Style*, ed. Barry Martyn and Mike Hazeldine (New Orleans: Jazzology, 1999), 23.

<sup>588</sup> Russell, *New Orleans Style*, 23.

<sup>589</sup> Morton interview with Lomax, 1938.

<sup>590</sup> Whitney Balliett, *Jelly Roll, Jabbo, and Fats: Nineteen Portraits in Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 25–26.

documented how New Orleans blues musicians have “often been inclined to use the Spanish tinge when musically identifying their home city.”<sup>591</sup> The rhythmic figures of this creolized blues became foundational to other forms of jazz and Black music.<sup>592</sup>

Some scholars have explored the cultural philosophy implicit in this approach, in which disparate aesthetic forms come together to create a whole that is not entirely synchronized. In the words of musicologist Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Morton does *not* “seamlessly fus[e] these disparate musical impulses”; rather, what makes Morton’s performance so compelling is that he “juxtaposes jazz and the blues with the Spanish tinge, allowing them to clash with one another, to work in combination yet maintain their mutual independence.” Garrett hears in Morton’s performance a “sonic metaphor for cultural difference and conflict.”<sup>593</sup> Can we use big ears to listen for gender in this sonic metaphor?<sup>594</sup> How do gender and sexual politics inform this “cultural difference and conflict” and quest for “mutual independence?” The contradictory experiences of the Haitian Revolution’s migrants, and their shifting experiences of gender within the plantation’s sexual economy, was a central site of conflict in this process of creolization.

It is instructive that Black commentators of this era heard in the *habanera* rhythm a cultural lineage that connected the music of Louisiana to Haiti. Maud Cuney Hare, an accomplished Black pianist and daughter of the famed Texan Reconstruction activist Norris Wright Cuney,<sup>595</sup> published

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<sup>591</sup> Peter Narváez, “The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African- American Blues Musicians,” *Black Music Research Journal* 14 (1994): 220. Raeburn also emphasized Creoles of Color had distinct way of playing the blues.

<sup>592</sup> Christopher Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 59–80.

<sup>593</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 60.

<sup>594</sup> Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, eds., *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>595</sup> Douglas Hales, *A Southern Family in White and Black: The Cuneys of Texas* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

a 1921 compilation titled *Six Creole Folk Songs*, which are full of *habanera* bass lines much like those present in “Mamie’s Blues.” She writes in the book’s introduction that these songs were “Mainly African in rhythm, [and] the music was brought to South American countries and to the West Indies, thence to Louisiana... Distinct from the mountain song of Kentucky, the Negro Spiritual or the tribal melody of the Indian, the Creoles have added a new note in their gift to the folk-song of America.”<sup>596</sup> Hare highlights the “West Indies,” namely Haiti, as an important waystation for the Afro-Atlantic genealogy. As she works through the sardonic and sarcastic nature of the pieces, Hare explains that “songs of mockery, pointed at times with cruel satire, were common among the Creole songs of Louisiana and the Antilles [Haiti].”<sup>597</sup> Hare also notes that these songs treated themes of gender and sexuality. Quoting H. E. Krehbiel, she writes that the song “Caroline” “lets light into the tragedy as well as the romance of the young Creole slaves. Marriage, that state of blissful respectability [was] denied to the multitude either by law or social conditions.”<sup>598</sup> Hare apparently felt Krehbiel’s rare acknowledgement of slave humanity and the violence of Southern slave law were necessary to understand the gender politics of this piece. Compiled and published in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hare’s anthology reflects how African American musicians in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century understood the *habanera* rhythm and the social-commentary it informed: a) as a Haitian (“West Indies”) derivation, and b) included in songs of a satirical nature in which gender and plantation sexual relations were held up for critique, contemplation, and ridicule.

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<sup>596</sup> Maud Cuney Hare, *Six Creole Folk-Songs with Original Creole and Translated English Text - Sheet Music for Voice and Piano* (New York: C. Fischer, 1921), 3.

<sup>597</sup> Hare, *Six Creole Folk-Songs*, 7.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

In the past three decades, scholars have begun echoing the internationalism of Hare's analysis, treating the "Spanish" or "Latin" tinge as an aspect of circum-Caribbean culture among Black and Creole of Color New Orleans.<sup>599</sup> To return to Garrett, he employs the "Spanish Tinge" to reconsider the story of jazz's origins:

Although I do not dispute that jazz originated within the borders of the United States, I suggest that framing its development as part of a transnational or global phenomenon may enhance our understanding of jazz history. More specifically, Morton's incorporation of Latin and Caribbean musical influences implies that the international roots of jazz are more complex than the barebones equation involving Europe and Africa would suggest...the broader metaphor of a Spanish tinge has much to tell us about the complex, contested, and multicultural history of jazz and American music.<sup>600</sup>

What is interesting about the Caribbean-based New Orleans musicology of Garrett, Peter Narváez, and others is that their "transnational and global framing" does not mention or foreground Haitian musical influence. If anything the adjective Spanish actively obscures it.<sup>601</sup> These "complex, contested, and multicultural histor[ies]" of jazz make this exclusion with no evidentiary basis and should be considered ideological in nature. Thus, the problem with the Spanish tinge discourse is that it hides more than it reveals.<sup>602</sup> As Michel Rolph-Trouillot noted, the Haitian Revolution was

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<sup>599</sup> Despite Morton's knowledge of the song "La Paloma, written by the Spanish composer from the Basque region Sebastián Yradier in the 1850s, the "Spanish tinge" should be understood as connotating an Afro-Cuban or a Cuban-Mexican influence. Rebecca Scott notes, "Spanish" was a pseudonym for Cuban in nineteenth century New Orleans Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 78; Morton interview with Lomax, Library of Congress, 1938.

<sup>600</sup> Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 50, 80.

<sup>601</sup> Peter Narváez, "The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African-American Blues Musicians," *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (2002): 175–96. Ned Sublette, in his seminal *Cuba and its Music*, also briefly suggests that the cinquillo has Haitian origins. "In the first half of the twentieth century," he writes, "there were two contradanzas in Cuba; one in Havana and one in Orinete. The Haitians in Oriente added to the contradanza a touch of *vodú*. They brought with them *cocoyé*, which was sung and danced in comparsas by the Haitian cabildos in Oriente known as *tumba francesa*...in Saint Dominique the rhythm was called *catá*, a word of Bantu origin; in Cuba it was known as the cinquillo...It would be the foundation not only of Haitian meringue and Dominican meringue, but of the Cuban *danzón* and the *bolero*." See Ned Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 138. This particular influence is not treated in detail by Sublette beyond this passage.

<sup>602</sup> It functions like ideology or the Barthes notion of myth. Barthes claims that myth occurs when objects for communication become "appropriated by society," a process when "the signifier cannot distort anything because

an “impossible history,” and this impossibility meant that its erasure was enacted in both descriptions of musical influence as well as issues of politics and identity well into the twentieth century.<sup>603</sup>

The Haitian proverb, *Kreyon pèp la pa genn gonm*, declares that “the people’s pen has no eraser,” and at least some Afro-Latin jazz musicians actively remember this Haitian musical legacy.<sup>604</sup> As Grammy-winning jazz pianist Arturo O’Farrill said, “As a Cuban, I find Cuban-centrism offensive. It is a small view of the world. It does not reflect the global nature of the music. I have found great big-band traditions in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico.”<sup>605</sup> In a similar spirit, guitarist and composer Angel Fernandez believes that the *cinquillo* rhythm came to Cuba by way of Haiti during the mass immigration of the late 1700s and provided Cuban music its rhythmic foundation: “The economic prosperity of nineteenth-century Cuba allowed for dissemination of these rhythms to the United States. As a result, Cuba is most often given credit for the contribution of these rhythms. I believe that Haiti’s contribution deserves wider recognition.”<sup>606</sup>

Following these musicians’ lead, an emerging consensus among Caribbeanists posits that Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican Republic, and Jamaican musics all bear the profound imprint of the Haitian diaspora, with heel drumming-techniques, an interconnected dance complex, and

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the signifier, being empty, offers no resistance to it.” Barthes felt that such appropriations specifically were geared toward revolutionary acts, and this “recuperation” ensure that they “cannot remain revolutionary for long.” Quoted in James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, “Ideology and Bliss: Roland Barthes and the Secret Histories of Landscape,” in *Postmodernism: Disciplinary Texts : Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 64.

<sup>603</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995; Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015).

<sup>604</sup> Charles Arthur and Michael Dash, eds., “Proverbial Wisdom,” in *Libète: A Haiti Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), 287–88.

<sup>605</sup> Arturo O’Farrill, interview with Christopher Washburne, quoted in Washburne, *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 31.

<sup>606</sup> Christopher Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 63

politicized songs travelling with the refugees.<sup>607</sup> The musicologist Christopher Washburne has recently added a corrective to the Spanish tinge narrative, emphasizing how “The musical influence of the Saint-Domingue refugees was vast,” noting that in addition both cultural practices, institutions, and creolized rhythmic traditions such as the *tresillo* arrived with the Haitian immigrants.<sup>608</sup> Sara Johnson argues that these “musics were built upon the migratory labor of black artists and their publics” and that it is therefore “not surprising that the *cinquillo* resurfaced in communities where Saint-Domingue migrants resettled. Cuba provides a case in point.”<sup>609</sup> Raul Fernandez has explicitly connected these “cultural links” to a centuries-long shared antislavery history, noting that “Maroon communities, independent contraband commerce, and the development of creolized centers fairly removed from colonial control were centered in areas of Haiti, the north coast of Jamaica, and eastern Cuba for centuries, allowing for extensive contact and interaction among the peoples of the region.”<sup>610</sup> Music was, in a sense, the “material basis” for the common wind.<sup>611</sup>

No scholar has connected blues or New Orleans music to this particular diasporic political culture informed by the Haitian revolution. Without this framework, it is impossible to understand the argument I make here: that “Mamie’s Blues” should be read as a late-nineteenth century manifestation of a Haitian and circum-Caribbean women’s critique, whereby sexual violence, the

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<sup>607</sup> For instance, *bomba plena* in Puerto Rico and the meringue in the Dominican Republic have well-documented roots in the Haitian diaspora. Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 9; Johson, *Fear of French Negroes*, and Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, also are important works on this subject.

<sup>608</sup> Washburne, *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz*, 54.

<sup>609</sup> Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 144-146.

<sup>610</sup> Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>611</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018).

Black body, and the erotic were brought out in a Black counterpublic enunciated with musical culture. Deborah Jensen has traced “a vigorous tradition of female popular verbal arts” in Saint-Domingue, noting that the poems and songs written and performed by Black and mixed-race women “make it impossible to imagine an early black Atlantic sphere” without their biting and incisive cultural commentary.<sup>612</sup> Similarly, Lisa Ze Winters traces the “echo” and the “spiraling presence” of the “mulatta concubine” throughout the diaspora, and documents how music at courtesan balls in Saint-Domingue/Haiti, “*signare* balls” in French-controlled Saint-Louis in Senegal, and Quadroon Balls in New Orleans, were all sites of sexual violence as well as counterhegemonic messages. She finds in the music, dances, and poems performed in these spaces evidence of the “subversive negotiation of sexual and racial economies imposed by European colonialism and American slavery,” creating room for dissent and contestation.<sup>613</sup> Storyville’s somewhat audacious performance of dissent and critique through blues, often during the moments of sexual transaction itself, thus has a lot in common with these diasporic pre-echoes. This Afro-Atlantic sexual economy had a built-in critique within its corresponding performance traditions, a practice of symbolic negation in spaces where men and women artists had a circumscribed but still tangible role to signal dissent, ridicule, and rejection of the terms of engagement.

Before exploring some of the repertoire of this tradition, it is important to emphasize that the periods before and during the Haitian Revolution were indexed by the substantial empowerment of Black and mixed-race women, and this contributed to a genre of musical critique once these women were abroad. In 1776, Hilliard d’Auberteuil’s claimed that “mulatto women are

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<sup>612</sup> Deborah Jensen, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 298.

<sup>613</sup> Lisa Ze Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 61.

much less docile than mulatto men, because they have acquired a dominion over white men based on debauchery.”<sup>614</sup> While this reproduced a sexualized ideology that legitimized rape, d’Auberteuil’s comments reveal that women of color could be outspoken and public in ways that their male counterparts could not.<sup>615</sup> During the Haitian Revolution, the depth of these changes are captured by the colorful comments of outraged white Saint-Domingue colonists. “You cannot imagine these orgies, called patriotic fêtes,” complained a white Dominguan exile in Philadelphia. At these events, “the women of color, proud of having become the idols of the day, were given the leading place.”<sup>616</sup>

Women of color’s empowerment in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Haiti was not an inevitable result of a tripartite racial system. In the period leading up to the French and Haitian Revolutions, particularly in the 1760s and 1780s, John Garrigus has shown how white Saint-Dominguans consolidated white power and made it harder for free people of color to wield political and economic power.<sup>617</sup> Women engineered their liberation in a variety of ways, one of which was their participation in a revolutionary movement. Women had long served as ciphers for what Julius Scott has called “the common wind,” such as the Jamaican “higgler,” a broker between slaves’ internal gardening systems and slave markets in the city. Planters often complained of “wandering higglers” who brought revolutionary news from the cities to the plantations and vice versa.<sup>618</sup> Women were

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<sup>614</sup> Michel-René Hilliard d’Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l’état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue: Ouvrage politique et législatif présenté au ministre de la marine*, vol. 2 (Paris: Grangé, 1776), 77.

<sup>615</sup> As Saidiya Hartman notes, dominant discourses of the “phantasmal ensnaring agency of the lascivious black” insured that “raped disappeared through the intervention of seduction.” Hartman, “Seduction,” 544–45.

<sup>616</sup> Dalmas, *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 184, translated and quoted in Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 182.

<sup>617</sup> John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>618</sup> “Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a Residence among the Negroes in the West Indies* (London, 1845), 41; *Royal Gazette*, 2 March 1793; quoted in Julius Scott, *The Common Wind*, 134.

important participants in the Haitian Revolution, occupying leadership positions. Cécile Faitman, a mixed-race voodoo priestess, was an important participant in the Vodou ceremony led by Boukman which initiated the slave uprising.<sup>619</sup> Many of the stories of one prominent Haitian *lwa*, Erzili Dantò, describe an enslaved mother who fought in the Haitian Revolution.<sup>620</sup>

Outside of the revolutionary movement, manumission in Saint-Domingue was deeply tied to “libertine commerce.”<sup>621</sup> According to Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, this commerce paralleled the power of revolt: “Collective slave resistance in the form of revolt was often aimed at the attainment of freedom ultimately, that is to say, freedom from white ownership and rule, but many slave women were able to obtain their individual freedom through other means.”<sup>622</sup> Those means are specified more explicitly in a memorable passage by historian Deborah Jenson:

In slavery, where the exchange of human beings as goods was not veiled by sentiment or familial consent, the obvious potential for the sexual use of human goods—a kind of “abuse value” overlapping with the Marxian “use value” of the human commodity—had the predictable yet paradoxical repercussion of bringing those defined as persons and those defined as things into the same colonial family. The category of the *mulâtresse* became iconic as a subversive chess piece on the board of colonial race relations... The power of the “bounda” [ass, both literal and figurative] had been enough to rearrange hierarchies...giving women a kind of economic power normally associated with colonists’ status.<sup>623</sup>

There are multiple ways to read the mixed-race free women of color, known as the *mulâtresse* in colonial Saint-Domingue parlance. On the one hand, as Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby points out, “The

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<sup>619</sup> Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 265.

<sup>620</sup> Karen McCarthy Brown, “Erzili Dantò,” in *Libète: A Haiti Anthology*, ed. Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009), 266.

<sup>621</sup> Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 277.

<sup>622</sup> David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xi.

<sup>623</sup> Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 277.

Mulatta incarnated empire; she was its sign because she was its product.”<sup>624</sup> But for Susan Buck-Morss, the *mulâtresse* could read against the imperial grain, too, as a reflection of how “boundary-disrupting potential of women's sexual agency was economically powerful...[and] escaped political control,” dangerous because it threatened the reproduction of white racial purity and pointed to the ability of women color to dramatically impact social relations.<sup>625</sup> Interracial marriage was not uncommon, and marriages between white men and free women of color reached 17 percent in some parishes.<sup>626</sup> By the 1770's, white colonists and administrators were alarmed by the rapid growth of the *gens de couleur* population as well as their upward mobility. According to the census, *gens de couleur* comprised 22 per cent of the colony's free population in 1775, and almost half – 44 percent – in 1788.<sup>627</sup>

Saint-Domingue had an extremely complex and shifting power structure, even before an antislavery revolutionary movement turned the world upside down. The deeply engrained practice of interracial sex was disavowed in the colonial public sphere, but other forms of communication illuminated the nuances of this world to both white and Black publics. As Garrigus and Bernard note, “Gossip about rich married men and their mulatto mistresses was common-place, and white bachelors lived openly with their ‘housekeepers.’ The purported lines of division between whites and blacks, however enshrined in law and ideology, were nevertheless violated every day in the

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<sup>624</sup> Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 266.

<sup>625</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 113-114.

<sup>626</sup> Jacques Houdaille, “Trois paroisses de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle,” *Population* 18 (1963): 100; quoted in Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 68.

<sup>627</sup> Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 45.

household.”<sup>628</sup> Creole song and poetry produced a space in which enslaved and free women of color could comment on matters that addressed the intersections of race, desire, and power, often critiquing the violent, contradictory sexual relations of the colony or celebrating their own sexual powers. They brought this hidden world out into the open. For instance, one poem imagined an archetypal enslaved woman, “Lisette,” chastising her lover for escaping to town to have sex with a mistress. She claimed of her foe that:

Her butt is no more than a packet of bones. (*Bonda li c’est paquet zos*)  
She has not a tooth in her mouth, (*Li pas teni dents dans bouche*)  
Her tits are like the sugar cane trash we feed the pigs. (*Tété li c’est blan cochon*)

In contrast, Lisette claims a litany of positive attributes: she claims she sings like a bird (Mon chanté tant com zozo), “Tété moins bougé debout” (her breasts are upright), and she is sexually active. (“mon gagné canal / D’yo pas lé manqué li” (“I have a canal / And no shortage of water for it”).<sup>629</sup> Jenson calls this the “Earliest [recorded] example of female-narrated dissing in the New World African diaspora.”<sup>630</sup>

Such dissing and erotic agency travelled with the Saint-Domingue refugees. For instance, a similar song appeared in Jamaica, another destination for Haitian emigration and where a performance style known as “French Set girls” emerged, marked by women in using handkerchiefs and a heel drumming technique closely tied to Haiti.<sup>631</sup> In Santiago de Cuba, Emilio Bacardí, a

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<sup>628</sup> Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 68.

<sup>629</sup> “Chanson créole” in Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Notes Historiques*, F3 ed., vol. 140 (Archives d’Outre-mer), 49; quoted in Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 296-299.

<sup>630</sup> Jenson, 297.

<sup>631</sup> “But Massa Buccra have white love,  
Soft and silken like one dove,  
To brown girl—him barely shivel—  
To black girl—oh Lord, de Devil  
But when him once two tree year here,

Cuban historian whose maternal relatives were planter emigres from Saint-Domingue, recorded a song he overheard during an Afro-Cuban performance:

Those white men from France, oh shout it! (Blan lá yó qui sotíi en  
Frans, oh, jelé!)  
They use their (white) wives as a pillow (Yó prán madam yó servi  
sorellé)  
For caressing black women (Pú yó caresé negués)<sup>632</sup>

This song was derived from a *Tumba Francesa*, meaning “French dance.”<sup>633</sup> Like “Spanish tinge,” “French” in this case was a misnomer since the *Tumba Francesa* was a set of dances and a song form reproduced by enslaved Haitian communities in Santiago de Cuba, which had the largest concentration of Saint-Domingue refugees outside of Louisiana. It would not be surprising if this song had initially been sung in Haiti. The patois sung here, a fusion of Kikongo and French, was one that some Saint-Dominguan planters knew, but still it contained an intricate web of coded signification.<sup>634</sup> The Haitian patois in this *Tumba Francesa* song opened up a matrix of meanings

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Him tink white lady wery great boder;  
De coloured peoples, never fear,  
Ah, him lob him de mostest nor any oder . . .  
So always come-in two tree year,  
And so wid you, massa—never fear  
Brown girl for cook—for wife—for nurse;  
Buccra lady-poo-no wort a curse.”

Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed, eds., *After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries Concerning the Slaves, Their Manners, and Customs in the British West Indies*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 238.

<sup>632</sup> He provides a “literal translation” as “Blancos esos que salen de Francia, oh gridadlo, / Toman a sus senoras para que sirvan de almohadas para acariciar a las Negras.” Bacardí y Moruea, *Via Crucis*, 56. The song also appears in Pablo Armando Fernández, *Otro Golpe De Dados* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Carieva Editorial, 2000), 85. Slave music in Cuba was also narrated in the 1881 abolitionist novel by Francisco Calcagno, who depicts an enslaved *mulato* man, Romualdo, born free but kidnapped at birth. Romualdo proves his status as free by singing melodies shared with him by his mother, which a sympathetic priest uses to find his biological mother in Havana. Francisco Calcagno, *Romualdo, uno de tantos: Novela cubana* (M. de Armas, 1881), 294; Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 207.

<sup>633</sup> Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 136.

<sup>634</sup> James Sweet, “Research Note: New Perspectives on Kongo in Revolutionary Haiti,” *The Americas* 74, no. 1 (2017): 83–97. Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh have noted that that amongst seafaring communities, “Pidgin became an instrument, like the drum or the fiddle, of communication among the oppressed: scorned and not easily understood by polite society, it nonetheless ran as a strong, resilient, creative, and inspirational current among

and significations, able to articulate the gendered dimensions of slavery's sexual economy without fear of direct reprisals. Bacarí himself was deeply interested in this "special language," what he identified as "slang, French Creole, patois, a mixture of the French language with distinct dialects of African tribes." He claimed that a "more developed intellectual culture was evident in these slaves than that which was found amongst other slaves who weren't French property."<sup>635</sup> Sara Johnson notes that in this context, "Frenchness...mean[s] something quite distinct," a "distinction was unquestionably linked to blackness and revolution."<sup>636</sup> Part of the revolutionary content, in this instance, appears to be the ability to directly insult both the desirability of masters' wives and their fetishizing of their Black female properties, who had apparently suffered enough unwanted fornication and rape to be able to consider themselves a mattress to the "pillow" of the white wife.

*Tumba Francesa* did not only announce what happened behind closed doors to the broader Black counterpublic. As discussed earlier, rhythms that undergirded this Haitian import were one of the ways in which the *cinquillo* was introduced into Afro-Cuban and, later, Cuban music more broadly.<sup>637</sup> Cuban musicologist Fernando Ortiz, writing in 1950, considered the most important Afro-Cuban rhythm to be the "rhythmic cell of the *Danzón*, called the *cinquillo*."<sup>638</sup> What is important to highlight here is how this integrated dance and musical complex also contained a repertoire of gendered critique which took aim at the sexual economy of the plantation. Wherever

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seaport proletarians almost everywhere." Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 154.

<sup>635</sup> Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas*. 508; quoted in Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 232.

<sup>636</sup> Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 137.

<sup>637</sup> Sara E. Johnson, "Cinquillo Consciousness: The Formation of a Pan-Caribbean Musical Aesthetic," in *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 35–58.

<sup>638</sup> "a célula rítmica africana del *Danzón*, llamada *cinquillo*," translated by myself, in Fernando Ortiz, *La Africana de La Musica Folklorica de Cuba* (Habana: Ediciones Cardenas Y Cia., 1950).

these “French negroes” arrived, so did the *cinquillo*, distinct dancing styles, percussion styles, and a genre of sexual-political commentary.

New Orleans was another recipient of *cinquillo* rhythm and its travelling companion, biting sexual commentary, narrated from the point of view of violated women and men of color alike. Haitian-derived dance forms and song lyrics were observed not only in Congo Square<sup>639</sup> but also on the levees surrounding the city.<sup>640</sup> The changing fortunes of Saint-Domingue women as they arrived in New Orleans was discussed in songs quite evocative of the examples listed above. Camille Thierry, a free man of color, transcribed the Creole song “Lament of an Aged Mulatta” from New Orleans, presumably sung by a woman. It rings of the style of the Creole poetry heard in Saint-Domingue:

Listen! When I was in Saint-Domingue,  
Negresses were just like jewels;  
The whites there were ninnies,  
They were always after us.

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<sup>639</sup> The *kalenda*, an important dance in Congo Square, has been traced by the dancer Katherine Dunham to be a synonym for the bamba, a “social or marginal socio-religious dance of Haiti, known in other islands and southern states of America.” Katharine Dunham, *Dances of Haiti* (1947; Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1983), 72.

<sup>640</sup> In 1831, a northern traveller named Pierre Forest reported on his finding in New Orleans. He wrote that “every Sunday the negroes of the city and of the surroundings” used to gather “in a large number of distinct groups” on a “huge green field on the bank of a lake,” where each group “has its own flag floating atop a very tall mast, used as a rallying point . . . [for the] dance.” They danced “with extraordinary speed and agility. Actually their dance is rather a pantomime than a dance.” They made music by “beating and rolling their sticks on their drums; a sharp sound is produced, repeated two or three times by the surrounding echoes.” Forest reproduced one of the Black dancers’ “favorite songs,” which in its third stanza referred to the calenda dance. “Dempé mo perdi Lizette, Mo pas souchié calinda, Mo pas bram bramba boula.” This was a popular refrain in Saint-Domingue. Samuel Kinser later translated this stanza as follows: “Since I have lost Lizette, My footsteps care not for the calinda, Nor for the ‘bram’ of the bamboula.” George J. Joyaux, ed., “Forest’s Voyage Aux États-Unis de l’Amérique En 1831,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* XXXIX (1904): 465; Samuel Kinser, *Carnival, American Style: Mardi Gras at New Orleans and Mobile* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1990); Jeroen Dewulf, “From the Calendas to the Calenda: On the Afro-Iberian Substratum in Black Performance Culture in the Americas,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 519 (2018): 3–29.

Another song which was associated with the Haitian Revolution, “Eh! Eh! Bomba, Hen! Hen!” was recorded in Congo Square, and ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik has suggested the song is a denunciation of white supremacy. Gerhard Kubik, *Jazz Transatlantic: Jazz Derivatives and Developments in Twentieth-Century Africa* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017). For a more critical and sober take on the history and myth surrounding this song, see Alasdair Pettinger, “‘Eh! Eh! Bomba, Hen! Hen!’: Making Sense of a Vodou Chant,” in *Obeah and Other Powers: The Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing*, ed. Diana Paton and Maarit Forde (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 80–102.

In a household,  
 Never any fighting,  
 The love of a white meant adoration!  
 They weren't stingy,  
 They were very rich,  
 A good *bounda* [ass] was worth a plantation!  
 Times have changed, we are sleeping on straw,  
 We, whom the planters celebrated...  
 Before long a lower-class white  
 Will be calling us riff raff!<sup>641</sup>

The reappearance of the political power of *bounda* is, in this case, a marker of descent. Its relative power to the old days—when it was worth a plantation—had disappeared.

Another Creole of Color song, “Dialogue D’Amour,” narrates the destruction of a cane as a metaphor and expression of a lost love, taking aim at commodification of both bodies and labor. Maud Cuney Hare claims that the song was a “Calinda” and a “song of derision” which “ended the evening’s gaiety at place Congo.”<sup>642</sup> Indeed, at the top of the sheet music, the title “Dialogue D’Amour” contains the subtitle, “song of mockery.” In this “dialogue,” a woman compels a man:

If your love can be so great, my dear  
 Sir, If your love can be so great, my dear  
 Sir, If your love can be so great,  
 Then give me your silver.

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<sup>641</sup> Miré! Quand mon té Saint-Domingue,  
 Négresses même té bijoux;  
 Blancs layo té semblé seringue,  
 Yo té collé derrière à nous.  
 Dans yon ménage  
 Jamain tapage,  
 L’amour yon blanc, c’était l’adoration!  
 Yo pa té chiches,  
 Yo té bien riches,  
 Yon bon bounda té vaut yon bitation!...  
 Temps-là changé, nous sur la paille,  
 Nous que z’habitants té fêté...  
 Avant longtemps yon blanc pété  
 Va hélé nous canaille!!!

Camille Thierry, *Les Vagabondes: Poésies Américaines* (Paris: Lemerre, 1874); quoted in Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 298-99.

<sup>642</sup> Maud Cuney Hare, *Six Creole Folk-Songs with Original Creole and Translated English Text - Sheet Music for Voice and Piano* (Read Books, 1921), 24.

[Man]: All of my cane is burned, Marianne,  
Is burned, Marianne,  
All of my cane is burned,  
And ruined am I.

[Woman]: If plantations are lost, my dear Sir,  
If your cane is destroyed, my dear Sir,  
If your cane is burned,  
Then love is lost in flames!

The song certainly repeats, or prefigures, lines heard in Mamie's Blues, such as Desdunes's invocation to "spare a dime." It also marks a different emotional tradition than those prevalent in African American culture. Paul Gilroy has argued that songs of lost love in the blues genre are metaphors for Black disenchantment with modernity and the pain invoked is a sign of the "distinctive rapport with the presence of death," which is one of slavery's legacies. That does not appear to be exactly the case here. The tone here is playful but resilient, sarcastic and biting, speaking truth to power. It was, after all, a "song of mockery." If this French-language song was linked to the Calinda and was part of a Congo square repertoire, this "lost love" could be a tongue-in-cheek critique of the master's power, which has evaporated with the destruction of his sugar cane. Sugar, the very symbol of authoritarian power and slave overwork, was an object of scorn amongst the enslaved—and was frequently burned in uprisings across the Caribbean, including in Louisiana during the German Coast Uprising of 1811.<sup>643</sup> It also could very well be a "Quadroon" asking for her payment from her pledged lover. In this sense, it follows the tradition of "the ability to drag sexual issues into the public sphere," which Mimi Sheller has associated with the practice

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<sup>643</sup> Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 592. In the early twentieth century, sugar cane burning was a marker of revolt and revolution in Oriente, Cuba. Haitian *braceros* contributed to these efforts, too. See Philip A. Howard, *Black Labor, White Sugar: Caribbean Braceros and Their Struggle for Power in the Cuban Sugar Industry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 41. In the case of

of music in Haiti and Jamaica as part of the practice of “erotic agency.”<sup>644</sup> And once again, this song utilized, like “Mamie’s Blues,” a *habanera* bass line (see figure 5 above).

Both songs also commented on how free women of color lost political and economic power in the transition from Saint-Domingue to New Orleans, and previously insurgent women of color of Haiti had been contained as in the much-mythologized “Quadroon Ball.”<sup>645</sup> Quadroon balls were, in fact, as Emily Clark makes clear, “a Haitian import adapted to exploit the boomtown, male-dominated market of New Orleans, perhaps promoted in the 1820s to advance the material prospects of refugee-descended women”<sup>646</sup> whose fortunes in revolutionary Haiti had been all but undone, and whose subjection to a carnivalesque, ritualized prostitution with white men exposed “the tragic reality of the young refugee women and the extraordinary nature of the strategies they deployed.”<sup>647</sup> Historian Daniel Rosenberg describes these “Humiliating, exploitive” events as representing the “limits [that] surrounded the freedom of free Blacks, infusing even that most fabled expression of interracial association: the quadroon ball, drawing white bluebloods after free Black women in a system of prostitution winked at and patronized by gentlemen of standing.”<sup>648</sup>

Clark suggests these spaces did more than satisfy white male desire: they were ideological performances meant to contain the disruption of gendered and racial relations occasioned by the Haitian revolution. “The enterprising *ménagère* had become the compromised *placée*,” explains Clark, a “metamorphosis...[that] rendered the mixed-race temptress several degrees less

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<sup>644</sup> Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 265.

<sup>645</sup> Camille Thierry, who transcribed the piece, produced poetry for *Les Cenelles* that critiqued the Quadroon Ball and the racialized-gendered relations therein. See Floyd D. Cheung, “Les Cenelles and Quadroon Balls: ‘Hidden Transcripts’ of Resistance and Domination in New Orleans, 1803-1845,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 29, no. 2 (1997): 5–16.

<sup>646</sup> Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2013), 172.

<sup>647</sup> Clark, *American Quadroon*, 83.

<sup>648</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 4.

dangerous. She was now fully mastered by the white men whose patriotism and security she had once threatened. Symbolically, the danger of Haiti was mastered.”<sup>649</sup> In response to this ritualized disempowerment, a new form of Creole of Color poetry emerged in the form of a collection known as *Les Cenelles*, edited and compiled by Armand Lanusee. Considered by Jerah Johnson to be “the single most important piece of antebellum black literature ever written,”<sup>650</sup> it critiqued the institution of *plaçage* and took aim at the racialized sexual economy that it reproduced. These poems became so popular that they were set to songs and recited by memory among free Black audiences.<sup>651</sup> Lanusee's poem “The Young Lady at the Ball” critiqued the materialism implicit in the arrangement: “the glitter which surrounds you and charms your eyes/ Is only a deceptive prism which conceals death.”<sup>652</sup> Literary scholar Floyd Cheung argues that these poetic songs were “important, politically charged documents” and suggest that these poems “anticipate another African-American genre of social complaint: the blues.”<sup>653</sup> Like New Orleans blues, these pieces of social criticism were a form of address that critiqued their work conditions and the sexualized power structure that engendered them. They reflected analogous scenarios across the Afro-Atlantic world.

As the *ménagère*, and the social changes unleashed by the French and Haitian Revolutions, became contained in the figure of the *placeé*, the sonic laments of feminized poverty and illegitimate children by free women of color increased in proportion. “Pauvre piti Mamselle Zizi”

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<sup>649</sup> Clark, *American Quadroon*, 83.

<sup>650</sup> Jerah Johnson, “Les Cenelles: What’s in a Name?,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 31, no. 4 (1990): 407.

<sup>651</sup> Edward Maceo Coleman, ed., *Creole Voices* (Washington, D.C: Associated, 1945), xix.

<sup>652</sup> “L’éclat qui t’environne et qui charme ta vue / N’est qu’un prisme trompeur qui recèle la mort.” Armand Lanusee, ed., *Les Cenelles: A Collection of Poems by Creole Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century*, trans. Régine Latortue and Gleason R. W. Adams, Reference Publications in Afro-American Studies (1845; Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 108, 109.

<sup>653</sup> Floyd D. Cheung, “Les Cenelles and Quadroon Balls: ‘Hidden Transcripts’ of Resistance and Domination in New Orleans, 1803-1845,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 29, no. 2 (1997): 6.

was one song which attested to this phenomenon. According to a tourist guidebook published in 1885, this piece was sung in second line processions during the late nineteenth century.<sup>654</sup> It also appeared in a pamphlet published in Philadelphia in 1811 titled *Idylles et chansons, ou essais de poësie créole*, written by a “Habitant d’Hayti.”<sup>655</sup> Dana Epstein, who unearthed this document in 1977, insists that this song was “very popular in both Louisiana and the French indies.”<sup>656</sup> Epstein’s argument is corroborated by George Washington Cable, who claimed the song traveled to New Orleans in 1809, with “refugees from Cuba, Guadeloupe, and other islands...a great influx of persons neither savage nor enlightened, neither white nor black, neither slave nor truly free.”<sup>657</sup> In addition to its second-line appearance, Henry Krehbiel claimed that this song was sung by a “negress in New Orleans.” Krehbiel’s variant references the accessories of a bed, again symbolically charged as pillows were in the *tumba francesa* song recorded by Bacardí y Moreau. Sung in Haitian creole, the song marks the bed’s absence as a marker of *ménagère* descent:

Saturday, love; Sunday married;  
Monday morning, a little one in arms.  
There is no coverlet, no sheets, nothing—  
Little one in arms!  
There will be no money to buy a bed.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans* (New Orleans: New Orleans Press, 1885); referenced in Colleen Mondor, “Listen to the Second Line,” in *Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans? A Collection of Stories and Essays Set in the Big Easy* (Seattle: Chin Music Press, 2006), 82–90. This episode, and these sources, are also recounted in Ruth Salvaggio, *Hearing Sappho in New Orleans: The Call of Poetry from Congo Square to the Ninth Ward* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 7-15.

<sup>655</sup> Habitant d’Hayti, *Idylles et Chansons, Ou Essais de Poësie Créole* (Philadelphia: De l’Imprimerie de J. Edwards, 1811).

<sup>656</sup> Dana Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, 94-95.

<sup>657</sup> George Washington Cable, “Creole Slave Songs,” *Century Magazine*, February 1886, 811.

<sup>658</sup> “*Sam’di l’amour, Dimanch’marié,  
Lundi matin piti dans bras;  
N’a pas couvert, n’a pas de draps,  
N’a pas a rein, piti dans bras!*”

This translation and version of the song on an amalgamation of two different derivative songs of the “original” work referenced in *Idylles et chansons* and *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*. Henry Krehbiel published a variant of the song in Henry Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folk Songs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1914), 134-35, which he based off of Julien Tiersot, “Notes d’ethnographie Musicale. La Musique Chez Les Peuples Indigènes de l’Amérique Du Nord (Etats-Unis et Canada),” *Sammelbände Der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 11, no. 2 (1910): 141–231. Tiersot was a librarian of the Paris Conservatory, and he spent

Over time, the song's narrator and content changed – from Zizi to Azélie to Caroline—but the stories of all three, notes Ruth Salvaggio, “echo within the chambers of a long song about woman who bear the labor and burdens of a historic pain.”<sup>659</sup> In New Orleans, what had been sung in Saint-Domingue as a song placing demands on a system as *ménagères* now had a different tone; it marked the limitations of *placeé* social relations and the economic destitution of Creole of Color migrants, who entered an Anglo-American administered slave society which stripped them of political and economic power. Another possible interpretation is that free women of color from Saint-Domingue were lamenting their reduced economic position in Louisiana: according to marriage contracts in New Orleans notarial archives, free men of color born in Saint-Domingue often married women from Saint-Domingue who had more in property than they did, while exactly the opposite was the case for Louisiana-born free persons of color.<sup>660</sup>

According to George Washington Cable's piano reduction for another variation of this song named “Caroline,” a *habanera* rhythm guides the rhythmic structure of this piece. Once again, a critique of sexualized power relations and feminized impoverishment are accompanied with a *cinquillo*-derived rhythm. This systematic convergence suggests something akin to an intra-diasporic genre of Afro-Atlantic rhythmic devices and biting commentary from which Mamie Desdunes could draw from for inspiration.

The appearance of these songs in a second-line in 1885 demonstrates how thoroughly these themes echoed throughout the generations of Haitian-Louisianan popular culture. According to

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considerable time transcribing music from the Americas, including Iroquois and indigenous songs in 1905. Kreihbel's mentions *l'caban*, which he notes in Martinique meant “bed.”

<sup>659</sup> Salvaggio, *Hearing Sappho in New Orleans*,

<sup>660</sup> Paul Lachance, “Were Saint-Domingue Refugees a Distinctive Cultural Group in Antebellum New Orleans? Evidence from Patterns and Strategies of Property Holding,” *Revista/Review Interamericana* 29, no. 1–4 (1999): 184.

blues enthusiast Tony Russell, Louisiana blues also addressed the entanglements of quadroons, sexuality, and slave breeding. He points to a song popular during Reconstruction, sung from the point of view of a slave, which piece captures the sex between masters and mixed-race slave woman on Louisiana plantations. The verse is as follows:

Massa had gardens and bowers,  
And flowers that were always in bloom;  
He begrudged me my pretty wild flower,  
Cora, my pretty quadroon.<sup>661</sup>

Cora, a “wild flower,” is one of many in the master’s “gardens and bowers.” These verses bear witness that trade in human flesh, which ensured that a new workforce was “always in bloom.” It suggests sex that was not complicit, as either Cora or the narrating slave was “begrudged.”

This song marks the merger of African American critiques of the slave breeding industry with the gendered and sexual commentary of the Black Caribbean and the Haitian diaspora, while the reference to “quadroon” summons the legacy of Quadroon balls. I cannot take up this complex institution here, but the song’s popularity can be understood as means to maintain the consciousness of plantation sexual coercion during Reconstruction, and to connect this historic injustice to current struggles over gender and autonomy. This was a period when, despite the attempt of freedpeople to implement massive structural changes to Southern society, “the Quadroon ball became the Quadroon prostitute.”<sup>662</sup> White men of means travelled the country to partake in this reinvented institution; when one white Republican was appointed by General Grant tasked to overseeing the 1877 election, he damaged his credibility and that of the national Republican party as a whole when he was admitted to attending a “dance given by some very light-

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<sup>661</sup> Tony Russell, *Blacks, Whites, and Blues* (York: Stein: Stein, 1970), 20.

<sup>662</sup> Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon*, 194.

colored people,” with the implication that he paid for sex with a “Quadroon.”<sup>663</sup> “Cora” was kept alive in popular songs for decades, and jazz banjoist Danny Barker recorded a song, “Corrine Died on the Battlefield,” which is quite possibly based on this same archetype.<sup>664</sup>

Quadroon Balls were reinvented during turn-of-the-century Storyville to market sex with mixed-race women, and they self-consciously invoked a long Afro-Atlantic shadow. Madam Willie Piazza’s ad that “we only have the amber fluid here” was one of many which appealed to a history of both *plaçage* and Creole of Color mistresses whose relationship with white suitors fell somewhere between common-law marriages and long-term prostitutes. It also, as Emily Clark has points out, invokes the light-skinned antebellum sex slaves known as “fancy girls.”<sup>665</sup> By the twentieth century, “Octoroons” were frequently marketed to the sex tourists arriving in the Crescent City, invoking the myth of the “Octoroon Balls.” Here, too, the self-conscious memory of Haiti by brothel owners contributed to the meanings and contradictions of the sexual economy. Lulu White claimed to be descended from Saint-Dominguan refugees (she wasn’t), as did Willie Piazza (for which there is evidence).<sup>666</sup> Lulu White’s “Mahogany Hall” was, as Emily Landau reminds us, an homage to the deforested tree species associated with Haiti.<sup>667</sup> The variations of

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<sup>663</sup> *New York Times*, February 10, 1877; Paul Leland Haworth, *The Hayes-Tilden Disputed Presidential Election of 1876* (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers Company, 1906), Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon*, 195.

<sup>664</sup> Danny Barker recorded “Corrine Died on the Battlefield,” allegedly based on the legend of a woman named Cora Anne who died in a street fight between two Mardi Gras tribes in the 1920s, but it seems likely that it had some relation to this earlier piece. The lyrics explain, “Corrine came from the Cotton Fields, Corrine died on the Battlefield, Corrine Met a Man Named Bill, He Made her Gamble, He Made Her Steal.” These song continued to be transformed by artists just as Charles Neville and Wilson Turbinton, including a variant of Corey, a rebellious male slave. See Jason Berry, Jonathon Foose, and Tad Jones, *Up From the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music Since World War II* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 235; Jason Berry, “African Cultural Memory in New Orleans Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (1988): 10.

<sup>665</sup> For a discussion of fancy girls and Octoroon Balls, see Lisa Ze Winters, “‘More Desultory and Unconnected than Any Other’: Geography, Desire, and Freedom in Eliza Potter’s ‘A Hairdresser’s Experience in High Life,’” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 455–75.

<sup>666</sup> Emily Landau has concluded that Lulu White most likely was born in Alabama to enslaved parents. See Epstein, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 197-198.

<sup>667</sup> *Spectacular Wickedness*, 200.

“Cora” and “Pauvre piti Mamselle Zizi” spoke to this evolving and transforming system of sexual commodification, its fetishized colorism, and its resonances with the past century, thereby keeping historical memory alive through popular aural critique.

The distinct double valence of the blues—its invocation of sexual liberation, or at least, erotic agency, while narrating the contours of an oppressive sexual economy—is strikingly similar to this genre of Haitian diasporic aural critique. As George Washington Cable remarked, “It is odd that such fantastical comicality of words should have been mated to such fierce and frantic dancing, but so it was.”<sup>668</sup> These rhythms sonically marked alternatives to the sexual coercion and alienated erotics, and were reproduced in the very heart of factories of prostitution and sex work, whether within slave labor or wage labor. By the time of Storyville’s emergence, prior regimes of sexual coercion had manifested into a kind of sexual capitalism, whereby sex was not only coerced or for sale but integrated into the New South’s consumer-centric economy.<sup>669</sup> Yet even here, one heard the utterances of early blues, which reclaimed women’s right to a desalienated *eros* and reproduced a community of compassion for fellow sufferers. And even here, the *cinquillo*- and *tresillo*-derived rhythms of the Haitian diaspora continued to serve as a cultural response to the psychic, political, and affective contradictions embedded in commodified sex. “Mamie’s Blues” embodies this connection.<sup>670</sup>

Equally important is the fact that other Creole of Color blues musicians who Jelly Roll Morton and Mamie Desdunes socialized and performed alongside *did* invoke their Haitian identity,

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<sup>668</sup> George Washington Cable, “The Dance in Place Congo,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* XXXI, no. 4 (February 1886): 525.

<sup>669</sup> “Jas Bands in New Orleans,” *Ragtime Review*, Jan 1917, available at <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10157532441074211&set=gm.2674198492813189>, accessed August 25, 2020.

<sup>670</sup> For a discussion of “tango,” its substitution with *habanera* and other Caribbean rhythms, and the bantu roots of the word, see Isabelle Leymarie, *From The Tango To Reggae: Black and Creole Music of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996).

sometimes in order to signify scenes of sex and power. Such is most vividly captured by Lizzie Miles, who performed frequently in Storyville and who Jelly Roll Morton called his “favorite vocalist.”<sup>671</sup> Miles appears to link her connection to the Haitian diaspora to the brutal treatment she endures at the hands of her husband in “Haitian Blues.”

Daddy's been cheating  
he's been mistreating  
gave me a beating for some abuse  
Now I've learned my lesson  
and I'm confessin'  
I wish that I had never been born  
I'm leaving town  
'cause I've got the Haitian Blues  
Boo hoo hoo hoo<sup>672</sup>

Miles seems to imply something particularly “Haitian” about being the victim of infidelity and abuse, as well as this particularity being somehow located in New Orleans. Perhaps she is invoking the complex history of disempowerment invoked by the “tragic Quadroon.”

Thus, in registers that marked both erotic agency and social death, a Haitian political vocabulary had been generalized as common sense over several generations. Some women used these markers to market their wares; others looked to Haiti in order to invoke a history of sexual violence; prior generations remembered Saint-Domingue as a site of empowerment which had led to emancipatory possibilities for formerly enslaved people. Yet what was performed, lived, and breathed in the district were the *cinquillo*-based rhythms and the embodied wisdom it captured. Katherine McKittrick writes that the brilliance of Black women artists lies in their ability to “respatialize the potential of black femininity and black subjectivity in general. Blackness becomes

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<sup>671</sup> Zutty Singleton said that Lizzie Miles was Jelly Roll Morton's favorite vocalist. “Zutty and Marge Singleton, Oral History.” February 2, 1969, Reel I, Track I, Summary, 7. Hogan Jazz Archives. Tulane University, quoted in Tucker, “Feminist Perspective,” 324.

<sup>672</sup> Lizzie Miles, *Haitian Blues / Your Time Now*, Shellac, 10”, 78 RPM (The New Emerson, 1923). I would like to thank Michael Heller for his help with lyric transcription.

a site of radical possibility, supernatural travels, and difficult epistemological returns to the past and the present,” creating a liminal space whereby “black geographies, while certainly material and contextual, can be lived in unusual, unexpected, ways.”<sup>673</sup> The Black geographies explored by “Mamie’s Blues” performs a similar respatialization, creating both radical possibilities and exploring “difficult epistemological returns” in order to better contextualize the sexual economy of Storyville. Her very performance, and its echoes in Jelly Roll Morton, create an expansive sense of Black history and identity tied to the Afro-Atlantic’s myriad lessons. It is a historical archive from below, a terrain of struggle, a map for possible futures. The musical practice redeployed the cultural technology of bringing sexual issues out into the open. It marked the victories of *mulâtresses* and the defeats of *placeés*, the changing fortunes which added and altered the possible “blueprints for action” without erasing prior ones. Mamie Desdunes’s invocation of *habanera* within blues captured this fraught, contradictory, and complex history.

### 3.6 Conclusion

*My grandfather saw it all, saw what it was. He knew he wasn't supposed to talk to this girl or come to see her. And the girl was shy; she'd be frightened. He saw her being taken away. He'd seen her such a short time; it was such a short time he'd know all what he was singing and feeling and what it was leading up to in itself, inside him—to a kind of freedom, to a kind of time catching up to itself to where it was just itself and at peace. That feeling, it got too strong for him. He stopped the singing, he had to stop. And people about him, they saw it. They'd seen what had happened. And so they started to moan, to let him know. They were moaning because something like that had happened to all of them.*

- Sidney Bechet<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>674</sup> Bechet, Sidney. *Treat It Gentle*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1960.

Several scholars have hypothesized the connections between Haiti and jazz. For instance, Douglas Henry Daniels has pointed to “two metaphors or motifs-rootedness and flight-which jazz and vodun share, and they exist at rather deep levels in each, masquerading as rhythms and rhythmic motifs which inspire dance and various states of transcendence.”<sup>675</sup> Two prominent African American women artist-scholars, Zora Neal Hurston and Katherine Dunham, deeply researched and theorized these connections through their scholarship and art. Not coincidentally, both Hurston and Dunham were deeply invested in the prophetic and transcendent properties of Black music.<sup>676</sup> “Something material, psychic and spiritual of Haiti’s revolutionary cultural action inhabits American consciousness,” argues Keith Cartwright, what he referred to as a “voodoo’s polyrhythmic “remix” of the diverse bodies of knowledge” which continues to “swing the new jazz sounds of modern time.”<sup>677</sup> Haitian artists have made similar claims. According to the contemporary Haitian jazz guitarist, Alex “tit” Pascal, *rara* and jazz are linked as Black modernist forms that defy hierarchies of “folk” and “art”: “I have been looking at *rara* the way we say *an kan* [on edge]; you look at it sideways and just let it go by...I have never thought that I’m going to modernize *rara*. It is far more modern than anything modern we have. It is avant-garde...like when I heard Coltrane.”<sup>678</sup> From Haiti to New Orleans to the United States South, across decades, these connections live.

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<sup>675</sup> Douglas Henry Daniels, “Vodun and Jazz: ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton and Lester ‘Pres’ Young - Substance and Shadow,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2003): 110–23.

<sup>676</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1935) and *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1938).

<sup>677</sup> Keith Cartwright, “Re-Creolizing Swing: St Domingue Refugees in the Gove of New Orleans,” in *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and Its Cultural Aftershocks*, ed. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), 103-105.

<sup>678</sup> Quoted in Averill, *A Day for the Hunter*, 132.

The creolized rhythms of the Haitian diaspora's (often forced) refugees and the Afro-Caribbean woman's tradition of sexual critique can be considered another of Houston Baker Jr.'s "waystations" of the blues. One resonance of the embodied freedom of the Haitian peasantry within blues philosophy is the lyric, "Yuh Can Read My Letters bu Yuh Sho Cain't Read my Mind."<sup>679</sup> Opposing state legibility and governmentality with a secretive realm of autonomy sounds a lot like a riff of a nineteenth century expression of the Haitian peasantry, "*Vous signé nom moi, mais bous pas signé pieds moi*," "You signed my name, but you haven't signed my feet." This common refrain that celebrated the peasantry's marronage from plantation contracts and the embodied freedom embedded in feet, movement, and music.<sup>680</sup> The presence of Alice Zeno's "song from Haiti," the pervasive influence of the *habanera*, and the transculturation of Haitian dance and musical forms in all sectors of New Orleans society, from Congo Square's dances to the music of Louis Gottschalk, lend a context in which to imagine how Haitian influences suffused rural and urban Louisiana counterplantation traditions, including the blues.<sup>681</sup> Mamie Desdunes was activating a creolization already implicit in the history of Afro-Louisiana.

However, a paucity of hard archives does not mean we lack evidence. In their study of the Black eroticism within slavery and freedom, Lindsey and Johnson ask, "What did ecstasy look like for newly emancipated blacks?" and suggest that the questions of the erotic and the ecstatic have

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<sup>679</sup> Sterling Brown, "The Blues as Folk Poetry," in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert O'Meally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 550.

<sup>680</sup> Arudouin 1860: 10:23n1; Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 166.

<sup>681</sup> As Reagan Patrick Mitchell argues, "Gottschalk's re-embodiment of the bamboula rhythm was made possible and enriched as a result of mental and physical boundary transgressions of two women from Haiti, Brusle and Sally. However, when Gottschalk's history is presented, only one possibility is presented, that he simply heard the sonic ruminations from Congo Square." Reagan Patrick Mitchell, "Gottschalk's Engagement with the Ungovernable: Louis Moreau Gottschalk and the Bamboula Rhythm," *Educational Studies: Echoes, Reverberations, Silences, and Noise: Sonic Possibilities in Education* 54, no. 4 (2018): 426.

been untended because “We lack imagination. The archive demands imagination.”<sup>682</sup> As Pamela Scully has noted, “The historian trying to uncover or analyze slaves’ perspectives on slavery, emancipation, and gender and racial ideologies has to press the limits of the evidence;” and thus, historians of emancipation seek to hear “different perspectives of the colonized through attention to practices, through the use of oral history, and through skillful reading between the lines to find evidence of subaltern views.” Because it was often dangerous for enslaved communities to circulate their views, “Embracing the ambiguity of the archives means acknowledging our limitations as historians. It also meanings acknowledging the political agency of freedpeople.”<sup>683</sup> In other words, we should understand the lack of “evidence” as, paradoxically, the possibility of an underground system of meaning-making that was and continues to be illegible to power. As Diana Taylor has pointed out, in contrast to archive, the repertoire “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing-in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge.” The mutability of these forms is also what makes them a source of continual meaning-making: “Dances change over time, even though generations of dancers (and even individual dances) swear they’re always the same. But even though the embodiment changes, the meaning might very well remain the same.”<sup>684</sup> Amiri Baraka’s concept of “the changing same” underscores the same idea with its apparently contradictory dialectic. “The Blues impulse transferred...*The spirituals...the camp meeting songs at backwoods churches...or*

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<sup>682</sup> Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie Johnson, “Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom,” *Meridians* 12, no. 2 (2014): 189.

<sup>683</sup> Pamela Scully, “Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Production of Knowledge in the Postemancipation Cape Colony, 1834-1844,” in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, ed. Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 37–55.

<sup>684</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

*Slave Songs talking about deliverance...* This is social, but it is total. The world is a total.”<sup>685</sup> To this litany, I have added the sexually-conscious commentary of diasporic Haitian songs as another “ingredient” of mutable and transferential blues consciousness.

Creole of Color activists and Haitian-Louisianan blues women present two contrasting subjectivities from which to trace our argument. The former constitutes an archivally “legible” subject. Their commitment to modeling racial and economic justice as an embodiment (or performance) of the Haitian Revolution and the “the country of Dessalines” suggests that radical attitudes were widespread for a longer period, and across a wider population, within Louisiana’s variegated Black communities than we have acknowledged. In the second instance, performance traditions rooted in an Haitian exodus and an Afro-Atlantic sexual economy have eluded the archive can still be heard and felt; my goal here has to been to trace their affect as an expression of “embodied memory.”<sup>686</sup> By uniting these methodologies, I have tried to show that rather than making an attempt to pin down the “truth” of Haitian influence on jazz (and it seems undeniable that it was a meaningful influence across several generations of Black Louisianans) a more productive task is to trace how this was an active, rather than a passive, inheritance. Those who claimed “to be Louisiana is to be Haitian” did so because they put in work to be Haitian. And the meanings of Haiti changed for those who embraced its mantle. During the dramatic, revolutionary years of Reconstruction, such an intersubjective, “romantic” political praxis was both possible and needed. In the epoch of Storyville, being a Haitian-descended woman entailed creating a polyvocal and polycultural musical form as a way to speak truth to power and summon the will to liberate and embrace desire—all while still making a living!

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<sup>685</sup> Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), “The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music),” in *Black Music* (New York: De Capo, 1968), 180, 186 (emphasis in text).

<sup>686</sup> Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.

According to several, Daniel Desdunes was the first to swing, and his sister, Mamie Desdunes, composed the first 12-bar blues.<sup>687</sup> The Desdunes continued creolizing intra-plantation traditions from the Caribbean and the United States – and by doing so inaugurated a new structure of feeling.<sup>688</sup> This was a praxis, a challenge to social death, performed and embodied through communicative and expressive forces.<sup>689</sup> This fusion was not ancillary to, but an outgrowth of, the long 19<sup>th</sup> century’s Caribbean revolutions, which fought to remake the meaning of labor, race, and modernity. The common wind not only ensured that such redefinitions reached the ears of Rodolphe, Daniel and Mamie; the freedom dreams on this common wind produced the Desdunes family as one of its most powerful vectors of 19<sup>th</sup>-century radical Black internationalism. As Clyde Woods suggests, “The Blues tradition has consistently served to unite working-class communities across different spatial scales: blocks, neighborhoods, towns, cities, regions, ethnicities, and nations.”<sup>690</sup> This chapter locates such blues unification as Atlantic in scope, so long as we employ a scale that thinks in the long nineteenth century in the Caribbean world.

Viewed this way, one can appreciate the expansive sense of sexuality which animates these works even when sexuality is acknowledged as weaponized in the service of a “saturnalia of punishment.”<sup>691</sup> When Mamie Desdunes and other blues women celebrated their own sexuality—when they sang about their cabbage being cooked—even while acknowledging how their

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<sup>687</sup> Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27.

<sup>688</sup> For a discussion of how plantation singing traditions in the United States south influenced the development of barbershop chords and blues harmony, especially the use of sevenths, see Vic Hobson, “Plantation Song: Delius, Barbershop, and the Blues,” *American Music (Champaign, Ill.)* 31, no. 3 (2013): 314–39.

<sup>689</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>690</sup> Clyde Woods, “‘Sittin’ on Top of the World’: The Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography,” in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge: Between the Lines, 2007), 46–81.

<sup>691</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 259.

sexualization was part of an informal market propelled by white commercial power, they were expounding a theory of the plantation's continuity within urban life and pointing to a way the soul might exit the plantation. Their dissident articulations should be thought of as part of the counter-plantation nexus, and their work spoke to an alternate vision of community and the body that reclaimed pleasure and sensuousness for Black communities and Black bodies which had become alienated as sexual commodities. They sang not only of their pain but also the terms of their liberation. In this way, they were able to shine light on a path out of the prison.

## 4.0 La Frontera Sónica: Slavery, Empire, and Liberation in Afro-Louisianan Dreams of Mexico

### 4.1 Introduction

*To survive the Borderlands  
You must live 'sin fronteras'  
be a crossroads.*

- Gloria Anzaldua<sup>692</sup>

In February of 1885, “two to three thousand colored people” with additional “scattered whites” attended a striking civil rights rally, reminiscent of the apex of Reconstruction, eight years after the return of white supremacist rule. Held in an enormous, thirty-three-acre outdoor structure directly outside of New Orleans between Charles Street and the Mississippi River, the event featured multiple “colored” brass bands, Black choirs from around the country, and iconic Black activists from other parts of the Deep South. Civil rights lawyer and Allen University professor, Daniel A. Straker, travelled from South Carolina to speak to the captive audience. Straker’s resume spanned the Black Atlantic: he had relocated to Kentucky from his native Barbados to teach at a Freedman’s school in 1868; in 1875, he arrived in Charleston, where he was elected to the State House of Representatives from Orangeburg Country in 1876. In less than a year, he was forced from office, with the threat of violence, by “Redeemers.”<sup>693</sup> Yet neither he nor those who

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<sup>692</sup> Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 4.

<sup>693</sup> Glenn O. Phillips, “The Response of a West Indian Activist: D.A. Straker 1842-1908,” *Journal of Negro History* 66 (1981): 128–39; Eric Foner, “Daniel A. Straker,” in *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 205–6.

assembled to hear him had given up the dream of a radical, interracial democracy. He called for a society where Black and white peoples may “dwell together in love, peace, and unity, under equal laws, exact justice and common privileges, so that the antagonism of race, the hatred of creed and parties, the prejudices of caste, and the denial of equal rights may disappear from among us forever.”<sup>694</sup> Following Straker, another ousted Black Reconstruction politician, Bishop Henry M. Turner of Georgia, took the podium. Now a prominent AME minister, Turner was the country’s most vocal advocate of emigration, and did not believe the United States could be reformed.<sup>695</sup> Turner used his speaking time to denounce the Supreme Court decision in 1883 which had voided the Civil Rights Act of 1875: “[I]n a seven minute decision [the Court] had declared that seven millions of colored people had no social rights which the Government could protect.”<sup>696</sup>

These speeches were interspersed with performances that spanned African American life. In between the civil rights calls to action the Laredon Rifles, probably the state’s last Black militia, showcased their arms in a salute.<sup>697</sup> Then Fisk Jubilee Singers and the “Glee Club” of Louisiana’s Straight University sang patriotic airs and African American choral music. Finally, the Excelsior Brass Band, “known as the finest black brass band in the city” of New Orleans,<sup>698</sup> played in between speakers, including a number that celebrated the radical internationalism of the event: “Transit Around the World.”<sup>699</sup> Perhaps they chose this selection to honor the ensemble

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<sup>694</sup> *Times Picayune*, February 24, 1885.

<sup>695</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press, 1971); John M. Matthews, “Negro Republicans in the Reconstruction of Georgia,” *Georgia Reconstruction Quarterly* 60 (1976): 147; Eric Foner, “Henry M. Turner,” in *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 215-16.

<sup>696</sup> *Times Picayune*, February 24, 1885.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.* The Laredon Rifles are also mentioned in the *New Iberia Enterprise*, August 26, 1885. They appear to have been captured by the state militia commander and Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard’s son-in-law, Colonel Charles Laredon. See T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 324-326.

<sup>698</sup> William J. Schafer and Richard B. Allen, *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 9.

<sup>699</sup> *Times Picayune*, February 24, 1885.

who had performed first at this epic gathering: the eighty piece group *la banda del Octavo Regimiento de Caballería* (the Eighth Calvary Band, hereafter referred to as *la Banda de Caballería*). This group was Mexico's premiere military band, and they had travelled from Mexico City at the order of President Porfirio Díaz.<sup>700</sup> *La Banda de Caballería* was so successful during its performances in New Orleans that it stayed six months in the Crescent City, and several of its members relocated to the French Quarter permanently.<sup>701</sup> Their solidarity with Black Americans' struggles did not stop on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February: Mexican instructors taught the formative generation of New Orleans jazz musicians, including Bunk Johnson, Eddie Edwards, and Louis James.<sup>702</sup> When Florencio Ramos decided to stay in New Orleans, he effectively deserted a military post that had provided health insurance and social security, choosing instead to become New Orleans's first full-time saxophonist and contribute to an audacious crossborder musical experiment.<sup>703</sup>

This Atlantic scene, with Afro-Caribbean radicals, back-to-Africa emigrationists, Black militias, and Mexican musicians, uniting around a civil rights agenda and a display of Black and Brown culture, shatters many assumptions about the Redemption South and the so-called "age of accommodation."<sup>704</sup> But this radical gathering was certainly not the intent of the event's architects. The polyglot assembly of plantation dissidents took place in the middle of the planter class's most high-profile and reactionary public event since the Civil War: the 1884-85 Industrial and Cotton

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<sup>700</sup> Rafael A. Tuiz Torres, "Las Bandas Militares de Música En México y Su Historia," in *Bandas de Viento En México*, ed. Goergina Flores Mercado (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2015), 21–44.

<sup>701</sup> John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Alain Derbez, *El jazz en México: Datos para esta historia* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 235-236.

<sup>702</sup> Gaye Theresa Johnson, "'Sobre Las Olas': A Mexican Genesis in Borderlands Jazz and the Legacy for Ethnic Studies," *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 225–40; Stewart, Stewart, "The Mexican Band Legend," 1-4.

<sup>703</sup> Torres, "Las Bandas Militares de Música En México y Su Historia," 21–44; Stewart, "The Mexican Band Legend: Myth, Reality, and Musical Impact; A Preliminary Investigation," 3.

<sup>704</sup> Blair Murphy Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3-4.

Exposition. Straker's language of equality and unity could not be more antithetical to the politics of the event as a whole. Marking 100 years of cotton exports from the United States, this exposition's significance lay in that it was held seven years after Reconstruction was dismantled/abandoned by the "Great Compromise" of 1877. A show of force by Louisiana's planter class and New Orleans's shipping barons, it signaled, in the most grandiose manner possible, that the Crescent City was open for business, and that economic penetration into Latin American was an absolute priority.<sup>705</sup>

Built on a former plantation, similar fairs across the south often featured "plantation" exhibits with "Young bucks and thickliped [*sic*] African maidens 'happy as a sunflower,'" and New Orleans was no exception.<sup>706</sup> Speakers denounced the call for civil rights and called for Black submission to white rule: "Be as grateful as you can to those descended of the people who imported you first from Africa, and sold you down South when your labor was no longer profitable" intoned one Judge who had a public speaking role.<sup>707</sup> Meanwhile, modernizing-obsessed Latin American capitalist technocrats, a class that Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo has described (sardonically) as "wizards of progress"<sup>708</sup> courted U.S. investors to purchase the lands and labor of their subalterns and harvest precious minerals and resources. The Mexican ambassador to Great Britain, Sebastian B. de Mier, claimed that "the exhibition of New Orleans changed foreign opinion in our favor" as

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<sup>705</sup> Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1978); E. M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay, 'The Killing Fields of the Deep South: the Market for Cotton and the Lynching of Blacks, 1882-1930', in *American Sociological Review* 55(4) (August 1990): 526-539; Weymouth Jordan, 'Cotton Planters Conventions in the Old South', in *The Journal of Southern History* 19(3) (August 1953): 321-345; Herbert Collins, 'The Southern Industrial Gospel Before 1860', in *The Journal of Southern History* 12(3) (August 1946): 386-402.

<sup>706</sup> Wright Stedman, "Vanity Fair," *Nashville American*, 1 May 1897, 7; quoted in David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 77.

<sup>707</sup> *Times Picayune*, May 18, 1885.

<sup>708</sup> Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

people were “surprised” by both Mexico’s “natural riches” and Díaz’s “efforts to exploit them.”<sup>709</sup> These negotiations portended poorly for farmers and Indigenous peoples in Mexico. U.S. Americans<sup>710</sup> bragged that they would be moving “Their entire cotton farm” onto the land of indigenous peoples in Sonora, Mexico; and less than a year later Porfirio Díaz initiated the most brutal genocide of modern Mexican history against the Yaqui nation to acquire land he had already sold.<sup>711</sup> This cultural fair was the cultural expression of the resurgent plantation economy, manifesting a new era of imperialism and anti-Black and Brown violence. When the Mexican Revolution (1910-1924) produced a government less sympathetic to U.S. business interests, the United States marines occupied Veracruz for eight months in 1914.<sup>712</sup>

Even in this spectacular world of racism, and dispossession, in the beating heart of an emerging empire propagating a global plantation, a counter-plantation space emerged, populated by a motley crew of Mexican, Barbadian, and Afro-Louisianan peoples who made themselves legible, or rather, audible, to one other. This two-way traffic between New Orleans and Mexico is the subject of this chapter. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mexico was an active player in the regional struggle against slavery and plantation economics, with a marked impact on the Black political and musical cultures of Louisiana. After Haiti, Mexico was the second country in the world to abolish slavery; a fact not lost on the hundreds of thousands of Afro-Mexicans who were

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<sup>709</sup> Sebastian B. de Mier, *México en la Exposición universal internacional de París - 1900* (Paris: J. Dumoulin, 1901), 6-7.

<sup>710</sup> I have borrowed the term “U.S. American” from the historian Mary A. Renda to challenge the United-States centrism implicit in the more commonly used “American,” which refers to a continent, not a nation-state. Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 281

<sup>711</sup> “Mexico Exhibit,” *Times-Democrat*, February 16 1885; quoted in Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876– 1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>712</sup> Jack Sweetman, *The Landing at Veracruz: 1914: The First Complete Chronicle of a Strange Encounter in April, 1914, When the United States Navy Captured and Occupied the City of Veracruz, Mexico* (Washington: U.S. Naval Institute, 1968).

overrepresented in the causalities in the Mexican War of Independence.<sup>713</sup> Mexico emanated a powerful symbolic and geopolitical importance for antislavery efforts of Afro-Louisianans; in the 1830s, escaped slaves, free people of color, internally displaced Indigenous peoples, and sympathetic Tejanos created maroon societies in a region stretching from east Texas south to the Rio Grande and west to the borders of the *Comancheria*.<sup>714</sup> Thousands of enslaved Afro-Louisianans and free people of color escaped to these free societies, an area denigrated by one U.S. Indian agent as a “whirlpool” that drew in the “restless and dissatisfied of all nations and languages.”<sup>715</sup>

Yet the Mexican state found them to be better neighbors than others. With the “Law of April 6, 1830,” Mexico prohibited the entry of slaveowners and their slaves into Texas, eventually leading to a slaveholder uprising that led to the United States-Mexican War. In 1831, the government of Tamaulipas offered land and tools to a colony of 250 free Black families from Ohio. Mexico also began recruiting self-emancipated slaves and Creoles of Color from New Orleans to form agricultural colonies in the border region.<sup>716</sup> It was around this time that Creole of Color families such as the Donatos and the Tios began deepening their commercial contacts with Mexico.<sup>717</sup> Two decades later, at the onset of the United-States Mexican War, a robust Spanish-

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<sup>713</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991).

<sup>714</sup> Max Flomen, “The Long War for Texas: Maroons, Renegades, Warriors, and Alternative Emancipations in the Southwest Borderlands, 1835-1845,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2021), 6.

<sup>715</sup> George Gray to James Barbour, June 13, 1827, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 20: The Territory of Arkansas, 1825-1829* (28 vols. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940), 480; quoted in Flomen, “The Long War for Texas,” 12.

<sup>716</sup> Benjamin Lundy, *The Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy: Including His Journeys to Texas and Mexico, with a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti* (Philadelphia: W.D. Parrish, 1847), 105;

<sup>717</sup> Sidney J. Lemelle, “The ‘circum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures: The Donato Colony in Mexico, 1830-1860,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 57–76; Claude Oubre, “St. Landry’s Gens de Couleur Libre: The Impact of War and Reconstruction,” in *Louisiana Tapestry: The Ethnic Weave of St. Landry Parish*, ed. Vaughn Baker and Jean T. Kreamer (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 1983).

language press took root in New Orleans. It not only opposed the aggression of Mexico's northern neighbor, but challenged the United States's slave system.<sup>718</sup> At the same time, Mexican and Black aural cultures in the borderlands region began to interact in creative ways that expressed the condition of the migrant and Black-Mexican solidarity. As Blind Lemon Jefferson sang, "Well the blues come to Texas: loping like a mule. You take a high brown woman, man she's hard to fool."<sup>719</sup>

This chapter will foreground what Max Flomen calls the "alternative emancipation" strategies developed by Black and Creole of Color Louisianans as they built alliances with Indigenous, Tejano, and Mexican communities across the borderlands.<sup>720</sup> Yet other transnational spaces, where freedom dreams were spoken and sung, proliferated in the port cities of the Gulf world, and one of the main liberation schools was the cigar shop. Cigar making was an Atlantic trade which was heavily populated by freed slaves, Creole of Color radicals, Cuban independence leaders, and Mexican liberal exiles.<sup>721</sup> Benito Juárez, for instance, worked as a cigar roller while in New Orleans during the 1850s, as did the Cuban exile Ramón Pages in the 1890s. Both of these revolutionaries returned to their country to instigate regime change; while living in New Orleans, they interacted deeply with Creole of Color activists during civil rights struggles in both decades.<sup>722</sup> Part of what made cigar rolling distinct from other workplaces was the common

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<sup>718</sup> Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "Delta Desterrados: Antebellum New Orleans and New World Print Culture," in *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 52–79.

<sup>719</sup> Blind Lemon Jefferson Lyrics for "Long Lonesome Blues."

<sup>720</sup> Max Flomen, "The Long War for Texas: Maroons, Renegades, Warriors, and Alternative Emancipations in the Southwest Borderlands, 1835-1845," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2021).

<sup>721</sup> For a discussion of the commodity webs that informed Tobacco, see Barbara M. Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright: Creating an American Commodity, 1617– 1937* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011). Susan D. Greenbaum explores Afro-Cuban cigar rollers and the political importance of cigar rolling communities in Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 50.

<sup>722</sup> José Herrera Peña, "Juárez y el destierro (1853-1855)," in *Benito Juárez en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. Adalberto Santana (México: UNAM, 2006), 51–68; Colonel John Sobieski, *Life of President Benito Pablo Juarez: The Savior and Regenerator of Mexico* (Rosendale: S.A. Coffman, 1919); Rebecca J Scott, "Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary," *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 2 (2007): 237–56.

practice of *El Lector*, or the “reader,” by which current events and radical tracts were shared by an orator while others worked.<sup>723</sup> Cigar workers were particularly radical members of the Atlantic working class; their shops were also places where transnational communities might share song; Ned Sublette notes that in Santiago de Cuba, “cigar rollers were entertained by having readers read to them, but the workers also sang while they sat twisting up tobacco all day. A group of cigar rollers could work out songs on the job, a cappella, then go out at night with a guitar, serenading.”<sup>724</sup>

Two musicians in the Excelsior Brass Band embody this transborder history. These were the brothers Louis Tio (1862-1922) and Lorenzo Tio Sr. (1867-1908), two of New Orleans’s most highly accomplished Creole of Color clarinetists. They were also Mexican nationals.<sup>725</sup> Louis and Lorenzo Sr.’s parents, Thomas Louis Marcos Tio (1828-1878) and Louise Marguerite Anthenais Hazeur (1830-1903), had moved to Veracruz at the invitation of the Mexican revolutionary government of Ignacio Comonfort and Benito Juárez in 1860.<sup>726</sup> Both of these Mexican Presidents had, only five years earlier, lived in New Orleans as exiles, where they planned the overthrow of Santa Anna’s military dictatorship with other exiled liberal revolutionaries.<sup>727</sup> In Veracruz, Thomas and Louise had two sons; they also built an experimental agricultural commune named *Eureka* with one hundred families from both sides of the border. These families shared resources, joined communal lands, and received an incredible amount of support from both the Mexican state

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<sup>723</sup> Araceli Tinajero, *El Lector: A History of the Cigar Factory Reader* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>724</sup> Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Incorporated, 2007); Margarita Mateo Palmer, *Del Bardo Que Te Canta* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1988).

<sup>725</sup> Rose Tio Winn, also upon direct question, responded that she felt assured her grandfather and great-uncle did perform in some capacity at the Exposition.. See Kinzer, “The Tio Family,” 150.

<sup>726</sup> *Documens Relatif à La Colonie d’Eureka*, Louisiana Research Center, Tulane University, 1860.

<sup>727</sup> José Herrera Peña, “Juárez y el destierro (1853-1855),” in *Benito Juárez en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. Adalberto Santana (México: UNAM, 2006), 51–68; Ray F. Broussard, “Vidaurri, Juarez and Comonfort’s Return from Exile,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1969): 268–80.

and Veracruzano locals.<sup>728</sup> In the *Eureka* commune, counter-plantation traditions were put into practice; in Veracruz, while working as cigar-rollers, the young Tios developed their clarinet chops until they moved to New Orleans as teenagers.<sup>729</sup>

I conceptualize this ongoing crossborder space where alternative emancipations and new sounds were shared as *la frontera sónica*. In Spanish, *la frontera* can refer to both “the border” as a construction of states and empires, as well “borderlands,” the geographic and social spaces that emerge at the intersection of two or more linguistic, political, and cultural worlds, often created by those who the border crosses. As many commentators have noted, the borderland (*frontera*) is a site that evades the hegemonic values of nation-states and empires, pointing to possibilities not imagined by either.<sup>730</sup> As Gloria Anzaldúa explains, “A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los Atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through.”<sup>731</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Deôt et euripsto, *O. de Armas*, trans. Lawrence Gushee, 1859; Antoinette Tio, “Memoir of Antoinette Tio” (1878). Thank you to Professor Charles Kinzer for providing me these invaluable documents.

<sup>729</sup> Charles Kinzer suggests that Tios learned how to play clarinet from their father, but I believe they also learned from locals, an argument I develop later. “The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans,” *The Second Line* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 18–27.

<sup>730</sup> Elliott Young, *Catahno Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press,

2004); Americo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border, Music in American life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Arnoldo De Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Manuel H Pena, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

<sup>731</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 3. For other literature on borderlands as distinct from (and resistant to) borders, see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 814–4; Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2011): 5–46; James F. Brooks, “Served Well by Plunder: La Gran Ladronería and Producers of History Astride the Río Grande,” *American Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2000): 23–58; Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

As both a material and a sonic space, the subjects of the *frontera sónica* attempted to build and resound social relations hitherto unrealized, between groups that might not speak the same language but shared a communitarian grammar. These spaces were a kind of “decolonized contact zone,” where, in the words of Kevin Meehan, “diverse colonized peoples struggling toward greater self-determination...strive to replace the radical asymmetries of colonial society with radically egalitarian power relations.” The consistent presence of Mexican and Tejano collaborators in both New Orleans and the Texas borderlands region suggests that Indigenous and non-Black colonized people of color made an important contribution to the evolving culture of the African diaspora and its counter-plantation projects.<sup>732</sup> Perhaps most important is how, in the words of James Nichols, “mobile peoples transformed a limit that governments intended to mark one territory off from another into a line of opportunity, economic mobility, and even social stability.”<sup>733</sup> In sync with Louisiana-Mexican mobile peoples who challenged the limits of state power and white supremacy, the *frontera sónica* prefigured the border-crossing that was heard in early jazz. Sonic border hopping was, indeed, derived from this history of exodus, a cultural practice deeply tied to the struggles for equal rights and self-determination.

The Tio family ran through each of these Atlantic scenes: as cigar makers, border-hopping refugees, agricultural communers, and Afro-Mexican musicians, and their multigenerational contacts in the *frontera sónica* speaks to their authoritative influence on New Orleans clarinet. Yet the Tios, like the Mexican republic itself, were not without their contradictions, especially

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<sup>732</sup> Kevin Meehan, *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 37-38. Meehan builds off, and contrasts with, Mary Louise Pratt notion of the “contact zone” between colonizers and colonized subjects in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>733</sup> James David Nichols, *The Limits of Liberty: Mobility and the Making of the Eastern U.S.-Mexico Border* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 228.

regarding their relationships with the darker members of the African diaspora. Louis and Lorenzo Tio Sr.'s grandfather engaged in small-scale slave trading, likely as a privateer, and later, Lorenzo Tio Sr. expressed antiblack attitudes in his competition with uptown Black musicians. Yet the Tios also created profound friendships across the color line with freedpeople and their descendants, including the comedian Billy Kersands and the trumpeter W.C. Handy, and were close with progressive members of the Creole of Color community, including the Desdunes family. It is a complex story, and the complexity needs to be acknowledged. Even in instances of inter-ethnic tension and colorism, communal music traditions served as an agent of cultural transformation, and Lorenzo Tio Jr. largely moved past the racial antagonisms exhibited by his father.

This chapter begins with an overview of the Mexican band and blues influences on New Orleans musicians, including an overview of the Tios' career in New Orleans. I then pivot to a historical analysis of the interrelationship between Mexico and Afro-Louisianans, with a particular focus on the alternative societies that both hoped to build through their crossborder affiliations. Afro-Mexican interaction was facilitated by two Spanish-language counter-public spheres<sup>734</sup>—one print, and one aural—that contributed to a variant of Radical Republicanism deeply at odds with the United States consensus. And finally, I examine the *Eureka* commune and Tios' tenure in Mexico with each of these traditions and histories in mind. With scant but extant documentation as to the functioning of this commune, I hope to explore how these “alternative emancipations” of the *frontera sónica* were not only jazz's condition of possibility, but also its prefigurative predecessor. The freedom dreams imagined and sung in the *frontera sónica* help us hear how and why Mexican music profoundly impacted Afro-New Orleanian music, even if the Tios were a

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<sup>734</sup> For a discussion of “subaltern counterpublics,” see Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80,

contradictory vector of this particular brand of republicanism.<sup>735</sup> The evidence presented explores new dimensions of jazz's anticolonial and counter-plantation politics. Indeed, the Afro-Mexican projects of liberation in the Gulf zone challenge and expand the meanings of republicanism, modernity, and jazz.

#### 4.2 Overview of the Tios' Musical Legacy in New Orleans

Of all New Orleans jazz musicians, the three clarinetists of the Tio family most powerfully embody the convergence of the *frontera sónica* and the development of jazz. Descended from émigrés from Haiti and Catalonia, the Tios had generations of contact with Mexico and even moved to Veracruz in the late 1850s to build a cooperative agriculture colony with colored families from New Orleans and Mexico. Their internationalist sensibilities in both playing and their history of migration have been described by one jazz historian as “the best examples of the Creole current in jazz.”<sup>736</sup> In 1877, Louis and Lorenzo Sr., now teenagers, moved to New Orleans, where they soon became the most in-demand clarinet players in the city. In the 1880s, they played with the city's top Black brass bands, including Onward Brass Band, the Excelsior Brass Band, and several others.<sup>737</sup> Lorenzo Sr.'s son, Lorenzo Tio Jr., continued this legacy, and was considered New Orleans's most accomplished clarinetist until his student, Sidney Bechet Jr., came of age.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

<sup>736</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans,” *The Second Line* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 24.

<sup>737</sup> Louis R. Tio, Interview, October 26, 1960, New Orleans, The Hogan Jazz Archive; Charles Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933,” PhD diss., (Louisiana State University, 1993), 148.

<sup>738</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tios of New Orleans and Their Pedagogical Influence on the Early Jazz Clarinet Style,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (1996): 279–302.

Outside of numerous recordings and his crystal-clear arpeggiated runs, Lorenzo Jr. was a prolific composer who contributed the melody for “Mood Indigo” to Duke Ellington. He is broadly credited for developing the jazz clarinet style.<sup>739</sup>

It is hard to overstate the influence of the Tio family had among New Orleans musicians of color. They mentored an upcoming generation of jazz musicians including George and Achille Baquet, Alphonse Picou, Tony Girdina, Harold Dejan, Eddie Cherrie, Elliot Taylor, Louis Cottrell, Jr., “Big Eye” Louis “Nelson” Delisle, Sidney Bechet, and Willie J. Humphrey.<sup>740</sup> As Jelly Roll Morton remembered, “There were the men who taught all the other guys how to play clarinet.”<sup>741</sup> In multiple interviews, this generation of New Orleans clarinetists remembers the Tio’s exacting discipline, their specialized embouchure that supported warm and robust tonal production, a solfege technique that required students to develop an “inner ear” and hear melodic phrases as part of sight reading, and a methodology to produce linear phrases that emphasized strings of continual off-beat connected eighth notes.<sup>742</sup> Charles Kinzer suggests that they molded not only clarinet playing, but the practice of mentorship in the jazz tradition itself: “[T]he Tios are perhaps the first significant pedagogues in the history of jazz, and their chief contribution lies in the establishment and maintenance of a norm for the training of jazz woodwind players in and beyond New Orleans.”<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke*, 54; Al Rose, *I Remember Jazz: Six Decades Among the Great Jazzmen* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>740</sup> Pamela J. Smith, “Caribbean Influences on Early New Orleans Jazz,” M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1986, 36.

<sup>741</sup> Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950). 90.

<sup>742</sup> Barney Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke: The Autobiography of a Jazz Clarinetist*, ed. Barry Martyn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Interview, Leonard Bechet; Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tios of New Orleans and Their Pedagogical Influence on the Early Jazz Clarinet Style,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (1996): 279–302.

<sup>743</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933” (The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993), 4.

Lorenzo Sr. and Louis Tio's great-great-grandfather on their father's side, Joseph Marcos Tio, migrated from Catalonia at some point in the 1790s, which was continuously occupied by French forces through the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.<sup>744</sup> Catalonians were also racialized in New Orleans. "Despite their honesty and work ethic," notes Emily Clark, "the Catalan immigrants in early nineteenth-century New Orleans were 'held in low esteem,' and essentially equated by other Europeans in the city to be 'on the same level as [free] blacks.'"<sup>745</sup> Catalan independence activists moved to different spaces in Latin America; in 1907, the editors of one Catalan nationalist newspaper, *Euzkotarra*, were suddenly forced to relocate from Mexico by a conservative government. They chose New Orleans as their new home.<sup>746</sup>

Lorenzo Sr. and Louis's maternal grandfather, Louis Hazeur (1792-1860) was a Jamaica-born free person of color. His mother gave birth to him as she and her husband migrated from Guadeloupe to New Orleans. Hazeur served as a senior musician in a wind ensemble that accompanied the First Battalion of Free men of Color in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, and he later moved to the *Eureka* colony, where he passed away. Perhaps Hazeur's presence explains why other Creole of Color musicians moved to Veracruz, such as the families of Louis St. Amant, Vincent Cupidon, and Antoine Populus. On the other side of the family, Joseph Marcos Tio (1796-1837) also fought in the First Battalion of Free men of Color.

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<sup>744</sup> Charles J. Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>745</sup> Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 130-131; the in-line quotes are from Claude C. Robin, *Voyages dans l'intérieur de la Louisiane: de la Floride occidentale, et dans les isles de la Martinique et de Saint-Domingue, pendant les années 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805 et 1806* (Paris: Chez F. Buisson, 1807), vol. 2: 77-78.

<sup>746</sup> Ana Varela-Lago, "Working in America and Living in Spain: The Making of Transnational Communities among Spanish Immigrants in the United States," in *Hidden Out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States (1875-1930)*, ed. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago (University Press of Colorado, 2019), 51,

The militia members, venerated for their bravery and invaluable contribution to the battle against the British army, included several veterans of the Haitian Revolution,<sup>747</sup> and they performed songs developed from the struggles against European armies, such as "En Avan' Grenadié," whose chorus intoned "Go forward, grenadiers, he who is dead requires no ration."<sup>748</sup> These soldiers self-consciously envisioned themselves as carrying out a Radical Republican project in line with their Atlantic lineage, challenging British monarchical aggression in defense of an American republic, and performing songs of the French and Haitian Revolutions; as Bell notes, "they carried the ongoing current of revolutionary idealism forward."<sup>749</sup> Creole of Color republican soldiers played a decisive role in defending the city from conquest in 1815; as Bell surmises, "two battalions of free men of color, the Baratarians, and proponents of the Republican cause in Mexico distinguished themselves in the battle of New Orleans."<sup>750</sup>

Military bands of this sort had two distinct genealogies. On the one hand, during the French Revolution, bands as large as seventy-eight members became utilized to announce the new social order at civic festivities and demonstrations. These ensembles were "born," suggests Boris Schwarz, "of a curious mixture of exalted idealism and political necessity, of public education and propagandist showmanship."<sup>751</sup> On the other hand, African-descended military musicians had a distinct history in the Caribbean, sought out for their talent by many regimental bandleaders; as

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<sup>747</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, "The Band Music of the First Battalion of Free Men of Color and the Siege of New Orleans, 1814-1815." *American Music* 10, no. 3 (1992): 348-69.

<sup>748</sup> Maud Cuney-Hare, *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (New York, NY: G.K. Hall & Co, 1996, orig. 1936), 265-266.

<sup>749</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 7; see also Roland C. McConnell, *Negro Troops of Antebellum Louisiana: A History of the Battalion of Free Men of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

<sup>750</sup> "Jackson's Proclamation to the People of Louisiana," September 21, 1814, in in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 58; Bell, *Afro-Creole Protest Tradition*, 57.

<sup>751</sup> Boris Schwarz, *French Instrumental Music Between the Revolutions (1789-1830)* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 10-12.

Julius Scott notes, “black musicians became increasingly prominent and by the 1780s could be found playing beside whites in all parts of the continent,” bringing with them “new sounds which the bands eagerly incorporated.” Black military musicians provided not only new sounds but created connections between disaffected British and Irish soldiers to the Black Caribbean underground, and many of the former deserted and built new lives with the latter.<sup>752</sup>

Military bands were deeply tied to the Atlantic Age of Revolution, and in New Orleans, the band was an important part of Creole of Color identity that forged connections between revolutionary French and Caribbean traditions. The regiment drilled year-round, and despite their importance in defending New Orleans, the sights and sounds of armed, uniformed men of color sparked protests and paranoia from Louisiana’s new Anglo-American denizens. As General James Wilkison penned to George Washington shortly after the Louisiana Purchase was consummated, “[The] formidable aspect of the armed Blacks and Malattoes [sic], *officered and organized*, is painful and perplexing.”<sup>753</sup> The militia and its band would be disbanded after the battle of New Orleans by military decree. Some veterans continued to participate in the symbolically-charged annual civil celebrations of the battle; others, such as Humbert, Captain Savary, General Toledo, and many of the members of the First Battalion of Free men of Color redirected their energies to assisting Republican insurgencies in Mexico and the Gulf at large.<sup>754</sup> It is unclear what route Joseph Marcos Tio pursued, but it is interesting that in September 1817 he registered a fifty-eight-foot schooner, the *Caroline*, of which he was the owner and master. 1817 was an also the year that a customs officer in New Orleans, Beverly Chew, bemoaned “an extended and organized system

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<sup>752</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018), 54.

<sup>753</sup> Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812*, vol. IX, *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (New York: Ams Pr Incorporated, 1940), 139; quoted in Hudson, “Crossing Stores,” 209.

<sup>754</sup> Bell, *Afro-Creole Protest Tradition*, 59.

of enterprise, of ingenuity, of indefatigability, of audacity” in Galveston Island, Texas, which was “organized by a motley mixture of freebooters and smugglers at Galveston, under the Mexican flag.” Haitians were involved in this enterprise, too: among those in the compound was “Commodore Aury, with a few small schooners from Aux Cayes [Haiti],” manned by “mulattos,” and who practiced “the most shameful violations of the slave acts, as well as our revenue laws.”<sup>755</sup>

While there is no evidence that any Tios were part of this compound, had they visited or joined with this group, they would have found several familiar faces from the First Battalion of Free men of Color. Also noteworthy is that Joseph’s brother, Louis Marcos Tio (ca. 1798-1844) spent a summer in Port au Prince, Haiti, in 1821.<sup>756</sup> This itinerary, as with their ship model and their social circles, had much in common with anticolonial Republican privateers.<sup>757</sup> Privateers had, for centuries, carved out autonomy within an Atlantic formation of self-governed aquatic societies that Rediker and Linebaugh have termed a “hydrarchy from below.”<sup>758</sup> In the early nineteenth-century, privateers were indispensable to New Spain independence movements, which lacked standing navies. Privateers moved between Santiago de Cuba, Tampico, Florida, Haiti, and Louisiana regularly—exactly the trading contacts of Joseph Marcos Tio. As Johnson notes, these “adventurers commonly met in a New Orleans café or gathered in Aux Cayes to plan the future of places such as New Granada or New Spain.”<sup>759</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> William Bollaert, “Life of Jean Lafitte, The Pirate of the Mexican Gulf,” *Litell’s Living Age* 32 (March 1852): 439-40; quoted in Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 91.

<sup>756</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933” (New Orleans, Louisiana, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993), 23.

<sup>757</sup> Johanna von Grafenstein Gareis, “Auge y Decadencia En Las Relaciones Intramericanas: México y El Caribe En Los Años 1763-1821” (Congreso LASA-97, Guadalajara, 1997); Jesús María Puente González, “Las insurrecciones de esclavos en Haití y el imperio español en la época de Carlos IV” (Master’s Thesis, Santander, Spain, Universidad de Cantabria, 2012).

<sup>758</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

<sup>759</sup> Stanley Faye, “The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1940): 733–826.

Schooners were popular in trades that required speed and windward ability, such as slaving, privateering, and blockade running, and were the vessels of choice for the republican radicals assisting the Mexican Revolution. Another clue as to Joseph Marcos Tio's potential involvement with the regiments in defense of Mexico was his death certificate: when Joseph died in 1837, Joseph was working in Tampico, Mexico as an overseas partner of a New Orleans firm. On the other hand, the speed of the schooner portended to another complicated detail. Joseph Marcos Tio engaged in the slave trade, as indicated by a receipt indicating the sale of five slaves in 1817 to a Phillippe Pedescalux Duverger.<sup>760</sup> This is perhaps the most damning evidence that contradicts any unqualified assessment of the Tios' Radical Republican credentials. While probably not large-scale slavers—their slave trading was part of a larger mercantile enterprise with continued trade in Mexican port cities after slavery was abolished—it opens up a painful chapter of Afro-Creole and enslaved African relations that sometimes include the ownership of persons of African descent.

Yet this detail also links the Tios more deeply to the networks of trading and raiding led by republican privateers, whose raids were indiscriminate in the cargo they raided from Spanish vessels. As Johnson notes, “these ‘masterless’ men...achieved some degree of independence through the profitable business of depriving others of their freedom.”<sup>761</sup> The most famous of these, the white Saint-Domingue refugee Jean Lafitte, used the word “commune” to describe his “egalitarian empire” that attempted to expropriate “those riches to those in need in the majority

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<sup>760</sup> Sale of Slaves, Tio to Duverger, Philippe Pedesclaux, n.p., 3 March 1817, Orleans Parish Notarial Archives; in Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933” (New Orleans, Louisiana, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993), 20.

<sup>761</sup> Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 95.

class.”<sup>762</sup> Lafitte was so popular amongst Louisiana’s lower classes that Andrew Jackson was successfully pressured, after considerable resistance, to enlist his help in the 1815 Battle of New Orleans.<sup>763</sup> Among the many claims in Lafitte’s diary (a diary whose authenticity is disputed) include his friendly relations with the Haitian state, his assistance to Mexican republicans, his reselling of slaves stolen from Spanish vessels, and his financing of his radical friends, Marx and Engels.<sup>764</sup> At least some faction of Haitian émigrés found him to be useful to the republican cause: the Spanish revolutionary Juan Picornell noted Jean and Pierre Laffite’s importance to “the Santo Domingan [*sic*] free colored people of New Orleans”<sup>765</sup> and these included the Creole of Color Captain Joseph Savary, who may have owned a slave in Lafitte’s Galveston commune.<sup>766</sup>

Joseph Marcos Tio and his son, Louis Marcos’s, trading of slaves was thus not an uncommon phenomenon in this world of nation-hopping seafarers who resisted empires and fought colonialism. Amongst historians of the Black Atlantic, Sara Johnson has treated this phenomenon with the most focus, asking, “What do certain terms such as *republican* or *radical* mean within this context of slave owning and slave trading?” Was it possible, Johnson continues, for Colonel Savary be a “beacon of the successful triumph over slavery” if he “was known to be closely associated with slave traders?” At the same time, Johnson notes that human beings were complex, perhaps none so more than these republican privateers, and could hold seemingly contradictory positions simultaneously: “Mercenaries, defenders of the rights of emergent nations, savvy

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<sup>762</sup> Gene Marshall, trans., *The Memoirs of Jean Laffite from Le Journal de Jean Laffite* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2000), 151.

<sup>763</sup> Bell, *Afro-Creole Protest Tradition*, 108, 126, 129, 151.

<sup>764</sup> Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 105.

<sup>765</sup> Stanley Faye, “The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1940): 739.

<sup>766</sup> William C. Davis cites a mariner who lived in the Galveston commune, Manuel Gonzáles, who claimed that Colonel Savary had a woman slave who was “attending upon Lafitte.” William C. Davis, *The Treacherous World of the Corsairs of the Gulf* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005), 353. See also Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 105.

smugglers—these labels were not mutually exclusive.”<sup>767</sup> Certainly Colonel Savary has been celebrated in both popular and scholarly literature as an example of a transnational fighter for freedom; Bell, for instance, argues that “Colonel Savary and other Saint-Domingue free black soldiers in the 1809 refugee movement” were fundamental in that they “introduced the city’s [New Orleans] Afro-Creole leaders to a strain of Radical Republicanism that had triumphed over slavery and racial oppression in Saint-Domingue/Haiti.”<sup>768</sup> Johnson’s research complicates these claims, but does not try to erase them, either.

The Tios’ ownership of slaves was not unheard of for free people of color in the Atlantic world; as Kimberly Hanger notes, “the holding of African slave property by free people of colour was customary throughout the Americas and most colonial governments guaranteed the property rights of their free black citizens.”<sup>769</sup> But the numbers in New Orleans are lower than commonly represented;<sup>770</sup> by 1860, amongst a population of over 10,000, some 700 free people of color in Louisiana owned slaves, most fewer than five.<sup>771</sup> Stephen Ochs reminds us that “The relationships between free people of color and slaves were complex and never as simple as a somatic division between light and dark.”<sup>772</sup> While anecdotal evidence has suggested that some Creole of Color slaveowners were considered even crueler than white masters, many others used ownership as a means to help free enslaved family members and friends. Lawrence Kotlikoff and Anton Rupert

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<sup>767</sup> Johnson, *Fear of French Negroes*, 99.

<sup>768</sup> Bell, *The Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, 64. For more on Savary, see Roland C. McConnell, *Negro Troops of Antebellum Louisiana: A History of the Battalion of Free Men of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

<sup>769</sup> Kimberly Hanger, “Free Blacks in Spanish New Orleans.” in *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas*, ed. Jane Landers (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 49.

<sup>770</sup> Robert C. Reinders, “The Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro in the Decade before the Civil War 24,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 24 (April 1962): 273–85.

<sup>771</sup> Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 44; Paul F. Lachance, “The Limits of Privilege: Where Free Persons of Colour Stood in the Hierarchy of Wealth in New Orleans,” in *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas*, ed. Jane G. Landers (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), 65–84.

<sup>772</sup> Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 44.

have examined jury records of manumission and found free people of color were involved in a significant portion of manumissions, suggesting that at times ownership was a ruse to freedom.<sup>773</sup> Free people of color formed benevolent societies such as the Perseverance and Mutual Aid association (founded in 1783), the *Société des Artisans de Bienfaisance et D'Assistance Mutuelle* (1834) and *Dieu Nous Protège* (1844) to help enslaved people purchase their own or their families' freedom. Louisiana's Anglo-American administration took note of this practice, and the restriction of Creole of Color autonomy and the restriction of manumission was closely linked. Between 1852 and 1855, only thirty slaves in the state were manumitted, compared with an average of 76 per year in the first decade of United States rule.<sup>774</sup> In 1855, the state legislature forbade new religious, charitable, scientific, or literary societies composed of free people of color.<sup>775</sup> In 1857, Louisiana banned manumission altogether.<sup>776</sup> By 1857, Governor Wickliffe, in his annual message to the Legislature, aggressively pushed for the removal of Louisiana's population of free people of color from the state: "Public policy dictates, the interest of the people requires, that immediate steps should be taken at this time to remove all free negroes who are now in the state, when such removal can be effected without violation of the law. Their example and associations have a most pernicious effect upon our slave population."<sup>777</sup> In 1859 a bill was considered (though it ultimately was not

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<sup>773</sup> Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Anton Rupert, "The Manumission of Slaves in New Orleans, 1827-1846," *Economic Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1980): 173-81.

<sup>774</sup> Shawn Cole, "Capitalism and Freedom: Manumissions and the Slave Market in Louisiana, 1725-1820," *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 4 (2005): 1020.

<sup>775</sup> Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 60.

<sup>776</sup> Kotlikoff and Rupert, "The Manumission of Slaves in New Orleans, 1827-1846," 173-174.

<sup>777</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1935), 402.

passed) by the state legislature that would have enslaved all free persons of color who refused to leave the state of Louisiana by a specific date.<sup>778</sup>

Over subsequent generations the Tios resented their slave owning ancestors for partaking in this infamous institution. In one interview, Rose Wynn Tio acknowledged that her great-great grandfather Joseph Marcos Tio “Was a slave trader. Let me get under the table...I'm ashamed of that.”<sup>779</sup> Being ashamed that a great-great-grandparent sold slaves is certainly no badge of antiracist honor. But it did reflect the end point of a long *durée* of historical change amongst Creoles of Color, wherein the peculiar institution was denaturalized and rendered incompatible with republican values and modern ethics. Mexico’s commitment to antislavery influenced these changes.

Indeed, when Louis Marcos Tio’s son, Thomas Louis Marcos Tio (1828-1878), a clarinetist and cigar maker, signed the notarial acts to consummate the *Eureka* commune with Mexican authorities in New Orleans, slave trading was no longer part of the family’s portfolio, and the family’s multigenerational linkages to Mexico remained strong. Even after the commune was burnt down for unclear reasons in 1862—a history to which I will return later—the Tios opted to stay in Tampico for another fifteen years, moving to at least seven different homes while Thomas Louis Marcos worked as an itinerant cigar maker. It was during this period that Louis Tio (1862-1922) and Lorenzo Tio Sr. absorbed aspects of the Mexican musical tradition, which itself had undergone significant creolization in the nineteenth century Afro-Cuban influence. The *cinquillo*, *habanera*, and *tresillo* rhythmic clusters were all abundantly clear in the music of Veracruzanos, another trace

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<sup>778</sup>Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>779</sup>Rose Tio, "Oral History with Rose Tio. November 29,1999.," interview by Barry Martyn and Jack Stewart, VCR, Video 1 of 2, November 29,1999, Tulane Jazz Archive

of the *frontera sónica* and a continuation of the sonic common wind discussed at length in Chapters 1 and 2.<sup>780</sup> Veracruz influences will be treated in depth in the following section.

#### 4.2.1 The Tios In New Orleans and New York

The Tios moved back to New Orleans in 1877. In the 1880s, Lorenzo Sr. and Louis Tio could be found performing with the Onward Brass Band and Excelsior Brass Band, considered the best Black bands in New Orleans, while rolling cigars on an as-needed basis. While these Creole of Color musicians were “classically” trained—a contemporary of Louis Tio’s remembered that he was one of the “five Negroes in the whole French Opera”<sup>781</sup>—alto saxophonist Isidore Barbarin recalled that unlike their European counterparts, “[T]hey played anything.” They could play in both “high society” or within Black brass bands such as the Excelsior, Onward, and the Tio-Doublet orchestra. Their performances encompassed parades, steamboat excursions, picnics, dances for benevolent societies, and dances at Economy Hall.<sup>782</sup> They also did several tours on the African American minstrel circuit in the 1890s.<sup>783</sup> Their embrace of both vernacular traditions and aspects of the European cannon, was, in fact, the expression of a particular Afro-Caribbean musical tradition.

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<sup>780</sup> Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Incorporated, 2007), 252; Argeliers León, *Del Canto y El Tiempo* (Havana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1984), 274; Arthur R. LaBrew, “The Brindis de Salas Family,” *Afro-American Music Review* 1, no. 1 (1981): 15–57; Vincente T. Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana: Ensayo de Clasificación y Antología* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM, 1961), 97; R. R. García Baeza, “Lírica Popular Improvisada, Estudio de Dos Casos: El Son Huasteco y El Blues” (PhD Dissertation, San Luis Potosí, México, El Colegio de San Luis, A.C., 2016).

<sup>781</sup> Zutty Singleton, Interview, February 8, 1969, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>782</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstöröm, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 156.

<sup>783</sup> Isidore Barbarin, Interview, January 7, 1959, in Hogan Jazz Archive.

By the turn of the century, they began performing in African American national music circuits by joining the Black minstrel troupe Richards and Pringle's company in 1897, and went their separate ways and joined different ensembles thereafter.<sup>784</sup> In this and other ensembles on the Black minstrel circuit, their impact was felt across the country and they frequently earned accolades from the Black press. The *Indianapolis Freedman* hailed Lorenzo Tio Sr.'s playing in 1898, at a concert in Oskaloosa, Iowa:

The concert given by Prof. F.M. Hailstock's concert orchestra, of the Oliver Scott Minstrels, was largely attended in Oskaloosa, Ia. Each number on the program was rendered, and the audience showed their appreciation by applauding vigorously. Prof. Hailstock was complimented on the efficiency of his orchestra. Lorenzo Tio's clarinet [*sic*] solo was the hit of the afternoon, he being obliged to respond to an encore.<sup>785</sup>

In another instance, a program shows a song named "'Trocha' (Cuban dance)" in Frank M. Hailstock's concert orchestra, (which was part of the Oliver Scott Colored Minstrels) in Oskaloosa, Iowa). composed by William H. Tyers, born in 1870 to formerly enslaved parents in Virginia. Tyers was a prominent musician among the new generation of Black musicians who emerged in New York after 1898. His later songs "Panama" and "Maori" were recorded by Duke Ellington in 1928.<sup>786</sup>

Crucially, Lorenzo or Louis Tio did not play music that would be described as "jazz" today. They did not improvise and, according to one musician, Louis Tio expressed reluctance to play for predominantly Black audiences, pointing to antiblack tensions amongst the Tios and Creoles of Color community. One musician recalled that Tio said that Black audiences "want ya' to make cat

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<sup>784</sup> Vernhettes and Lindstöm, *Jazz Puzzles*, 156.

<sup>785</sup> *Indianapolis Freedman*, October 8, 1898; quoted in Kinzer, "The Tio Family," 181.

<sup>786</sup> "William H. Tyers, 1876-1924," Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed October 4, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200038855/>.

on your clarinet...They want ya' ta' make all that noise ya' know, all that monkey shines."<sup>787</sup> In addition to the racial tropes inherent in this comment, Lorenzo Tio Sr. also reveals the demanding expectations that Black audiences had for non-Western techniques and a creative approach to improvisation. As Sidney Bechet's brother Leonard remembered, "You have to play real hard when you play for Negroes. You got to go some[where]...to avoid any criticism. You got to come up to the mark."<sup>788</sup>

Unlike Lorenzo Sr., his son, Lorenzo Tio Jr., had a deep connection to jazz style and African American musical conventions. Indeed, Lorenzo Jr. was at the heart of the New Orleans jazz revolution. Alan Lomax suggested quite romantically that the "hot blasts from black Bolden's horn and searing arpeggios from light Tio's clarinet burned away the false metal of caste prejudices and fused tan knowledge with black inspiration."<sup>789</sup> While Lomax's dichotomization of knowledge and inspiration is not useful, it was true that Tio Jr. played with and for Black musicians, and was as talented a sideman as he was a composer. As Peter Bocage remembered, "He was all musician...He could play jazz, too, and he could play anything you put up there in front of him...He was gifted; he could fake, and he knowed the chords and everything. You see, that's what it takes."<sup>790</sup> He not only played in high society functions but with plantation to urban migrants, such as in the Tuxedo Band which was led by former cane-cutter William "Bébé" Ridgley.<sup>791</sup> As

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<sup>787</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 107-108.

<sup>788</sup> Alan Lomax, "Selections from the 1949 New Orleans Jazz Interviews Recoded by Alan Lomax," 151 (Leonard Bechet). Booklet accompanying Morton, *Complete Library of Congress Recordings*, Rounder CD 1888.

<sup>789</sup> Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz"* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 99.

<sup>790</sup> Peter Bocage, interview, 29 January 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive. See also Kinzer, "The Tio Family," 296.

<sup>791</sup> William "Bébé" Ridgley, Interview, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961, Hogan Jazz Archive.

Bruce Boyd Raeburn points out, the band “created relationships that subverted the dehumanizing effects of racism,” and Lorenzo Tio Jr. both shaped and was shaped by this socializing process.<sup>792</sup>

Like his father and uncle, he was also an important teacher of the next generation. Among his other talented students, he was Sidney Bechet’s clarinet teacher of choice. Although Paul Dominguez credits Buddy Bolden for “cause[ing] these younger Creoles, men like Bechet and Keppard, to have different style altogether from the old heads like Tio and [Emanuel] Perez”—an influence that surely was in Bechet’s playing<sup>793</sup>—Bechet himself explains in his autobiography how he sought out lessons with Lorenzo Jr. after his initial Creole of Color clarinet teacher, George Baquet (himself a former student of Louis Tio), did not help him grow as an improviser. What Baquet did teach Bechet was “how you can play that note—growl it, smear it, flat it, sharp it, do anything you want to it. That’s how you express your feelings in this music. It’s like talking.” But Bechet remembered that Baquet lacked the ability to execute or teach the practice of improvisation: “What he played, it wasn’t really jazz... he stuck real close to the line in a way. He played things more classic-like, straight out how it was written. And he played it very serious.”<sup>794</sup> For lessons on improvisation, Bechet turned to Tio Jr., who became responsible for Bechet’s education thereafter. As Bechet explains: “I hung around his [Tio’s] house a lot. We used to talk together, and we’d play [music] to all hours.”<sup>795</sup> In fact, Bechet’s professional career began in earnest in the early 1910s, when he succeeded Lorenzo Tio Jr. in Bunk Johnson’s Eagle Band, which was composed of Buddy Bolden alumni.<sup>796</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “Foreword,” in *The Original Tuxedo Jazz Band: More Than a Century of a New Orleans Icon*, by Sally Newhart (Charleston: The History Press, 2013), 1–2.

<sup>793</sup> Paul Dominguez, quoted in Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 102 – 6.

<sup>794</sup> Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 251.

<sup>795</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat it Gentle* (New York: Hill and Wange, 1960), 79-80.

<sup>796</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tios of New Orleans and Their Pedagogical Influence on the Early Jazz Clarinet Style.” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (1996): 286.

Like his parents, Lorenzo Tio Jr. retained important circum-Caribbean cultural connections. Lorenzo Jr. performed across the country with the Cuban-Louisianan cornetist Manuel Pérez, who was considered a “titan of early jazz.”<sup>797</sup> Pérez was of Cuban ancestry and was born into a Creole of Color family of Spanish, French and African descent. Like Lorenzo Jr., one of his great-grandfathers was an officer of the free Black regiment which fought in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812.<sup>798</sup> Tio Jr. and Pérez played in Chicago in 1915 as well as in New Orleans. Tio Jr. can be heard on some recordings with the Armand J. Piron orchestra, which by the 1920s had become the preeminent dance band in New Orleans.<sup>799</sup> On these recordings, it is apparent that Tio Jr. is the principle soloist, and that in addition to showing off fast moving-arpeggios in every register, his solos “always [display] the open sound and fast vibrato characteristic of the early jazz style.”<sup>800</sup> The Piron Orchestra played some high-profile dates in New York City; they performed in the Roseland Ballroom for the summer months of 1924, and the band that replaced them was the Fletcher Henderson jazz orchestra (which included a young Louis Armstrong on cornet).<sup>801</sup> The band returned to New Orleans, but Lorezno Jr. moved to Harlem in 1930 and sent for his family in 1931. He worked with a theater orchestra, where he doubled on clarinet and alto saxophone, and he may have recorded with Jelly Roll Morton between March and October of 1930 in sessions whose clarinetist is still unidentified (though some jazz researchers have suggested is Lorenzo Jr.)<sup>802</sup> The New Orleans clarinetist was also in New York

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<sup>797</sup> Rose, quoted in Smith, Pamela J. “Caribbean Influences on Early New Orleans Jazz,” M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1986, 36.

<sup>798</sup> Pamela J. Smith, “Caribbean Influences on New Orleans Jazz” (Master’s Thesis, Tulane University, 1986), 36.

<sup>799</sup> Kinzer, “The Tio Family,” 266.

<sup>800</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans,” *The Second Line* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 24.

<sup>801</sup> Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History* (New York: Norton, 1977); Kinzer, “The Tio Family,” 290.

<sup>802</sup> Laurie Wright, *Mr. Jelly Lord* (Chigwell, Essex: Storyville Publications, 1980), 74-82. Cornetist Lee Collins remembers that Jelly Roll Morton “wanted to talk to me about making some records with him and wanted

when Duke Ellington recorded “Mood Indigo,” whose melody was provided by Tio; and he frequently went to see Benny Bigard, his old student, play with the Ellington band.

Lorenzo Jr.’s brother, Louis R. claims that Lorenzo wrote the melodies for the jazz standards “Mood Indigo,” “Sophisticated Lady,” and “Moonglow,” and sold these songs to Duke Ellington and Will Hudson/Irving Mills.<sup>803</sup> These claims are corroborated by the Creole of Color clarinetist Barney Bigard, who studied extensively with Lorenzo Jr. before playing with King Oliver and later in Duke Ellington’s orchestra. He recalled how Lorenzo’s melody found its way into Mood Indigo:

Duke and I had gotten together on *Mood Indigo*. I’ll tell you what happened, just to set the record straight. My old teacher Lorenzo Tio had come to New York and he had a little slip of paper with some tunes and parts of tunes he had written. There was one I liked and I asked him if I could borrow it. He was trying to interest me in recording one or two maybe. Anyway, I took it home and kept fooling around with it...I brought what I had of the number to the [Duke Ellington’s recording] date and we tried to work it out...Duke figured out a first strain and I gave him some ideas for that too.<sup>804</sup>

As historian and jazz purist Al Rose surmises: “[A]ll of us in New Orleans knew that tune [Mood Indigo] and we knew it was the Tio’s.”<sup>805</sup> According to Kinzer, early Ellington releases of the recording listed the song as “Dreamy Blues,” which was the name of a song also played by Lorenzo Tio Jr. and the Piron Orchestra. Further supporting the claim is that eventually Bigard

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Lorenzo Tio, Jr., and me on them.” Lee Collins never made the session. Lee Collins and Mary Collins, *Oh, Didn’t He Ramble: The Life Story of Lee Collins as Told to Mary Collins*, ed. Frank Gillis and John W. Miner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 65-66. See also Kinzer, “The Tio Family,” 293.

<sup>803</sup> Charles Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933,” PhD diss., (Louisiana State University, 1993), 293-294. He credits this oral history to an interview with Lorenzo Jr.’s daughter Rose Tio Winn, interview by Martyn, May 11 1990; Louis R. Tio, Interview; Wellam Buad [Duke Ellington’s longtime bassist], interview, 30 May, 1957, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

<sup>804</sup> Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke*, 54.

<sup>805</sup> Al Rose, *I Remember Jazz: Six Decades among the Great Jazzmen* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 109.

himself would be credited as a co-composer, but twenty-five years after the song's 1930 release.<sup>806</sup> (An online rumor mill, without much in the way of sources but possibly echoing New Orleans oral history, claims that Lorenzo Tio Jr. initially called the song "Mexican Blues."<sup>807</sup>) Regardless, this contribution to the jazz repertoire places Lorenzo Tio, Jr at the intersection of New Orleans style and swing. It demonstrates his outsized impact on the development of jazz clarinet, and he made contributions both as a composer, player, and pedagogue who contributed an important timbre and technique. Ellington's famous "mike-tone" (whereby the overtones of the lower register of the clarinet interacted with an upper-register, muted trombone) would have sounded different, or been nonexistent, had a clarinetist recorded with a less robust tonal production as Bigard.<sup>808</sup>

In 1932, Lorenzo Tio Jr. began running the house orchestra at the Nest, a popular nightclub and dance hall on 133<sup>rd</sup> Street. Sidney Bechet joined his old teacher in the ensemble after returning from Paris the same year. He recalled that Roy Eldridge made a guest appearance with the band.<sup>809</sup> The band provided financial stability for Tio, but in 1933, Lorenzo Jr. died of heart disease at Harlem Hospital on December 24<sup>th</sup>. The *Louisiana Weekly* wrote in his obituary that "Lorenzo Tio, Jr...contributed to the gaiety of "America's Most Interesting City" and its reputation as a musical center for more than half a century."<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> Charles Kinzer, "The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933," PhD diss., (Louisiana State University, 1993), 293-294

<sup>807</sup> See Carl, "Duke Ellington Records 'Mood Indigo' 89 Years Ago Today," *The Daily Music Break* (blog), October 17, 2019, <https://dailymusicbreak.com/2019/10/17/duke-ellington-records-mood-indigo-89-years-ago-today/>.

<sup>808</sup> For a discussion of Ellington's "mike-tone," see Chadwick Jenkins, "A Question of Containment: Duke Ellington and Early Radio," *American Music* 26, no. 4 (2008): 433; see also Aaron J. Johnson, "A Date with the Duke: Ellington on Radio," *The Musical Quarterly* 96, no. 3/4 (2013): 390.

<sup>809</sup> Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 158-59.

<sup>810</sup> *Louisiana Weekly*, January 13, 1934; quoted in Kinzer, "The Tio Family," 295.

#### 4.2.2 The Racial Politics of the Tio Family

Lorenzo Tio Jr.'s distinct contribution was his ability to blend brass band traditions and Creole of Color musical norms within jazz's emphasis on African American vernacular techniques and improvisation. He can be considered part of an intergenerational and, as we will see, continental bridge between Black cultures in Louisiana, Mexico, and across the United States. There is no evidence that Lorenzo Tio Jr. exhibited the racial prejudices of his parents, despite the ongoing hostility of the family to African Americans over generations. Drummer Barry Martin recalled speaking to Rose Wynn Tio about racial discrimination between Creoles of Color and African Americans. "In 1927, let's say, Louis Armstrong was at the height of his prowess, known all over the country. If you would have brought him home on a date to meet your family, what would have happened?" According to Martin, Rose rejected the hypothetical immediately. "We wouldn't bring him on no date. Bring him home? Man. Look, my mother was a very forgiving person. If he was hungry, she'd have fed him, but she wouldn't have let his black ass in the house."<sup>811</sup> This, it should be noted, is a hearsay story from a white drummer. But it is undeniable that antiblack colorism was prevalent amongst some of the Creole of Color community. The banjo player Johnny St. Cyr said "the mulattoes were actually more prejudiced than the white people at that time."<sup>812</sup> And as Pops Foster remembered,

The worst Jim Crow around New Orleans was what the colored did to themselves. The uptown clubs and societies were the strictest. You had to be a doctor or a lawyer or some kind of big shot to get in. The lighter you were the better they thought you were. The Francs Amis Hall was like that. The place was so dicty that they wouldn't let us come off the bandstand because we were too dark.

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<sup>811</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 47.

<sup>812</sup> Johnny St. Cyr, quoted in Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 99.

They would let the lightest guy in the band go downstairs and get drinks for all of us.<sup>813</sup>

Colorism was thus a problem that plagued these interactions and complicate any simple assessment of Creole of Color musicians. Amongst jazz historians, the consensus is that Creoles of Color worked to maintain class and cultural distinctions with African Americans. “Even as their economic status began to wane in the nineteenth century,” argues David Ake, “Creole society strove to maintain staunchly middle-class values, priding itself on appearing well mannered and well educated (in the European sense) and living within an overall Francocentrism.”<sup>814</sup>

However, Lorenzo Sr. and Louis Tio evince a more complex relationship with middle-class values, Francocentrisim, and African American culture than presented by the above material. They built friendships with prominent African American artists both in New Orleans and at the national level, and some of these were recorded through open letters from Lorenzo Sr. published in the *Indianapolis Freedman*. Lorenzo Sr.’s familiarity with this organ is, in itself, a suggestion that he was clued into Black culture and politics more than other scholarship has suggested. In November 1898, Lorenzo Tio Sr., now the clarinetist with Oliver Scott’s Refined Negro Minstrels, sent his regards to Daniel Desdunes.<sup>815</sup> A year later, Tio Sr. sent a letter to the African American comedian, Billy Kersands, who was in the Richard and Pringles’s tour. Kersands was probably the late nineteenth century’s most influential satirist, who critiqued and challenged American racial attitudes within the limited zone of the minstrel show, and who had a wide following amongst working-class African Americans.<sup>816</sup> Lorenzo published an open letter to Kersands in the

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<sup>813</sup> Foster, *Pops Foster*, 105.

<sup>814</sup> David Ake, *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 16. See also Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>815</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, November 19, 1898.

<sup>816</sup> Noah Cook, Interview, August 30, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive.

*Indianapolis Freedman*, a common form of communication for performers on the minstrel circuit who lacked stable addresses for most of the year. In April 1899 he used the opportunity both to celebrate the professionalism and aesthetic of his new ensemble and greet the great comedian Kersands. He wrote:

Lorenzo Tio...wishes to state to all friends in the profession that he would be pleased to hear from them, and that the [Oliver P. Scott] company is undoubtedly composed of the finest and most gentlemanly set of musicians and performers he has ever had the pleasure of travelling with...Hello Billy Kersands. I will meet you soon in Donaldsonville, La., regards to you, and kindest respect to your wife, and wishing success.<sup>817</sup>

Kersands is the only artist that Lorenzo Tio mentions by name in this correspondence other than his brother, Louis, who was also on the road at the time. By accounting, rather publicly, to get together back together in Louisiana, Tio is making his allegiance with the most popular Black comedian of his day well known to readers of the *Freedman*. Louis first worked with Billy Kersands on a national tour with the Georgia Minstrels in 1887. This was, then, potentially a twelve year long relationship.<sup>818</sup>

Like the Tios', Kersands's legacy is complicated, and his "antics," such as loading his mouth full of billboard balls, have been rightly called "troubling" by W.T. Lhamon, Jr.<sup>819</sup> Mel Watkins cites him as one of the earliest Black entertainers to have faced the dilemma of striking a balance between social satire and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes. His work contained many coded valorizations of African American identity and resistance to white supremacy,

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<sup>817</sup> *Indianapolis Freeman*, April 1, 1899.

<sup>818</sup> New Orleans *Weekly Pelican*, June 18 1887; Charles E. Kinzer, "The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans," *The Second Line* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 22.

<sup>819</sup> W. T. Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), vii.

including his frequent use of “weak versus strong matchups.”<sup>820</sup> During the backlash against Reconstruction and the implementation of Jim Crow, Kersands’s interventions were complex and contradictory expressions of an embittered political consciousness.<sup>821</sup> As Kersands himself intoned, in a perceptive comment on racialization and embodiment: “The colored man has never successfully taken off his own humorous characteristics, and the white impersonator often overdoes the matter.”<sup>822</sup> The salient point is Lorenzo Tio Sr. developed what appears to be a lifelong relationship with an important African American comedian. Perhaps the unique social space of the “road” partially explains this friendship. Multiple musicians’ interviews explain that Black and Creole of Color antagonisms in late nineteenth-century New Orleans were reinforced by the intense economic competition for limited jobs, a device employed by hegemonic classes to divide subalterns that Jim Crow did not alleviate.<sup>823</sup> On the minstrel circuit in a “mixed” Creole of Color and Black performance troupe, this disincentive for solidarity was absent. When W.C. Handy shared a bill with Lorenzo Tio Sr. in Portland with Manhara’s Minstrels, he did not consider him a Creole or Francocentric; he referred to him as “the first of the top-notch clarinetists of our race.”<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying--: The Underground Tradition of African-American Humor That Transformed American Culture, from Slavery to Richard Pryor* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 113-15.

<sup>821</sup> Racist as the influence of minstrel productions was, the staging of race resulted in what Eric Lott calls its “carnivalizing”; white appropriation of African or slave cultural forms could be re-manufactured by the black performer in ways paradoxically both demeaning and empowering. Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>822</sup> Susan Gubar, *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114.

<sup>823</sup> As Paul Dominguez said, “See, us Downtown people...we didn’t think so much of this Uptown jazz until we couldn’t make a living otherwise.” Quoted in Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 102 – 6. On racial capitalism, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Chapters 1-3.

<sup>824</sup> W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1941), 78.

Indeed, the relationship between Tio and Kersands reveals that the minstrel circuit was an important space where the descendants of freedmen and Creoles of Color could perform together. They present a scene whereby the collective labor of African Americans from distinct parts of the country united to reinvent the popular cultural form based on misrepresenting their own cultural legacies.<sup>825</sup> Indeed, Daniel Desdunes was another performer who occasionally performed in the same minstrel outfits as the Tios, and the Tios used their seniority in the ensembles to help support their students and find them employment. George Baquet, who performed with Gideon's Minstrels and Nashville Students company in Memphis, Tennessee, 1901, credited Louis Tio for his recommendation.<sup>826</sup> Lynn Abbot and Jack Stewart have traced the histories of independent African American vaudeville houses, and argued that "It was in the uninhibited, self-determined environment of this subcultural network of little theaters that some of the first commercial reverberations of blues and jazz were felt."<sup>827</sup> The Tios, Daniel Desdunes, and other New Orleans Creoles of Color made important contributions to this nascent, Black cultural underground.

The Tios were lauded within Black musical circles not only because they made friends, but because their clarinet technique was considered among New Orleans', and the nation's, best. Yet it is still important to clarify the multi-dimensional racial politics of the Tio family, because their "cultural citizenship" in the borderlands between Mexico and Black Louisiana is an important lens with which to understand Mexican influences in early jazz. As noted in this chapter's introduction, the clarinet became a staple of New Orleans brass bands in the wake of the epic 1884-85 performances of *la banda de Caballería*, and it was no secret to New Orleanians that the Tios were

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<sup>825</sup> Christopher J. Smith, *The Creolization of American Culture: William Sidney Mount and the Roots of Blackface Minstrelsy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

<sup>826</sup> Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 38-39.

<sup>827</sup> Lynn Abbot and Jack Stewart, "The Iroquois Theater," *The Jazz Archivist* IX, no. 2 (December 1994), 2.

Mexican. In fact, several musicians assumed that the Tios arrived in New Orleans as musicians with the “Mexican Band.”<sup>828</sup> In the following section, I recenter the Tios’ de-centeredness: as Creoles of Color, born in Mexico, fleeing systems of apartheid, slavery, and white supremacy in order to build a new life and society across the Gulf. The influence of Mexican political culture on the Tios—and their influence on the development of jazz—did not take place in a vacuum. I will explore the material solidarity enacted across the border and how this informed the valences of the *frontera sónica* resonating in late nineteenth century New Orleans.<sup>829</sup>

#### **4.3 A Brown Man’s Country: The Alternative Futures of Mexico’s Black Colonies**

*There are times in the life of a suffering people when it is good to have a change of climate.*

- Rodolphe Desdunes<sup>830</sup>

African Americans have long created inspiring cultural and political ties to Mexico. Well into the twentieth century, major cultural figures in the Black diaspora chose Mexican cities to retire, recover, or transition. John Coltrane and Alice Coltrane married in Juárez, Mexico, 1965. Bassist Charles Mingus chose Cuernavaca as the city which he passed away. Saxophonist Dexter Gordon also moved to Cuernavaca in 1983, planning to stay there for the winter months to take herbal treatments and acupuncture “to recuperate from the road and from years of being on

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<sup>828</sup> Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, NJ: Walter C. Allen, 1958), 9-10.

<sup>829</sup> Gaye Theresa Johnson, “‘Sobre Las Olas’: A Mexican Genesis in Borderlands Jazz and the Legacy for Ethnic Studies,” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 226.

<sup>830</sup> Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 114.

and off airplanes and trains and buses.”<sup>831</sup> Many Black artists chose Mexico to recover from another disease: United States racism. Richard Wright’s travels in Mexico in the 1940s led him to report, “[P]eople of all races and colors live in harmony and without racial prejudices or theories of racial superiority.” Langston Hughes’s remark that “[H]ere, nothing is barred from me. I am among my own people...for Mexico is a brown man’s country,” suggests not only a level of comfort but also identification with a common, antiracist project.<sup>832</sup> Mexican poet Andrés Henestrosa celebrated Black culture and struggle and thanked Hughes for being “a fiery friend and defender of Mexico” from United States aggression.<sup>833</sup> Willie Wells, the three-time US Negro League batting champion, claimed that in Mexico, “I am not faced with the racial problem...I’ve found freedom and democracy here, something I never found in the United States...Here in Mexico I am a man,” while heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson advertised “Jack Johnson’s Land Company” in Black newspapers that with the invitation: “Colored People. You who are lynched, tortured, mobbed, and discriminated against...OWN A HOME IN MEXICO here one man is as good as another and it is not your nationality that counts but simply you!”<sup>834</sup> Visual artists like Charles Alston, John Biggers, Elizabeth Catlett, Sargent Claude Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, Charles White, John Wilson and Hale Woodruff all traveled to Mexico in the first

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<sup>831</sup> Maxine Gordon, “Ben & Dex (Pt. 2),” The Dexter Gordon Society, accessed December 6, 2019, <http://www.dextergordon.org/blog/2016/1/11/ben-and-dex-2>.

<sup>832</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume 1: 1902–1941: I, Too, Sing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 40, 42; Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, ‘The Mexican Connection: the New Negro and Border Crossings’, *American Visions* 11(6) (December-January 1996): 20; Gaye Theresa Johnson, “‘Sobre Las Olas’: A Mexican Genesis in Borderlands Jazz and the Legacy for Ethnic Studies,” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 225–40.

<sup>833</sup> “Langston Hughes...es un ardiente amigo y Defensor de México.” Andrés Henestrosa, “Presentación,” in *Yo También Soy América: Poemas de Langston Hughes*, by Langston Hughes, trans. Herminio Ahumada (Juárez, México: Organizacion Editorial Novaro, S.A., 1968), 7.

<sup>834</sup> 1919 Advertisement in *The Messenger* in Theodore G. Vincent, ed., *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991), 260.

decades of the twentieth century and studied Mexican muralists.<sup>835</sup> Mexico was a powerful and attractive symbol of an antiracist republic to Black Americans.

These connections had roots. They were built by the African-descended peoples living in Texas and Louisiana during the nineteenth century. Louisiana's free people of color fought to make the Mexican republic a reality. The Haitian / Saint-Dominguan refugee, Joseph Savary, organized a battalion of 500 other free men of color to fight alongside Mexican revolutionaries against the Spanish crown in 1816. This effort was supported and partially armed by Haitian President Alexander Pétion.<sup>836</sup> At the same time that Savary was fighting for the Mexican republic, "Mexican black political input became more direct and powerful" in Mexico's liberation movement, because "Racially mixed descendants of African slaves maintained a high profile in the ranks of revolutionary forces. They also made their presence felt in politics during the first federal period of the new nation (1824–1830)."<sup>837</sup> Southern leaders were alarmed by the Mexican Revolution and its ties to Haiti; in 1825, the South Carolina Senator Robert Y. Hayne assessed correctly that "Those governments [Latin American republics] have proclaimed the principles of 'liberty and equality,' and have marched to victory under the banner of 'universal emancipation.' You find men of color at the head of their armies, in their Legislative Halls, and in their Executive Departments. They are looking to Hayti, even now, with feelings of the strongest confraternity."<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume 1: 1902–1941: I, Too, Sing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 40, 42; Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, 'The Mexican Connection: the New Negro and Border Crossings', *American Visions* 11(6) (December-January 1996): 20; Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African-Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 183–192.

<sup>836</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718–1868* (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 64.

<sup>837</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>838</sup> Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *In the Shadow of Powers: Dantes Bellegarde in Haitian Social Thought* (1985; Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2019), 9.

Southern slaves, aware of the antislavery dynamics of these regional struggles against colonialism, fled into Mexico throughout the antebellum period in large numbers.<sup>839</sup> In 1822, several dozen slaves fled their plantations in western Louisiana in order to take advantage of the freedom and equality clauses in the new Mexican constitution for *Afrodescendientes*.<sup>840</sup> In the 1830s, these migrations, and their counter-plantation politics, increased in scope. For example, Mexican President Valentín Gómez Farfías ordered his Louisiana and Texas ambassadors to formally recruit African Americans, both free and enslaved, to build a multinational buffer state against the rising Anglo-Texan slaveowners.<sup>841</sup> This state was to include Indigenous, Black, and mestizo Texans (referred to here as Tejanos). Maroons continuously escaped plantations as Anglo-Texans retreated to Louisiana in 1836; a Mexican general described how “slaves kept coming in succession” towards his troops, since “none of them wanted to stay beyond the Colorado [River], so great was their fear of falling once again into the hands of their owners.”<sup>842</sup> In late September,

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<sup>839</sup> Even though it was not until September 15, 1829, that slavery was “decreed to be non-existent and abolished throughout Mexico,” antislavery and racial justice had been a core part of the Mexican Revolution from its initiation. In 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest, launched the Mexican War of Independence by issuing of his Grito de Dolores, or “Cry of Dolores.” The revolutionary tract called for the end of Spanish rule in Mexico, redistribution of land, and racial equality. Gustavo Baz, *Vida de Benito Juárez* (México: Casa Editorial y Agencia de Publicaciones de Enrique de Capdevielle, 1874), 31, 32; Isidro Vizcaya Canales, *En los albores de la independencia: las Provincias Internas de Oriente durante la insurrección de don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, 1810-1811* (Mexico: Fondo Editorial de NL, 2005), 3. See also James David Nichols, *The Limits of Liberty: Mobility and the Making of the Eastern U.S.-Mexico Border* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 145.

<sup>840</sup> *Louisiana Gazette*, 18 July 1822. Even though it was not until September 15, 1829, that slavery was “decreed to be non-existent and abolished throughout Mexico,” antislavery and racial justice had been a core part of the Mexican Revolution from its initiation. In 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest, launched the Mexican War of Independence by issuing of his Grito de Dolores, or “Cry of Dolores.” The revolutionary tract called for the end of Spanish rule in Mexico, redistribution of land, and racial equality. Gustavo Baz, *Vida de Benito Juárez* (México: Casa Editorial y Agencia de Publicaciones de Enrique de Capdevielle, 1874), 31, 32; Isidro Vizcaya Canales, *En los albores de la independencia: las Provincias Internas de Oriente durante la insurrección de don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, 1810-1811* (Mexico: Fondo Editorial de NL, 2005), 3.

<sup>841</sup> As Sarah E. Cornell writes, “Given the looming conflict with Anglo-Texans, he may have also hoped that U.S. blacks would ally themselves with the central Mexican state, which opposed slavery, rather than with Texas slaveholders.” Sarah E. Cornell, “Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833–1857,” *Journal of American History* 100, no. 2 (September 1, 2013): 351–74.

<sup>842</sup> *General Vicente Filisola’s Analysis of Jose Urrea’s Military Diary: A Forgotten 1838 Publication by an Eyewitness to the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 88

the second-largest, and virtually unknown, slave uprising in North America was initiated by dozens of slaves on the lower Brazos river. They burned plantations, collected tools, and joined the Mexican Army or disappeared into the woods.<sup>843</sup> Contemporary newspapers claimed that one hundred thousand enslaved persons from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas escaped U.S. slavery by entering Mexican territory, although the number was probably closer to four thousand.<sup>844</sup> The highly exaggerated figure reflects the scale of slaveholders' deteriorating handle on the situation. The power of their paranoia was proportionate to the power of the freedom dreams that compelled slaves to exodus to Mexico. Solomon Northrup, enslaved in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in 1841, wrote how slaves still celebrated "a large number of a runways" who were hung in 1837 for planning a "crusade to Mexico," and predicted that their martyrdom would "doubtless go down to succeeding generations as their chief tradition."<sup>845</sup> On the pro-plantation side, in the August of 1835 the white slaveholder Stephen Austin, the so-called "father of Texas," explained to his cousin: "*Texas must be a slave country,*" in order to prevent "fanatical abolitionists" from agitating the enslaved population to rebel in neighboring Louisiana."<sup>846</sup>

What did this multinational buffer state look like that Austin and others of his ilk so feared? We do not have many accounts, but there is at least one travel narrative that captured a sense of daily life. Benjamin Lundy, an abolitionist who had lived and organized across the country, went

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<sup>843</sup> Max Flomen, "The Long War for Texas: Maroons, Renegades, Warriors, and Alternative Emancipations in the Southwest Borderlands, 1835-1845," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2021).

<sup>844</sup> On southern newspaper coverage of slave flight to Mexico, see Rosalie Schwartz, *Across the Rio to Freedom: U.S. Negroes in Mexico* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1975), 60-114; the figure of 4,000 is given by Texas Ranger John Ford in John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 196.

<sup>845</sup> Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841* (Auburn, NY: Applewood Books, 1853), 188.

<sup>846</sup> For Anglo apprehensions regarding slavery's future in Texas, see Austin to Mary Austin Holley, August 21, 1835, in Eugene C. Barker, ed., *The Austin Papers: Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1919 (AP)* (3 vols. Washington, 1924), III: 101-102 (emphasis in original); Beaumont Committee to Henry Millard, December 2, 1835, in William C. Binkley, ed., *Official Correspondence of the Texan Revolution (OCTR)* (2 vols. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), I: 160-161; Flomen, "Alternative Emancipations," 6.

to these free Black towns in 1831; Matamoros, which today is a border town, was the site of a free Black community in this decade. Again revealing the Crescent City's important role in the *frontera sónica*, it was in New Orleans where Lundy discovered the existence of these colonies, where he learned of a New Orleans Creole Color Nicholas Dronette who served in the Mexican army. Lundy described Dronette as a "dark mulatto, recently an officer of the Mexican army, [and who] had received a grant of land from the Mexican government, for the purpose of colonizing it with coloured settlers from Louisiana." Lundy visited Dronette in Matamoros, where he was welcomed warmly. He attended "a respectable meeting of coloured people" at the latter's house, and they even promised "pecuniary assistance" to Lundy's plan to create "an asylum for hundreds of thousands of our oppressed colored" from other parts of the United States.<sup>847</sup> Lundy mentions meeting "Two young mulatto men formerly of New Orleans," a steamboat engineer and a cabinet maker, who "Both expressed great aversion to returning to the United States," adding, "Coloured people prosper here in pecuniary matters." Lundy describes also seeing "Indian soldiers," allied with the Creoles, Tejanos, and free Blacks, patrolling the city streets, and also comments "I do not find one foreign white man here," except for one Vermont-born "anti-slavite." When Black people were confronted with racism by visiting whites, they were not afraid to defend themselves. When one white clerk to a visiting Northern merchant referred to Black men at a ball as "damn n----s," a fight ensued, and the clerk fell on his sword cane and injured himself. The white assailant was taken into custody by the police and imprisoned, an unimaginable consequence in the United States South.<sup>848</sup>

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<sup>847</sup> *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, XII (October, 1831), 87; supplement (December, 1831).

<sup>848</sup> Benjamin Lundy, *The Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy: Including His Journeys to Texas and Mexico, with a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti* (Philadelphia: W.D. Parrish, 1847), 142-45.

Lundy also highlighted the distinct form of agriculture used from the cotton-country envisioned by the Anglo-Texan slaveowners. Lundy describes a “singular” type of polycrop subsistence, with “many fine cabbage plants and young radishes” which “average six inches long and three quarters of an inch thick,”—even though the plants were quite young—“it is but three weeks since the seed was sown.” The land was, apparently, fertile, and the agricultural practices were consistent with counter-plantation values. Lundy even received medical treatment for his dysentery from plants from orchards and gardens—specially, Camphour and Laudanum, “remedies I believe are without parallel.”<sup>849</sup> In Chapter 4, I take these alternative land practices seriously as sites where collectivity and communal social relations were developed.

Lundy was understandably inspired by his travels, as well as the promise made by the government of Tamaulipas to provide land for a free Black colony. He wrote in the abolitionist periodical he edited: “The time has come when we think it proper to say: of all the places ever mentioned, as suitable for the emigration of the southern colored population, [Texas] is the most inviting, most desirable.” A few months later, he reiterated that in this “fine region [the] winter [is] unknown, and where man, without distinction of color or condition, is looked upon as the being that Deity made him—free and independent.”<sup>850</sup> As Lundy noted, native nations actively participated in these multinational communities, and native warriors arrived from as far away as Arkansas and Alabama to discuss “how they would transform Texas back into Indian Country.”<sup>851</sup> What is remarkable about all this is that, in decades prior, the Mexican state had not been an ally to the Native nations. But the encroaching plantation complex was understood as a distinct threat.

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<sup>849</sup> Lundy, *The Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy*, 143.

<sup>850</sup> Merton L. Dillon, “Benjamin Lundy in Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1959): 46–62.

<sup>851</sup> Flomen, “The Long War for Texas: Maroons, Renegades, Warriors, and Alternative Emancipations in the Southwest Borderlands, 1835-1845,” 16.

Uniting against it not only overruled past antagonisms but provided a space to imagine more egalitarian futures. As the Shawnee maroons who inhabited these borderlands declared, “all Indian lands were the common property,” not to be bought and sold by anyone.<sup>852</sup> Indigenous conceptions of land added to a lexicon of alternative economic development models and philosophies and had profound impacts on Afrodiasporic populations across the Hemisphere, and these Black-Tejano-Native villages in Matamoros reflected it.

Creoles of Color appear to have participated in the multinational buffer state: in addition to the Nicholas Dronette and the two “young mulattoes” that Lundy met, a military document from March 28, 1839 reports that a “French negro,” named Raphael, who “claimed to have always been free,” was captured by Anglos while serving in the Indigenous-Black-Tejano army of Vicente Córdova. Raphael refused to submit, promising he “always maintained a hostile attitude toward the [Anglo-] Texans,” and was executed.<sup>853</sup> Years earlier, in 1832, for instance, Martin Donato petitioned the state to allow Lucien Donato to collect \$500 from his grandmother’s estate, to be used for “making a trip to Mexico where he has an uncle and other relations, for the purpose of acquiring the Spanish language, [as well as] a knowledge of the manners and customs of that country.”<sup>854</sup> These multinational, counter-plantation borderland colonies were of serious concern to the Anglo-Texans. Stephen Fuller Austin mailed Mississippi Senator L.F. Linn in 1836 and asked for support in a proposed “war of extermination” against the “population of Mexicans, Indians, and renegades, all mixed together.”<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>852</sup> *Telegraph and Texas Register*, July 14, 1841, 3; Homen, 22.

<sup>853</sup> Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas*, 151-156; 361-363; *Telegraph and Texas Register*, January 23, 1839, 3; *Telegraph and Texas Register*, April 17, 1839, 2; Burlson to Johnston, May 22, 1839, U.S. Congress, Senate Executive Documents, 32nd Cong., 2nd sess., 30-31; William L. Mann, “James O. Rice: Hero of the Battle on the San Gabriel,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (July 1951): 30-42.

<sup>854</sup> Claude Oubre, “St. Landry’s Gens de Couleur Libre: The Impact of War and Reconstruction,” in Baker and Kreamer, eds. *Louisiana Tapestry*, p.83.

<sup>855</sup> Austin to L. F. Linn, May 4, 1836, *AP*, III: 344-348.

The eventual United States-Mexican War (1846-48) was widely perceived as a war to preserve slavery, even within the army. Hundreds of Irish draftees, most of them fleeing Great Britain's brutal occupation of Ireland and the resulting famine, switched sides and became Mexico's San Patricio battalion. They endured brutal torture at the hands of the United States after its victory.<sup>856</sup> "I have said from the first that the United States are the aggressors... We have not one particle of right to be here," wrote Colonel Hitchcock in his diary; General Grant wrote about the war that it was "the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation" and that "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican War," since it expanded the slaveholding states through the annexation of Texas and emboldened the use of force to settle questions of racial supremacy and colonialism.<sup>857</sup> Future Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and P.G.T. Beauregard played important roles in the war.<sup>858</sup>

In contrast, the Mexican's antislavery stance hardened as a result of the war;<sup>859</sup> and the Mexican press attacked the United States as a "hybrid republic, with popular institutions and a refined aristocracy of blood... [that degrades] people of color."<sup>860</sup> These critiques were reproduced in New Orleans's robust Spanish-speaking press, whose twenty three Spanish-language newspapers were the most in the nation, and even superseded the state's French press in reach and distribution by the 1840s.<sup>861</sup> One of these, *La Patria*, attacked the United States for "adopt[ing]

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<sup>856</sup> K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Omaha, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

<sup>857</sup> Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 105.

<sup>858</sup> Gustavus Woodson Smith, *Company "A" Corps of Engineers, U.S.A., 1846-1848, in the Mexican War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 43; Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 174-176. In fact, Robert E. Lee publicly lamented that Beauregard received more brevets in the Mexican campaigns. T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 13-33.

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>860</sup> *El Monitor Republicano*, 30 April 1847.

<sup>861</sup> Lázaro Lima, "Louisiana," in *Latino America: A State-by-State Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 347; Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 108-120.

doctrines so contrary to their founding” in this “unjust war” fought “in the bloodiest manner” possible.<sup>862</sup> Its editor, Victoriano Aléman, was soon assaulted in the streets of New Orleans by William Walker, the future filibusterer of Nicaragua.<sup>863</sup>

These Spanish-language critiques of imperialism and slavery further solidified Creole of Color and Black Louisiana identification with the Mexican republic. Critiquing the war’s impetus and its effects, Rodolphe Desdunes wrote that “slavery was the pivot around which everything revolved.”<sup>864</sup> At the conclusion of the United States’ colonial war against Mexico, a prominent Afro-Creole composer, Edmond Dédé, moved from New Orleans to Mexico to study conducting between 1848 and 1851.<sup>865</sup> He would become one of many free people of color who showed his solidarity with the Mexican republic.

As the counter-plantation Latin American and pro-plantation Anglo American project became increasingly contrasted, free Creoles of Color soon followed fugitive slaves in calling Mexico an adopted home. In the late 1850s, in sync with the Haitian emigration movement, Veracruz became a major destination for hundreds of Creole of Color families who moved from New Orleans in a mass exodus, including the Tio family. As with those who migrated to Haiti, they voted with their feet and became a transborder community. Boats sailed nearly every day from Veracruz, Mexico to New Orleans, as Creoles of Color traded goods with New Orleans,

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<sup>862</sup> “Entonces rechazaban a los invasores y resistían al tirano opresor que trataba de deominarlos cruelmente: pero hoy se nos presenta el reverse de la medulla, y esta gran nación que tachaba siempre la injusticia de los usurpadores, sigue las huellas y los malos ejemplos de otras naciones dominadas por la tiranía y la injusticia.” *La Patria*, June 4, 1846. Quoted in Kirsten Silva Gruesz, “Delta Desterrados,” 52-79.

<sup>863</sup> Tom Reilly, “A Spanish-Language Voice of Dissent in Antebellum New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 23, no. 4 (1982): 325–39.

<sup>864</sup> Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

<sup>865</sup> Here, he met touring virtuosos such as pianist Henri Herz and soprano Henriette Sontag. Sally McKee, *The Exile’s Song: Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 70.

visited relatives' funerals and weddings, and negotiated family business on both sides of the Gulf. Steamers could reach New Orleans in two weeks' time<sup>866</sup> In fact, as early as 1822, at the onset of Mexican independence, New Orleans outpaced Seville as Jalapa, Veracruz's primary trading partner.<sup>867</sup> While this transborder community had existed since the 1830s, Creole of Color migration to Mexico began in earnest in 1857 and continued as late as January 1860, when New Orleans *Daily Delta* reported that "scarcely a week passes but a large number of free persons of color leave this port for Mexico or Hayti."<sup>868</sup>

The Tios' relocation to Mexico was directly the result of increasingly repressive legislation in the 1850s, as well as the perception that the United States was an Imperial slaveholding power. According to Lorenzo Tio Jr.'s granddaughter, Rose Wynn Tio:

[W]hen the United States took over, racism took over. And [Great-grandpapa] could not take racism because I remember verbal history that he's suppose [*sic*] to have stormed up and down the house saying "I'm not standing for this. I'm not going to, I'm not going to play second fiddle and I can't take racism." So that's why he left. So he expatriated.<sup>869</sup>

To many Creoles of Color, Mexico was a more accessible destination than Liberia (then championed by the American Colonization Society) or Haiti. Commercial contacts and a small transborder community had existed between the Creoles of Color of Saint Landry Parish and Veracruz since at least 1832.<sup>870</sup> In the late 1850s, "what had begun as a trickle of emigrants grew

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<sup>866</sup> Mary Gehman, "The Mexico-Louisiana Creole Connection," *Louisiana Cultural Vistas* 11, no. 4 (Winter, 2001-2002): 68-76; George Black, *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 5.

<sup>867</sup> Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, *Apuntes Historicos de La Her6ica Ciudad de Vera-Cruz* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Vincente Garc3a Torres, 1958), vol. 3, 368-369.

<sup>868</sup> *New Orleans Daily Delta*, January 16, 1860, cited in Donald Everett, "Free People of Color in New Orleans, 1830-1865" (M.A. Thesis, New Orleans, Tulane University, 1952), 129.

<sup>869</sup> Rose Wynn Tio, Interview, Hogan Jazz Archive, quoted in Sara Hudson, "Crossing Stories: Circulating Citizenships in an Am3ricas Du Golfe" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New Haven, Yale University, 2011), 207.

<sup>870</sup> In 1832, Martin Donato petitioned the Opelousas courts to permit his 18 year old grandson, Lucien Donato, to collect his inheritance from this grandfather's estate. He needed the money for "Making a trip to Mexico where he

to a steady stream,”<sup>871</sup> and at least two colonies were formed. One, the Donato colony, located amongst the banks of the Papaloapan River, was named after a wealthy Creole of Color family in St. Landry Parish. The other, the Eureka colony, was envisioned as an agricultural commune and was located fifty miles north of Tampico in an estuary that met the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>872</sup> These were 361 miles apart, and the projects had different timelines: *El Siglo XIX* reports that Creoles of Color destined for the Donato colony landed at the Veracruz *llave* (port) in mid-July 1857, while the Eureka communers signed a notarial agreement with the Mexican state in 1859.<sup>873</sup> Most of the Veracruz homesteaders returned within less than ten years, but some remained longer. Among those who stayed for an extended period include the Tio family, who later moved to Tampico, Veracruz, after the Eureka commune collapsed. The Tio family remained in Mexico until 1877, when they moved to New Orleans.

The Eureka colony was another attempt to generate a Black-Mexican cooperative society of the type that flourished in Tamaulipas and Matamoros in the 1830s and 40s. Surviving notarial documents, issued between Mexican President Ignacio Comonfort and the Jamaican-born New Orleans Creole of Color architect, Nelson Fouché, provide a unique window into how the colony was to be organized. The “*Los condueños de cofradía*” (the co-owners of the guild, or brotherhood) promise to make “a donation of 2,500 acres of land to a hundred families,” and also pledged to donate “for their subsistence, during the first months, 60 cow heads,” with a further promise to

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has an uncle and other relations, for the purpose of acquiring the Spanish language, a knowledge of the manners and customs of that country and other information necessary to a young man in his situation.” See Claude Oubre, “St. Landry’s Gens de Couleur Libre: The Impact of War and Reconstruction,” in *Louisiana Tapestry: The Ethnic Weave of St. Landry Parish*, ed. Vaughn Baker and Jean T. Kremer (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 1983), 83.

<sup>871</sup> Lemelle, “The ‘cricum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures,” 63.

<sup>872</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933” (New Orleans, Louisiana, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993).

<sup>873</sup> “Immigracion,” *El Siglo XIX*, July 15, 1857, quoted in Lemelle, “The ‘cricum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures,” 63; Notarial Act.

“help you obtain other relief with the most favorable conditions.” The document also promises that Tampico doctor Arcadio F. Herrera will provide medical care and medicine to any sick settlers. The settlers were to be granted Mexican citizenship. Sales for the colony were to be managed collectively. Fouché was to sell land in New Orleans, but only for the purpose of raising money to purchase a ship that would transport the hundred families; afterwards, the ship would “continue making trips,” and “the [sales of] produce of each travel will be deposited in the municipals savings bank of the New Colony.” If the New Orleans families could find their own way to Eureka they would “have the right to one piece of land in the village, and also a respective lot, destined for cultivation” at “no cost at all.”<sup>874</sup>

A second document, drafted two years later bears the signature of [Thomas] Louis Marcos Tio and Auguste Metoyer, an ancestor of the jazz trumpeter Arnold Metoyer (Arnold was born in Tampico, was said to play trumpet “like a Mexican” by his contemporaries; he also taught a young Louis Armstrong).<sup>875</sup> *Los condueños de cofradia* established a creative mechanism to blur the line between private and communally held property: surpluses generated from land sales are distributed into a separate fund and act as an equalizing agent by distributing them to the colony’s impoverished:

Article 3: All nationals + foreigners who arrive in Eureka to live will receive, after the two months that Article 1 discusses, their lot in full ownership, and they will appear in the record that is to be managed by the Brotherhood of Co-owners; the same will be verified with respect to the crop lot in the event that they are farmers.

Article 4: The Brotherhood of Co-owners agree with the settlers who are already living in Eureka to set, in each particular [immigration] case, a very small price for their lots and lots of cultivation, with the product of these sales serving to foment the colony and to assist the

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<sup>874</sup> *Documents Relatif à la Colonie d'Eureka*, LRC, 1-7.

<sup>875</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstöröm, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 162-164.

poorest families. These products will be deposited while they are being invested, by a person with complete trust named in agreement between the co-owners and the settlers.<sup>876</sup>

These paragraphs also point to the clear presence of Mexican families as well as Louisianan Creoles of Color. (“*Todos los nacionales + extranjeros.*”) These paragraphs are vague in regard to several important details, but there is clearly expressed, from the onset of the colony, that a surplus-redistribution mechanism would formalize social well-being and signaled that poverty alleviation was a priority. Much like the land grant offered to Benjamin Lundy for resettling free Black families in Ohio, the Mexican government was quite generous, and provided not only free land and Mexican citizenship, but also cattle, tools, and medical care. A report produced later by the Mexican government stipulated that “los ilustrados dueños de la hacienda de la Cofradía” (the illustrious owners of the land of the Brotherhood) “offered still other auxiliary lands to the colonists.” The report continued: “If only this example was imitated by other landowners in the Republic, who possess huge quantities of land which they cannot cultivate, [and which] they leave barren, hindering the progress of agriculture and an increase in population!”<sup>877</sup> These institutional structures of communal production were a projection of Mexican and Afro-Louisianan solidarity, promoting “solidarity, mutual aid, reciprocity, and generosity” with “horizontal and autonomously

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<sup>876</sup> The text in Spanish reads as such: “Art 3: Todos los nacionales + extranjeros que se presenten en Eureka para vivir recibieron, pasados los dos meses de que habla el Art <sup>0/11</sup> anterior, su solar en plena propiedad haciéndose así constar por documentos que los otorgan los Condueños de Cofradía; lo mismo se verifica(r) a respecto del lote de cultivo si fueren labradores.

Art 4: Los condueños de cofradia de acuerdo con los colonos que ya están viviendo en Eureka fijaron en cada caso particular un precio ínfimo por los solares y lotes de cultivo, sirviendo el producido de estas ventas para fomentar la colonia y ausiliar á las familias más pobres. Estos productos se depositaran mientras se van invirtiendo, en persona de entera confianza nombrada de acuerdo entre los condueños y las colonos.” Thank you to Charles E. Kinzer for sharing this document.

<sup>877</sup> “los dejan eriazos entorpeciendo los progresos de la agricultura y el aumento de la poblacion.” *Memoria de la secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Fomento, Colonización, Industria y Comercio de la República Mexicana*, 57.

driven institutions.”<sup>878</sup> The symbolic history of Mexican-Black alliances in the borderlands lent credibility to the project, and these symbols were reproduced in the commune itself. One map of the “Colonia de Eureka” shows that architectural sites were rich with *frontera* imagery: the “plaza of cowboys,” (*plaza de vaqueros*) the “plaza of muledrivers,” (*plaza de arrieros*) and the “plaza of the sun;” (*plaza del sol*) the last of which was at the center of the colony and was to be circled by a municipal building and a church

There were some major differences, however, between the communal and counterplantation projects on the Mexican border region in the 1830s and 40s, and those created by the Mexican state and Creoles of Color in the late 1850s. The liberal Mexican state saw in the Eureka commune not only a safe haven for a racially oppressed group in New Orleans, but as a model for the breakup of huge swathes of unused lands. Creoles of Color were understood as modern, intellectually ambitious, industrious, and, perhaps most-importantly, non-white. This was a group who had contributed decisively to Mexico’s independence struggles a generation prior, and whose connection to the Haitian Revolution was not far from the historical horizon. Their sheer ingenuity, some Mexicans felt, could overpower Mexican conservatives’ retrograde views on race and inferiority. Some scholars have argued that, as a dark skinned Zapotec-Mestizo, Juárez may have seen similarities between the plight of Mexico’s mestizos and the free people of color and slaves he worked alongside while in New Orleans. In this context, Creoles’ possession of capital was perceived as a tool for liberation and economic development, not signs of aristocratic

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<sup>878</sup> This text is from contemporary African American cooperative, Cooperation Jackson, an organization located in Jackson, Mississippi but its language certainly would pertain to the type of cooperative institutions that was under construction in this instance. “The Jackson–Kush Plan: The Struggle for Black Self-Determination and Economic Democracy.” <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59826532e6f2e1038a2870ff/t/5b6655c86d2a73ce52f8d6ce/1533433296830/Jackson-Kush+Plan.pdf>. Accessed January 3, 2020.

light-skinned middle caste.<sup>879</sup> The Mexican press presented these groups as modernizing and industry-obsessed: the Donato colony was said to “have at their disposal capital that was calculated at about 80,000 pesos,” as well as “machinery” and “factories” already built in Veracruz. This rapid industrialization makes sense since “Their principal work consists of the cultivation and processing of sugar cane.”<sup>880</sup>

Sometimes, the courting of Creoles of Color was rooted in colorism or racism. Mexican President Valentín Gómez Farias, who had spent significant time in New Orleans, thought it wise to target specifically “quadroons and mulattos,” who were subjected to discrimination there. As Sarah Connell notes, this preference was based in no small part on racism: “Although he favored black immigration amid the growing crisis with Texas slaveholders, Gómez Farias also demonstrated prejudice by seeking immigrants of mixed ancestry and lighter skin.”<sup>881</sup> These ideological contradictions—between antiracism and light-skinned privilege, between opposing plantation slavery and facilitating “free” labor on plantations—were reproduced in the debates within the Mexican public sphere. In 1857, the Mexican *Extraordinary*, an English-language publication edited by a pro-slavery United States expat, denounced the African American colony in Veracruz, suggesting its very presence would lead to Mexican “degeneration” and arguing for the emigrants to be expelled.<sup>882</sup> The Spanish-language *El Siglo* rejected this Anglo-American brand of racism and celebrated Mexico’s rejection of slavery by pointing out that: “work, well-

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<sup>879</sup> Colonel John Sobieski, *Life of President Benito Pablo Juárez: The Savior and Regenerator of Mexico* (Rosendale: S.A. Coffman, 1919), 7; George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 149; See also Valeria Priscilla Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity: The World’s Fair, Mexico’s Eighth Cavalry Band, and the Borderlands of New Orleans Music, 1884–1910” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Illinois, Northwestern University, 2018), 80.

<sup>880</sup> “La Raza Negra,” *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City), Aug. 8, 1857; quoted in Lemelle, “The ‘circum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures,” 65.

<sup>881</sup> Cornell, “Citizens of Nowhere,” 357.

<sup>882</sup> Sidney J. Lemelle, “The ‘circum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures: The Donato Colony in Mexico, 1830-1860,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 65.

being, *liberty*, do not make races degenerate.”<sup>883</sup> Over time, however, its antislavery argument moved towards that of a different vintage, namely, that the different skin color and class status of the immigrants meant that the normal concerns with Black emigration need not apply. A French-Mexican paper, started by an ardent republican, used similarly coded racism: it argued that it was not as if the colony was “an eruption of blacks that arrived directly from the Congo;” rather, this was “a free colored population, intelligent, civilized, perfectly educated, and versed in an industry important to Mexico and provisioned with capital.”<sup>884</sup>

Similarly, *El Progreso*, a Veracruz newspaper, used the arrival of the Creoles of Color to both denounce United States racism and perpetuate a Mexican variant. On the one hand, the newspaper editorialized that the colonists came “fleeing from the ‘christianizing and civilizing’ treatment of North Americans, for whom the Negro is a thing, not a person; and declares them to be children, and expels them if they are not slaves.” Yet this perceptive critique of United States’ racist ideologies becomes obviously ironic when, in a subsequent paragraph, the newspaper celebrated the “industriousness” of the New Orleans migrants and claimed that they would “enliven our local *Jarochos* [local Afro-Veracruzanos] and make them shake-off their great laziness.”<sup>885</sup> What was read as “laziness” by *El Progreso* was rather, the historically articulated antipathy to plantation agriculture.<sup>886</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> “Colonización,” *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City), Aug. 3, 1857, p. 3; quoted in Cornell, “Citizens of Nowhere,” 373. Emphasis mine.

<sup>884</sup> Jacqueline Covo-Maurice, “A Major French Journalist in Mexico in the 19th Century: Rene Masson and Le ‘Trait d’Union,’” *Caravelle* 78 (June 1, 2002): 105–25.

<sup>885</sup> “La Colonia Del Papaloapan,” *El Progreso*, August 27, 1857; Quoted in Sidney J. Lemelle, “The ‘circum-Caribbean’ and the Continuity of Cultures: The Donato Colony in Mexico, 1830-1860,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 671.

<sup>886</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991).

Indeed, this complex entanglement of (lighter-skinned) racial identity, capital accumulation, and industrialized agriculture lends credibility to the claim that Creole “lightness” was invested in some degree of whiteness.<sup>887</sup> More broadly, it reflected the limitations of modernity, whether of an imperialist or a republican bent. David Goldberg has explained: “This is a central paradox, the irony perhaps, of modernity: The more explicitly universal modernity’s commitments, the more open it is to and the more determined it is by the likes of racial specificity and racist exclusivity,” and that soon, “modernity comes increasingly to be defined by and through race.”<sup>888</sup> Capitalism was so utterly dependent on slavery and plantation agriculture to power its genocidal integration of a world-system, that even the most audacious projects of variously raced subalterns on both sides of United States–Mexican border could reproduce some of its foundational discourses without intending to.

But it is worth noting that Mexican racial categories, and its history as a nation, was different from the countries under Goldberg’s analysis—those of Europe. The invaluable participation of enslaved Afro-Mexicans who scarified hundreds of thousands of lives during the War of Independence was consistent with Latin American independence fights in Colombia, Uruguay, and, of course, Haiti.<sup>889</sup> The Afro-Mexican general Vicente Guerrero, who served as Mexico’s second president, exemplified this connection. In the Americas, one Mexican writer noted, “there was no difference between the blood of Charlemagne and Montezuma.”<sup>890</sup> When the Chilean intellectual Francisco Bilbao defended “American civilization against European

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<sup>887</sup> Justin A. Nystrom, “Racial Identity and Reconstruction: New Orleans’s Free People of Color and the Dilemma of Emancipation,” in *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War*, ed. Paul Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 122–39.

<sup>888</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 70–71.

<sup>889</sup> Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795–1831* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

<sup>890</sup> *La República* (Chihuahua), 22 November 1867.

civilization,” the first item he listed was emancipation; the second, the abolition of racial distinctions and inequality before the law.<sup>891</sup> Perhaps this explains why conservatives attacked liberals in Latin American countries, not as Black sympathizers, but as Black themselves. The Conservative paper *La Sociedad* joked that Benito Juárez would take the part of “El Negro Sensible” in an upcoming play.<sup>892</sup> In 1862, during the Eureka colony’s tenure, conservatives attacked Mexico’s liberals as a “mob of mulattos.”<sup>893</sup>

Thus, interestingly, Creoles of Color from New Orleans were a strategic piece on this chessboard of capitalist development, liberalism, and conservative racism in Mexico. The motivations and ideologies of the Creoles of Color themselves has been a subject of debate amongst historians of antebellum New Orleans. Mary Nial Mitchell’s *Raising Freedom’s Child* and a forthcoming book (currently a dissertation) by Andrew N. Wegmann titled *Skin Color and Social Practice: The Problem of Race and Class in the Atlantic South, 1718-1865* speak to this. Mitchell’s reading foregrounds how these Mexican colonies were conceived as a “future rooted in a positive view of black people’s destiny in the world.”<sup>894</sup> Andrew Wegman distances himself from this interpretation, and suggests that it was their desire for capital accumulation, and not freedom dreams, which was the prime mover of Creole of Color emigration. He argues that the colonists were motivated by a “sense of economic opportunity, social mobility, and elitist ambition.”<sup>895</sup>

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<sup>891</sup> F. Bilbao, “El evangelio americano,” 2: 428, quoted in Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 172.

<sup>892</sup> *La Sociedad*, 5 July 1860; quoted in Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 171.

<sup>893</sup> *La Chinaca* (Mexico City), 12 May 1867.

<sup>894</sup> Mitchell, *Raising Freedom’s Child*, 13-14, 17.

<sup>895</sup> Andrew Wegman, “Skin Color and Social Practice: The Problem of Race and Class in the Atlantic South, 1718-1865” (PhD Dissertation, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 2015), 263.

Interestingly, nothing in the Eureka commune's founding documents or its historical record suggests that it was focused on plantation production. Whatever conservative ideologies and oligarchic fantasies may have animated a subsection of the Creole of Color population in their exodus plans, the commune would not have been viable without the generosity of Mexican assistance and their commitment to a shared project that influenced both peoples. It would not have come into existence had liberal Mexican revolutionaries chosen another city than New Orleans to spend exile, a reality captured by the fact that it was Juárez, as Chief Justice and Vice-President of Mexico, who worked with Mexican president Ignacio Comonfort, another former New Orleans exile, to officially charter Veracruz's Eureka Colony in 1857.<sup>896</sup> Focusing only on the ambitions of the most reactionary Creoles of Color erases not only the republican traditions of this group, but it also removes Mexican agency from the story.

The careful, multiyear planning of this project did not guarantee success. Whatever wealth the Tios had before their exodus to Mexico had all but evaporated by the end of the Eureka commune. Destroyed by an act of arson, possibly because of the perceived sympathies the colony had with the invading French force, a memoir produced by Antoinette Tio depicts an extremely desperate family, moving in haphazard and reactive fashion and relying on the goodwill and kindness of Mexican homeowners. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1862, Antoinette Tio wrote that "We arrived in Tampico," and two days later, "we moved into the house of Don Igancio Iscareña." A year later, apparently, the Tios had worn out their welcome: "We were dislodged from his home in the month of December 1863." They then "moved into the house of Don Juan Acosta" from December 1863 to July of 1865." These kinds of internal movements in Tampico continued at an unbroken pace in

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<sup>896</sup> Colonel John Sobieski, *Life of President Benito Pablo Juarez: The Savior and Regenerator of Mexico* (Rosendale: S.A. Coffman, 1919); *Documents relatif*, 7; Jiménez, "Brokering Modernity," 80.

the proceeding years, during which multiple children were born, with some dying in childbirth.<sup>897</sup> That was the case with one Lorenzo, who was born and died in the commune. Their next son would also be named Lorenzo, and he was born on August 28, 1867, in the city of Tampico, when the family was living with Don Juan Acosta. Deaths were recorded in the colony, as well: one uncle of Antoinette's died "the same day our house was burnt down" in Eureka. Several other cousins and uncles died throughout their journeys. In 1877, Antoinette and the Tios received news from her aunt, Josephine Hazuer, that her uncle, Sylvain Hauzer, had died in New Orleans. This suggests that the Tios continued to communicate with other family members in New Orleans as they attempted to make a life in Tampico.

Several salient points stick out about this narrative. The first possibility of ongoing mutual aid shown to the Tios by several Mexicans. Maybe they paid rent, or perhaps they were hosted as boarders, or possibly these Mexican families that had belonged to the "Brotherhood of Co-owners." Since the former had made the land available to the New Orleans Creoles of Color, it would not be surprising that they continued to provide support for them in the face of tragedy.

Secondly, it points to the ongoing relationships that the Tios built with Veracruzanos, even after their accusation of allegiance to Maximilian. Louis and Lorenzo Tio Sr. were 15 and 10 years old, respectively, when they moved to New Orleans. That means they built their foundational relationships, and musical chops, growing up in Veracruz. As Valeria Jiménez notes, "the Tio family, while prominent, were not yet the noted family of musicians they would become in the late nineteenth-century. They lived in Mexico for several decades, where they gained musical training

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<sup>897</sup> The Tios were able to move into a house they bought in 1868. Three months later, Antoinette's uncle, Favello, died. At that point, they were forced to sell the house, and moved into the house of "Mr. Ernesto" in September 1868, where they remained until 1872, when they moved in with Mr. Labourdette in July of 1872, the first listed man with a French surname and possibly another Creole of Color from New Orleans. They then left this house to live with Don Andrés Grillo in August 1873, and finally they moved in with Don Juan on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1874

and became noted clarinetists before returning to New Orleans.”<sup>898</sup> Indeed, the Tios were often referred to as “the Mexicans” by New Orleanians, many of whom were unaware of the family’s New Orleans roots.<sup>899</sup> There was even a rumor that the Tios learned their clarinet technique at *El Conservatorio Nacional de Música* in Mexico City, but this may have blended with the history of another New Orleans woodwind player from Mexico, Florencio Ramos—a mix-up that reveals how deeply the Tios were read, and “heard,” as Mexican.<sup>900</sup>

Thus, the impact that this Mexican solidarity provided to the Creole of Color nationals was of real significance, and likely had more of an impact on the politics and cultural identities of these emigrants than scholars have previously noted. To ignore the charity of Don Juan Acosta, “Mr. Ernesto,” or the doctor Arcadio F. Herrera at the Eureka colony is akin to ignoring the profound influence of Mexican music on the Tios. This material support was, as I have outlined here, part of a larger cultural collaboration—what Flomen calls the “alternative emancipations” carved out by multiethnic motley crews around the United States–Mexico border, where “bands of marginalized peoples fused together” to create a vision in the future firmly rooted in overturning slavery and plantation capitalism. The Eureka colony and the itinerant lives that Tios lived in Tampico thereafter could be said to be part of this *frontera sónica*. Even the instrument of choice

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<sup>898</sup> Valeria Priscilla Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity: The World’s Fair, Mexico’s Eighth Cavalry Band, and the Borderlands of New Orleans Music, 1884–1910” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Illinois, Northwestern University, 2018), 81.

<sup>899</sup> Johnson, “Sobre Las Olas,” 225 – 240; Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tios of New Orleans and Their Pedagogical influence on the Early Jazz Clarinet Style,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16.2 (Autumn 1996), 279 – 302; Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans,” *Second Line* 43.3 (Summer 1991), 18 – 27.

<sup>900</sup> Stewart, “The Mexican Band Myth,” 9.

of the Tios—the clarinet—reflected the cultural gulf winds which the Mexican musicians brought with them to the Crescent City.<sup>901</sup>

#### 4.4 Rolling for Resonance: Cigarmakers, Aural Agency, and Latin New Orleans

*Mi escenario no se restringe a ninguno de esos lugares geográficos que ellos llaman patria.  
[My stage is not restricted to any of those geographical places that men call nation.]*

- Lucía Guerra<sup>902</sup>

The idea of New Orleans is contested. It has long served as a site of racial exoticism, a narrative that distorts Black history and culture.<sup>903</sup> In the nineteenth century, however, it projected something quintessentially American: the inevitability of Empire. Indeed, the acquisition of New Orleans both accelerated Manifest Destiny ideology while simultaneously consolidating an Anglo-American notion of whiteness.<sup>904</sup> As a French and then a Spanish colony with a distinctive Creole of Color population, it is not difficult to imagine, however, a different path to postcolonial statehood along the lines of Spanish America or the French Caribbean.

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<sup>901</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Myth, Reality, and Musical Impact; A Preliminary Investigation,” *The Jazz Archivist* VI, no. 2 (December 1991): 1–14.; Xavier Quirarte, *Ritmos de la Eternidad* (Mexico, D.F.: CNCA, 1999).

<sup>902</sup> Lucía Guerra, *Más Allá de Las Máscaras* (Puebla, Mexico: Premia Editora, la Red de Jonas, 1984), 13.

<sup>903</sup> Lynnell L. Thomas, “‘Roots Run Deep Here’: The Construction of Black New Orleans in Post-Katrina Tourism Narratives,” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 749–68; Kevin Fox Gotham, *Authentic New Orleans: New Orleans, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); J. Mark Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

<sup>904</sup> Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), Chapter 1, on Thomas Jefferson’s pseudo-mathematical ideas on race, relates to the dual events of the Louisiana Purchase and the Haitian Revolution.

The veil of United States “inevitability” is one we must actively remove to appreciate the contours of the anti-imperialist (and anti-slavery) projects which sectors of Crescent City actively engaged in well after the inception of Anglo-American rule. “A study of the idea of New Orleans,” writes Tracey Ann Watts, “must recognize the influence of the American project, including its tendency toward masking.”<sup>905</sup> Recent studies have reemphasized New Orleans’s integration with Gulf, Caribbean, and Latin American populations, cultures, and political tendencies, in fields as diverse as Atlantic history, U.S. Southern history, music history, and literary studies.<sup>906</sup> Such gestures reject the implicit interpretive framework of New Orleans, which correlated United States sovereignty over Louisiana as the primary marker of historical development. They acknowledge, some implicitly, and others explicitly, what Fiehrer calls the “neocolonial” character of United States rule of New Orleans.<sup>907</sup> They suggest that New Orleans, alongside its role as the commercial capital of the Antebellum South, may be equally thought of as a colonized Latin American entrepot. “At stake in reimagining the diversity of nineteenth-century New Orleans and its ‘Latin’ character...as a center of Hispanophone cultural activity,” writes Gruesz, is the potential to “call into question the traditional geography of American studies...about the way in which the Americas have been systematically repressed as the abjected Other of America.”<sup>908</sup> The tacit

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<sup>905</sup> Tracey Ann Watts, “New Orleans as an American Jungle: Colonial Roots and Capitalist Representations” (Master’s Thesis, The University of Montana, 2001).

<sup>906</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Cécile Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans: Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society* (Chapel Hill: University of South Carolina Press, 2019); Angel Adams Parham, “Caribbean and Creole in New Orleans,” in *American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South*, ed. Martin Munro and Celia Britton (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 56–76; Adam Rothman, “Lafcadio Hearn in New Orleans and the Caribbean,” *Atlantic Studies* 5, no. 2 (August 1, 2008): 265–83; Kirsten Silva Gruesz, “Delta Desterrados: Antebellum New Orleans and New World Print Culture,” in *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 52–79; Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>907</sup> Thomas Fiehrer, “From Quadrille to Stomp: The Creole Origins of Jazz,” *Popular Music* 10, no. 1 (1991): 21–38.

<sup>908</sup> Gruesz, “Delta Desterrados,” 75.

naturalization of New Orleans as (United States) “American” in our historical imagination is akin to omitting U.S. imperialism in Latin America from our radar.

Despite the above authors’ foregrounding of alternative geographies by which we might conceptualize Louisiana, we currently lack a thorough study of radical Latin American political exiles in the Crescent City. This would seem to provide the strongest evidence of New Orleans’s unofficial, subterranean inclusion into the family of Latin American republics. The pattern of Caribbean and Spanish American revolutionaries taking solace, and organizing, in New Orleans models intra-Latin American transnational political communities which are populated by activists who have historically crossed borders to preserve their lives and continue their political work. In 1855, the Chilean liberal intellectual Francisco Bilbao fled after criticizing the clergy, eventually settling in Buenos Aires where he continued to publish Radical Republican tracts.<sup>909</sup> One hundred and twenty years later, the radical philosopher Enrique Dussel fled Argentina during the Dirty War to live in Mexico in 1975.<sup>910</sup> In between these two are a dizzying list of names that found refuge and solace in sister Latin American republics in various epochs of liberation, counterrevolution, and danger. As James Green and Luis Roniger note, “[the] exile has played a vital part in shaping the forms and styles of Latin American politics,” notable because they point to a shared activist Latin American identity outside the nation-state: “[As] new bonds have been forged with exiles from ‘sister-nations,’ ...the exile seems to have played an important role in Latin America in defining or redefining both national and pan–Latin American identity.”<sup>911</sup>

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<sup>909</sup> Sanders, *Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 3.

<sup>910</sup> Mark Burton and Jorge Mario Flpres, “Introducing Dussel: The Philosophy of Liberation and a Really Social Psychology,” *Psychology in Society* 41 (January 2011): 20–39.

<sup>911</sup> Luis Roniger and James N. Green, “Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America,” *Latin American Perspectives* 34, no. 4 (July 1, 2007): 3.

This history is what makes the plethora of Caribbean exiles in New Orleans so noteworthy. But their tendency to congregate within New Orleans' Creole of Color community is perhaps equally striking.<sup>912</sup> Cuban independence leaders lived in New Orleans for months to years at a time, often bringing with them experiences from other countries. The famed Afro-Cuban revolutionary general Antonio Maceo, after living in Port-au-Prince's Cuban exile community, moved with his family to New Orleans from the August of 1884 to May 1885. He gave speeches and raised funds for the revolution at events organized by the Cuban cigar makers' union, whose president was a collaborator of Rodolphe and Daniel Desdunes and *Comité des Citoyens* supporter, Ramón Pages.<sup>913</sup> Like the Desdunes, Maceo had long looked to Haiti as a beacon for Black and Brown struggle; ten days after he rejected the Spanish peace agreement in 1878 in Baraguá, central Cuba, Maceo published a pamphlet which he justified his opposition to the peace treaty and called on the continuation of resistance, expressing his wish for a "new republic assimilated to that of our sisters Santo Domingo and Haiti."<sup>914</sup> While there is no evidence that Maceo met with Rodolphe Desdunes or other Creole of Color radicals in New Orleans, Maceo held meetings in the same hall frequented by Desdunes and the *Comité*, the *Tribune* covered his exploits in Cuba with admiration, and resonated with its mutual admiration for the Black republic.<sup>915</sup> Maceo also had a daughter,

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<sup>912</sup> Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 3.

<sup>913</sup> Philippe Zacaïr, "Haiti on His Mind: Antonio Maceo and Caribbeanness," *Caribbean Studies* 33, no. 1 (2005): 58-61, 70; Casey, *Empire's Guest Workers*, 40; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 77.

<sup>914</sup> Antonio Maceo Grajales, *Ideología Política: Cartas y Otros Documentos*, 2 vols. (Habana: Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Históricos e Internacionales, 1950), 102; quoted in Philippe Zacaïr, "Haiti on His Mind: Antonio Maceo and Caribbeanness," *Caribbean Studies* 33, no. 1 (2005): 47.

<sup>915</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, "The Atlantic World and the Road to Plessy v. Ferguson," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 1, 2007): 726-33.

Mrs. Inez Andrews, who was born and raised in New Orleans.<sup>916</sup> After Maceo's experience in New Orleans, he moved to Veracruz, Mexico, to raise money from Cuban exiles there.<sup>917</sup>

Thirty years before Maceo's visit, New Orleans's French quarter was set afire with the core cadre of Mexico's liberal exiles. In 1853 Benito Juárez followed a history of political refugees, including ex-President Valentín Gómez Farías, to exile in New Orleans.<sup>918</sup> Juárez had supported Farías in his bid to limit the power of the Mexican military in the 1840s; now it was Juárez who faced Santa Anna's wrath for refusing to raise more troops in Oaxaca for the United States-Mexican War, which Juárez considered a lost cause after several devastating battles.<sup>919</sup> Leaving behind his wife with six children with two more on the way, Juárez first travelled to Havana, and then made his way to the Crescent City, where he joined both friends, such as Melchor Ocampo, Jose Mata, Cepeda Peraza, and Ponciano Arriaga, and rival liberals, like Ignacio Comonfort.<sup>920</sup> When Melchor Ocampo moved to Brownsville, Texas, to organize a separate detachment of exiles, he missed the political culture that New Orleans sustained. In a letter to his old roommates, he asked Juárez and Mata to send him plants, seeds, and news from the Crescent City, which Juárez sent regularly. News was sent back to New Orleans from Brownsville, and sometimes through Havana.<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> "Says General Maceo's Father Now Lives in New Orleans," *Afro American*, January 28, 1933, 8.

<sup>917</sup> Jerry A. Sierra, "Antonio Maceo Timeline," [historyofcuba.com](http://www.historyofcuba.com), 2006, <http://www.historyofcuba.com/PDFs/AntonioMaceoTimeLine.pdf>, accessed October 7, 2020. For other examples of Cuban revolutionaries in New Orleans, see Gerald Eugene Poyo, "Cuban Émigré Communities in the United States and the Independence of Their Homeland, 1852-1895" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 1983). Of the approximately 12,000 Cubans living in the United States by the mid-1870s, an estimated 4,500 were in New York, while about 3,000 lived in New Orleans and another 2,000 in Key West.

<sup>918</sup> Raúl Mejía Zúñiga, *Valentín Gómez Farías, hombre de México, 1781-1858* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981), 191.

<sup>919</sup> Adalberto Santana, "Dos próceres de Nuestra América: Francisco Morazán y Benito Juárez," in *Benito Juárez en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. Adalberto Santana (México: UNAM, 2006), 34-35.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>921</sup> José Herrera Peña, "Juárez y el destierro (1853-1855)," in *Benito Juárez en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. Adalberto Santana (México: UNAM, 2006), 51-68.

New Orleans was truly a Gulf sojourn for Latin American exiles. Juárez not only collaborated with exiled Mexicans, but also with Pedro Stancilia y Palacios, a poet, journalist, and exiled independence activist from Santiago de Cuba. They both “shared the same emancipatory ideals,”<sup>922</sup> and built a lifelong friendship. When Juárez was boarding a ship to return to Mexico to fight with the forces of General Juan Álvarez in 1855, Pedro Stancilia asked, “Where will we meet again?” Juárez replied, “In a free Mexico or in the afterlife.”<sup>923</sup> Stancilia later moved to Mexico and married Juárez’s daughter, Mañuela Juárez y Maza. He became Juárez’s secretary and was elected as a federal deputy on seven different occasions. He edited several liberal Mexican newspapers, such as *El Nuevo Mundo*, and published his own books. He fought in the Cuban Independence war but returned to Mexico, where he passed away in 1910.<sup>924</sup> None of this interaction would have been possible without the critical role played by New Orleans in sustaining a safe haven for Mexican and Cuban exiles.

But it was not only that New Orleans was located on a Gulf axis, equidistant between Veracruz and Havana. As Sara Hudson argues, “the most critical locations that birthed change in Mexican political landscapes across the nineteenth century were not legislatures with their political rhetoric nor courtrooms with their judicial reckonings, but rather New Orleans’ cigar factories with their day-to-day conversations.”<sup>925</sup> Indeed, New Orleans’s cigar shops, where Juárez and others worked, were home to the major ideological battles of the revolution, and the liberals’ *Plan de*

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<sup>922</sup> Luis Angel Argüelles Espinosa, *Temas cubanoamericanos* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1989), 69.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>924</sup> Ana Gloria Mesa de la Fé, *Escritores Cubanos Emigrados En Hispanoamérica (1868-1989)* (La Habana: Academia de Ciencias de Cuba/Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística, 1985), 5.

<sup>925</sup> Hudson, “Crossing Stories,” 241-242.

*Ayala*, which laid the framework for a separation of state from military privilege and church, was negotiated here. And these cigar shops were overwhelmingly run by Creoles of Color.<sup>926</sup>

When New Orleans Creoles of Color self-exiled to Mexico in the late 1850s and early 1860s, it was due in part to the relationships formed on these cigar room floors. It is no coincidence that Comonfort and Juárez were both presidents of Mexico when the Eureka colony was taking root. In fact, Comonfort directly appealed to Louisiana's free people of color, insisting that they would have "the same rights and equality enjoyed by the other inhabitants [of Mexico] without at any time having to feel ashamed of their origin,"<sup>927</sup> and he signed the documents chartering the free Black colony. Thus, it is not too outlandish to suggest that Creoles of Color were as much honorary subjects of Latin American republics as they were dishonorably discharged subalterns of the United States.

Radical Creoles of Color certainly spoke and wrote in a manner familiar to Latin American republicans. When the New Orleanian Creole of Color Edouard Tinchant railed against the French invasion of Mexico, his language echoed Chilean republican exile Francisco Bilbao, who depicted it as a titanic struggle of "American civilization against European civilization."<sup>928</sup> Mexicans would not have been able to move to New Orleans if there was not a sympathetic population who would protect them from retributive political violence, help them with expenses, find employment, and sustain diplomatic pressure against their countervailing forces. And Creoles of Color would not

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<sup>926</sup> For Creole of Color cigar rollers, see citations below, as well as Rebecca J. Scott, "Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary," *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 2 (April 2007): 237–56; Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); 139, 151; Mishio Yamanaka, "Separation Is Not Equality": The Desegregation Movement of Creoles of Color in New Orleans, 1862-1900" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2018) 178, 244-45.

<sup>927</sup> Manuel Siliceo, *Memoria de La Secretaría de Estado y Del Despacho de Fomento, Colonización, Industria y Comercio de La República Mexicana* (México: Imp. V. García Torres, 1857), 57; quoted in Mitchell, *Raising Freedom's Child*, 43.

<sup>928</sup> Sanders, *Vanguard of the Atlantic World*, 4.

have received citizenship, land grants, subsistence and tools from the Mexican state and Veracruzanos if their struggle was not understood a shared one. This section traces the development of this counterpublic sphere in New Orleans and especially amongst its Afrodiasporians through the institutions of the cigar shop.<sup>929</sup>

As noted earlier, the Spanish-language newspaper *La Patria* is a powerful vehicle for mapping the growing republican movement in the Gulf basin. But Latin American republicanism and its political ideals did not only, or even primarily, circulate in newspapers. A robust aural culture was located in the cigar making industry, and was arguably more important in sustaining a counterpublic sphere in the Gulf region. Cigar making was an Atlantic trade that embodied the intersection of tobacco, circum-Caribbean markets, Cuban and Mexican independence, and abolition.<sup>930</sup>

In New Orleans, cigar rolling was one of the trades urban slaves could learn that could allow them the opportunity to manumit. In 1834, the free man of color J.B. Glaudin, taught the trade to both free people of color and slaves in French Quarter. Glaudin had learned to roll from his father, an émigré from Saint-Domingue who became a skilled cigar roller in Havana. One of Glaudin's students, a slave named André Callioux, was able to "hire his own time" so frequently that in 1845, he was able to buy his own freedom. He then set up his own cigar-rolling enterprise.<sup>931</sup>

The trade attracted radicals such as Rodolphe Desdunes, who was invested in cigar manufacture.

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<sup>929</sup> Michael C. Dawson, "A Black Counterpublic?: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s), and Black Politics," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 1994): 195–223; Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 49–90; Natalie Fenton and John Downey, "Counter Public Spheres and Global Modernity," *Javnost - The Public* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 15–32.

<sup>930</sup> For a discussion of the commodity webs that informed tobacco, see Barbara M. Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright: Creating an American Commodity, 1617–1937* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). Susan D. Greenbaum explores Afro-Cuban cigar rollers and the political importance of cigar rolling communities in Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 50.

<sup>931</sup> Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 27–29; 54–55.

His son, Daniel Desdunes, was in charge of the cigar counter at the Chamber of Commerce billiard room when he lived in Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>932</sup> On one 1850 New Orleans census roll, 1,792 free people of color in fifty-four different occupations, including 355 carpenters, 325 masons, 156 cigar makers.<sup>933</sup> Some factories run by Creoles of Color had two hundred workers; most had considerably less.<sup>934</sup>

Cigar factories were a market dominated by Creoles of Color for two reasons. On the one hand, the trade was inherently transnational, with significant overlap between Louisianan, Cuban, Mexican, and Belgian markets. The second reason was economic. Sugar and cotton were economies of scale, requiring huge amounts of slave labor and enormous sums of capital to compete. As Rebecca Scott notes, “these were not sectors in which small operators were likely to flourish,” and so emerged the cigar roller, and “cigar-making skills...[became] common among the free and enslaved populations of color in the city.”<sup>935</sup> The ubiquitous Cuban cigar of today had steep competition with its counterparts in Veracruz, Puerto Rico, and New Orleans during the nineteenth century. By the mid-1860s, cigar-rollers began to organize internationally in the International Working Men’s Association, and a cross-border labor market facilitated such transnational solidarity and communication.<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>932</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, December 12, 1929; Dan Vernhettes et al., “The Desdunes Family (Unpublished Manuscript)” (2020).

<sup>933</sup> Mary Gehman, “Visible Means of Support: Businesses, Professions, and Trades of Free People of Color,” in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana’s Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 208–21.

<sup>934</sup> Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 54–55.

<sup>935</sup> Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), 102.

<sup>936</sup> Ad Knotter, “Transnational Cigar-Makers: Cross-Border Labour Markets, Strikes, and Solidarity at the Time of the First International (1864–1873),” *International Review of Social History* 59, no. 3 (December 2014): 409–42.

Trends in the cigar world would thus impact New Orleans cultural developments throughout the century, especially amongst musicians. Several musicians were descended from cigar makers, and many others worked as cigar rollers themselves, including Edmond Dédé, valve trombonist Anthony Pages, Manuel Perez, Natty Domingue, and the Tio family, to name only a few. A quarter of New Orleans brass and jazz band musicians between 1880 and 1915 reported that their day job was “cigarmaker.”<sup>937</sup> Cigar making was ideal as itinerant work because, as Vernhettes and Lindstörn note, “they were paid by the cigar, rather than by the day. Hence, they were at liberty to take time off, if they needed to.”<sup>938</sup>

Families like the Tios developed international connections through their knowledge of French and Spanish over generations. They may have read *Euzkotarra*, *El Monitor*, or *La Patria*. They also had long-standing ties to Mexico and Spanish-speaking Florida.<sup>939</sup> But perhaps equally or more important than their consumption of these periodicals was their interactions on the floors of Tobacco factories, where a Spanish-language critique of Spanish and United States imperialism was circulated for decades. Indeed, Latin American revolutionary exiles in New Orleans, such as Benito Juárez and the radical Cuban exile and *Comité* member Ramón Pages, worked as cigar rollers. “The [Cuban] cigar maker,” remembered roller García Galló, “loves discussions and this can be explained in terms of the way he works and his wide knowledge. There are daily debates in

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<sup>937</sup> Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 89-91.

<sup>938</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstörn, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 154.

<sup>939</sup> A document from 1826 shows Joseph Marcos Tio based in Pensacola, owner of the schooner *Amelia*. It was transporting a twelve-year old slave named Sally. Joseph Marcos “also did business in Mexican ports.” Vernhettes and Lindstörn, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1*, 150.

and out of work and there are times when they gain such impetus that the whole gallery takes part.”<sup>940</sup> Cigar rolling was an industry steeped in a Caribbean and Gulf aurality.

The connection of Havana to this nexus of organization was not incidental to our current discussion. Cigar rollers had an outside impact in another republican struggle which deeply impacted the entire Caribbean: the Cuban Independence movement. At the onset of the Ten Year’s War in 1867, thousands of exiled cigar rollers left Havana and set up factories in Key West.<sup>941</sup> As Gerald E. Poyo notes, it was during this decade “that the independence ideal became firmly embedded in the consciousness of the tobacco workers, which allowed them to carry on after most others despaired.”<sup>942</sup> While not as central as those in Florida to this phase of Cuba’s revolutionary movement, thousands of Cubans also lived in New Orleans, and were sufficiently organized to support and protect Cuban independence leaders Maximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo and their families for several months in 1884.<sup>943</sup> African Americans were not oblivious to the dynamics of the Cuban Revolution; as Philip Foner notes, they celebrated that Cuba’s “colored inhabitants battle side by side with the White, holding the rank of officers, and in numerous instances, colored officers [are] commandeering White troops.”<sup>944</sup> Afro-Cubans made up a significant portion of the cigar workers; according to Fannie Theresa Rushing, about one-quarter of cigarmakers were Afro-

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<sup>940</sup> Gaspar Jorge García Galló, *El tabaquero cubana: psicología de las profesiones* (Havana, 1936), cited and translated by Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860-1958* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 88.

<sup>941</sup> Antonio Rafael de la Cova, “Cuban Exiles in Key West during the Ten Years’ War, 1868-1878,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2011): 287–319.

<sup>942</sup> Gerald E. Poyo, “Key West and the Cuban Ten Years War,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1979): 289.

<sup>943</sup> Jerry A. Sierra, “Antonio Maceo Timeline,” [historyofcuba.com](http://www.historyofcuba.com), 2006, <http://www.historyofcuba.com/PDFs/AntonioMaceoTimeLine.pdf>, accessed September 5, 2020.

<sup>944</sup> Philip S. Foner, *History of Cuba and It’s Relations With the United States: From the Annexationist to the Second War for Independence 1845-1895* (New York: International Publishers, 1962), Volume II, 242.

Cubans,<sup>945</sup> a proportion that was slightly lower among United States-based Cuban cigar makers.<sup>946</sup> Susan Greenbaum, in her study of Tampa and Key West, notes that these Afro-Cuban cigar makers were “highly visible” and “prominent in revolutionary activities” with many joining the ranks of early labor activists: “Cigarmakers were among the vanguard of the Cuban insurgency, and cigarmaking was a vocation heavily populated with Afro-Cubans.”<sup>947</sup>

As with unofficial diplomacy among Mexico’s liberal exiles, the debates and coalitions that defined the first Cuban revolution emanated from these shop room floors. The Cuban independence movement institutionalized a likely common practice at the time and operationalized it for the purposes of the revolution: *el lector* (“the reader”). In James Weldon Johnson’s ramon à clef *The Autobiography of an ex-Colored Man*, he paints this scene vividly when the protagonist—himself a musician—recalls his work as *el lector* in a Cuban-run cigar factory:

At the end of about three months, through my skill as a “stripper” and the influence of my landlord, I was advanced to a table and began to learn my trade; in fact, more than my trade; for I learned not only to make cigars, but also to smoke, to swear, and to speak Spanish. I discovered that I had a talent for languages as well as music. The rapidity and ease at which I acquired Spanish astonished my associates....After I had been in the factory a little over a year, I was repaid for all the effort I had put forth to learn Spanish by being

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<sup>945</sup> Fannie Theresa Rushing, “Cabildos de Nación, Sociedades de La Raza de Color: Afro-Cuban Participation in Slave Emancipation and Cuban Independence, 1865-1985” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992), 63.

<sup>946</sup> According to U.S. census microfilm reels for 1900, 15 percent of Tampa’s cigarmakers were Afro Cuban. Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 63.

<sup>947</sup> Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 63, 50. Susan Greenbaum suggests that these spaces were important for connecting radical traditions of European migrants and Latin American republicans. As she notes, “Industrial immigrants in a southern city forger a proletarian community where Old World socialism and Latin American independence joined in an ongoing struggle against the imperialism, Social Darwinism, and voracious capitalism that were the signature of the era. Cuban revolutionaries with a strong commitment to labor activism found allies in the Italian and Spanish peasants who settled in Tampa. They had left rural villages in northwest Spain and southwest Sicily that were similarly wracked with poverty and political upheaval, where many had been romanced by ideas of socialism and anarchism. In a small frontier city on the west coast of Florida, they practiced these ideas in the construction of an insular settlement whose ideological foundations contrasted starkly with the post-Confederate southern belief system that characterized the host community.” Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 99. Similar spaces surfaced in New Orleans, which also stood in contrast to the dominant Southern racial order.

selected as “reader.” The “reader” is quite an institution in all cigar factories which employ Spanish-speaking workmen. He sits in the center of the large room in which cigar-makers work and reads to them for a certain number of hours each day all the important news from the papers and whatever else he may consider would be interesting....He must, of course, have a good voice, but he must also have a reputation among the men for intelligence, for being well posted and having in his head a stock of varied information. He is generally the final authority on all arguments which arise, and in a cigar factory those arguments are many and frequent.<sup>948</sup>

Johnson’s account highlights performative aspects of this powerful aural culture, one in which aesthetics (“a good voice”) converges with political consciousness (“well posted...a stock of varied information.”) These techniques of discussing news through verbal and aural enunciation can be considered, not only as a distinct counterpublic sphere, but, rather, as a different *genre* of public sphere entirely, where embodiment, interaction, and debate fueled the imaginations working people had about the future of their world. Indeed, a more traditional idea of musical performance was not uncommon, either. Samuel Gompers, future president of the AFL, started working in a New York cigar factory in the 1860s and remembered political discussions, reading, and factory-wide singing.<sup>949</sup>

On the floors of cigar making workshops in Havana, New Orleans, Veracruz, and elsewhere across the Gulf, a communitarian ideology coalesced, where news of liberation movements, theories of value and worker organization, and the struggle against slavery and segregation merged into a kind of common-sense. Various scholarship has shown how socialism, anarchism, and antiracism circulated within these factories across the Gulf.<sup>950</sup> This vernacular

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<sup>948</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (New York: Knopf, 1955), 72-73.

<sup>949</sup> Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, 2 vols (New York, 1925), I, 34–35, 44, and 68–69, cited by Dorothee Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community: The German Working Class in New York City, 1870-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 56.

<sup>950</sup> For the circulation of anarchism in cigar factories, see Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, “Spanish Anarchism in Tampa, Florida, 1886-1931,” in *Hidden Out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States (1875-1930)*, ed. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago (University Press of Colorado, 2019), 91–128; and Evan

democratic tradition became increasingly linked to the construction of a new collective vision with old roots: a common sense for how to build racial democracy and self-determination within historically specific contours in the nineteenth-century Caribbean. It was this world that compelled James Weldon Johnson to argue that “cigar-making is one trade in which the colour line is not drawn,” one echoed by several Afro-New Orleanians including the female Creole of Color cigar roller Eugenia Lacarra.<sup>951</sup> It is for these reasons the cigar shop was an integral part of the Gulf *frontera sónica*.

Even though the tradition of *El Lector* was not documented until this era of the Cuban Revolution, when the vanguard of the independence movement was associated with cigar makers,<sup>952</sup> the unique working conditions of cigar making – long hours sitting still and requiring both rhythm and concentration – made the integration of dissident forms of collective aurality commonplace across the Black world both before and after the 1860s. Robin D.G. Kelley describes North Carolina tobacco factories, where women stemmers were “not allowed to sit or to talk with one another, [and therefore] it was not uncommon for them to break out in song.” Kelley notes the importance of these performances as they shared a collectively constructed consciousness, both to one another and back to the singer themselves. “Singing in unison not only reinforced a sense of collective identity in these black workers but the songs themselves—most often religious hymns—

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Matthew Daniel, “Rolling for the Revolution: A Transnational History of Cuban Cigar Makers in Havana, Florida, and New York City, 1853-1895” (New York, The New School, 2010). For socialist ideologies, see Knotter, “Transnational Cigar-Makers,” 409-442.

<sup>951</sup> Lacarra contrasted cigar rolling with other industries: “If you didn't do menial labor, or housework, or learn to be a cigar maker, or you weren't lucky enough to get an education to teach, well, you were in very bad luck because then these people had nothing to do. See, they didn't give the poor colored people jobs. Interview with Eugenia Marine Lacarra by Arthé A. Anthony, New Orleans, Louisiana, December 9, 1977. Quoted in Arthé A. Anthony, “‘Lost Boundaries’: Racial Passing and Poverty in Segregated New Orleans.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 36, no. 3 (1995): 291–312.

<sup>952</sup> Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2002), 50. For a discussion of cigar rollers within Cuba, see also Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1898* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 102-203.

ranged from veiled protests against the daily indignities of the factory to utopian visions of a life free of difficult wage.”<sup>953</sup>

In the context of the Mexican-New Orleans *frontera sónica* in the French Quarter’s cigar rolling factories, critiques of autocrats and aristocrats, shared experiences of racism, the terrors of slavery, a common hatred of imperialism, and other topics could be shared and circulated between communities of migrants, strangers made familiar through an Atlantic struggle that rhymed. New Orleans, evenly positioned between Havana and Veracruz, was an ideal location for these conversations to flourish in this interconnected world, and it is not surprise that most of New Orleans’s most prolific radicals were products of these floors. And it was an occupation that sustained the Tios abroad, as well. In the 1871 Tampico census rolls appears a "Luis Marcos Tio" who is listed as “tabaquero, Americano, casado, no tiene propiedad, sabe escribir,” (married, American, cigar roller, does not own property, knows how to write).<sup>954</sup>

## **4.5 La Frontera Embodied: Mexican Musical Influences in New Orleans**

### **4.5.1 The Blues-Corrido Matrix**

Cigar rolling and transborder communes were both laboratories for new forms of music that aestheticized a world in flux, where liberation and oppression, where plantation agriculture and counter-planation modernity, and where Afro-Latin music all crossed borders. This might

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<sup>953</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South.” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 75.

<sup>954</sup> “Patron General de los Habitantes de la Municipalidad de Tampico, 1871” (Tampico, Mexico, 1871); quoted in Hudson, “Crossing Stories,” 241.

explain why, in the words of Geraldine Céliér, “The universe of the endemic music of Mexico shares the same liberation ideals as jazz.”<sup>955</sup> This section explores the influence of Mexican musical traditions on the blues and brass band traditions, to bring our argument to a close: that the aborted and interrupted communitarian futures built by Black, Mexican, and Indigenous communities in the borderlands were reimagined and rearticulated in New Orleans music.

Several scholars have noted the connections between the Blues and Mexican *corridos* which interacted frequently in the *frontera sónica* corridor. Indeed, the very mobility of Black-Mexican migrants were reproduced in the sociological elements of both forms. Peter Narváez describes “the roving lifestyle of Mexican street singers” whose stories approximate their African-American counterparts.”<sup>956</sup> Lucero White explores how mobile these signers were, noting that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth Mexican streets singers would often “ask for the indulgence of public in an introductory verse and... proceed forthwith with the singing of a new *corrido*; or the *cantador* may appear at the opening of a new store, meat market or *pulqueria*; perhaps at some small cafe, in the skirts of a village.”<sup>957</sup>

Blues and *corridos* shared many themes in common, as well. Manuel Gamino described *corridos* as:

...songs which tell a story. The corridos are of all the songs collected, nearest to the human interest story of the popular newspaper. Like the human interest story, they express the interests and aptitudes of the people. The heroes of the corridos are types that catch the popular imagination—swaggering bandits who boldly

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<sup>955</sup> Luís Espinosa, “Cómo Porfirio Díaz cambió la historia de la música e influyó en el origen del jazz,” *Cultura Colectiva*, September 14, 2020, <https://krtu.trinity.edu/news/how-porfirio-d%C3%ADaz-changed-course-music-and-influenced-origins-jazz/> accessed October 7, 2020.

<sup>956</sup> Peter Narváez, “The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African-American Blues Musicians,” 182.

<sup>957</sup> Aurora Lucero-White, *Literary Folklore of the Hispanic Southwest in Spanish and English* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1953), 117.

defy all the rest of the world, brave men foully assassinated, or men  
who “kill for love.”<sup>958</sup>

Many scholars have similarly remarked that African American music has embraced the bandit as a symbol of subaltern resistance,<sup>959</sup> and multiple interviews with early jazz musicians have shown how blues singers, especially in the docks of New Orleans, turned news into song form, such as Blind Tom’s “Battle of the Titanic.”<sup>960</sup> Such overlapping themes are quite striking: as in “Mamie’s Blues,” the destructive modernity of railroads are often a subject, and appear in the song “El Ferrocarril” (The Railroad):

¡Ay! ¡que dolor! (Oh! What sadness!)  
Tendrían los mexicanos (The Mexican will have)  
Al ver el ferrocarril (to see the railroad train)  
Que traen los americanos... (that the Americans bring)  
Origan y origan (Listen and listen)  
El ferrocarril bramar (To the train puffing)  
El que lleva a los hombres (that takes men)  
Y nunca los vuelve a traer. (And never brings them back again.)<sup>961</sup>

Southwest blues and *corridos* share frequent references to the devil, lost love, and an ecological poetry that acknowledges the interconnection of humanity and its ecosystems.<sup>962</sup> Even if one were to argue that there is no direct musical influence—which would require a truly unimaginative sense of history—the overlapping value systems of expressed in the migrating songs of Black and Mexican workers reflect similar social conditions and philosophical engagement with empire.

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<sup>958</sup> Manuel Gamino, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930), 159.

<sup>959</sup> B. Wagner, “Disarmed and Dangerous: The Strange Career of Brás-Coupe,” *Representations*, no. 92 (2005): 117–51; Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>960</sup> See for instance Danny Barker, Interview, June 18, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive, which mentions a blues singer describing the sinking of the Titanic.

<sup>961</sup> Jeffrey Marcos Garcilazo, *Traqueros: Mexican Railroad Workers in the United States, 1870 to 1930* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2012), 151-52.

<sup>962</sup> Anissa J. Wardi, *Water and African American Memory: An Ecocritical Perspective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 115-141; Roberto Rivelino García Baeza, “Lírica Popular Improvisada, Estudio de Dos Casos: El Son Huasteco y El Blues” (PhD Dissertation, San Luis Potosí, México, El Colegio de San Luis, A.C., 2016), 15.

And there is more than circumstantial evidence that the two interacted. As the Blind Lemon Jefferson pianist John “Koncky” Parker remembered, “Down there in the Southwest, country music and the black music came from the same roots. Now, we didn't have the New Orleans horns ... but we all had guitars and we always had the Spanish influence. The Spanish motif is stronger in the Southwest and this comes over to the blacks a whole lot. The blacks played nice pretty little Spanish folk tunes.”<sup>963</sup> And musicologist Elijah Wald has noted how after the guitar became widespread in the 1890s (when Sears-Roebuck made inexpensive mail-order instruments available), one of the instrumental numbers most frequently found among rural players was “Spanish Fandango,” a standard beginner piece in the formal instruction manuals, which was so popular that many blues players continued to refer to its trademark “open G” tuning as “Spanish.”<sup>964</sup> Perhaps this is an additional genealogy to Spanish colonial rule of Louisiana or migratory Cuban inheritances, which supplements why drummer Baby Dodds described the blues in New Orleans as played “with a Spanish accent.”<sup>965</sup>

These two guitar-based traditions interacted stylistically in the very regions where Black and Mexican migration had created multiethnic communities. Manuel Gamino’s ethnographies of Mexican immigrant communities in the United States, published in 1930, has frequent references to Black and Mexican families living in close proximity. One Mexican man remembered “We used to live next door to a *guera* [white woman] married to a Negro. Then we were getting on very well.” Rituals were shared as well: at “El Tieradito,” a sacred grave where an itinerant trader was

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<sup>963</sup> John Solomon Otto and Augustus M. Burns, “John ‘Knocky’ Parker-A Case Study of White and Black Musical Interaction,” in *Exploring Roots Music: Twenty Years of the JEMF Quarterly* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

<sup>964</sup> Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 47.

<sup>965</sup> Bill Russell, *New Orleans Style*, ed. Barry Martyn and Mike Hazeldine (New Orleans: Jazzology, 1999), 23.

buried in the late nineteenth century, groups of “Mexicans, Mexican-Americans...[and] Negroes” burned “whole boxes of candles” while they prayed at what they believed to be a site full of spiritual energy.<sup>966</sup>

Many commentators have foregrounded how major blues musicians spent considerable time in Mexico without examining the larger social histories of such connections. It has been oft-noted that Ma Rainey, at one point, “retired” to Mexico; that blues singer Lefty Wing Gordon “used to cross” to Mexico; and that other Mexican-frequenting musicians such as Robert Lee “Nighthawk” McCoy, Johnny Watson, and pianist Elmore Nixon spent considerable time in Mexico.<sup>967</sup> A thriving Gulf music scene allowed many early jazz musicians to tour before moving to Chicago;<sup>968</sup> Lee Collins toured in Mobile, where Jelly Roll Morton’s cousin (who he calls a “real creole boy”) on drums, a boy named “Acey” from Mexico on bass, and a “Japanese fellow” on clarinet.<sup>969</sup> As clarinetist Edmond Hall remembered, touring the Gulf Coast circuit required a specific skill: it was important that one “avoids and keeps away from them red-neck crackers” and “knows how to get around them.”<sup>970</sup> Mexicans were not read as such; in fact, they provided audiences and musicians to the new music.

Crossborder relations resulted in transdisciplinary collaborations, too. The “father of the Blues,” W.C. Handy, discussed in his autobiography his work with Mahara’s Minstrels, who “made of me a professional musician and a bandmaster.” They went on tour “from Cuba to

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<sup>966</sup> Manuel Gamino, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930), 81, 126.

<sup>967</sup> Peter Narváez, “The Influences of Hispanic Music Cultures on African-American Blues Musicians,” *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (2002): 177.

<sup>968</sup> Charles Chamberlain, “Searching for ‘The Gulf Coast Circuit’: Mobility and Cultural Diffusion in the Age of Jim Crow, 1900-1930,” *The Jazz Archivist* XIV (2000): 1–18.

<sup>969</sup> Lee Collins and Mary Collins, *Oh, Didn’t He Ramble: The Life Story of Lee Collins as Told to Mary Collins*, ed. Frank Gillis and John W. Miner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974). 29-30.

<sup>970</sup> Eurreal “Li’l Brother” Montgomery in Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz*, 72.

California, from Canada to Mexico.” When Handy’s house caught on fire, he mourned, more than anything, one memento from these trips: “I missed my Mexican guitar.”<sup>971</sup> Perhaps this affinity partially explains why W.C. Handy trusted Miguel Covarrubias, a famous Mexican painter and caricaturist, to illustrate his *The Blues: An Anthology* (1926). James Weldon Johnson reviewed the book and wrote that his illustrations “alone make the book worthwhile.”<sup>972</sup> One literary commentator explained why these drawings were so significant: “you can not only see these people, you can also hear them.”<sup>973</sup> When Covarrubias illustrated the cover of Hughes’ *Weary Blues*, Langston Hughes exclaimed: “You are the only artist I know whose Negro things have a ‘Blues’ touch about them.”<sup>974</sup> An anonymous Texan woman was less sympathetic. Perceiving the multiracial coalition that had threatened Texan slavery generations earlier, she quipped that *The Blues: An Anthology* was created by “a Mexican, a Yankee [publisher] and a n----r!”<sup>975</sup> These Mexican-Black collaborations captured an energy that was as healing to some as it was threatening to others.

#### 4.5.2 *La Banda de Caballería* as a Creolizing Event

Having highlighted these crossborder aesthetics and histories, I return now to the sonic and emotional meanings of the performances of *la Banda de Caballería* in New Orleans, mentioned at

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<sup>971</sup> W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1941), 68, 86.

<sup>972</sup> James Weldon Johnson in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, quoted in Adriana Williams, *Covarrubias* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 268.

<sup>973</sup> Carl Van Vechten, “*Keep A-Inchin’ Along*”: *Selecte2d Writings of Carl Van Vechten about Black Art and Letters*, ed. Bruce Kellner (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 35.

<sup>974</sup> Langston Hughes to Miguel Covarrubias, undated letter, Miguel Cobarrubias Archive, quoted in Adriana Williams, *Covarrubias* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 40. Apparently,

<sup>975</sup> Abbe Niles, “Forward,” in W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1941), ix.

the outset of this chapter. Led by bandmaster Encarnación Payen, their performances at the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition at New Orleans, including in the events associated with Daniel A. Straker and the Excelsior Band, pointed to a subaltern sonic diplomacy. This were perhaps the most visible site of confrontation between the inclusive, hybridist, and creative formations of the *frontera sónica* and the racist and demeaning othering of plantation capitalism.

“Supercharged with symbols of patriotism designed to promote sectional reconciliation,” writes Robert Rydell, “these fairs also represented attempts to catapult the poverty-ridden South into the forefront of national and international economic growth...[by the] subsequent export through southern ports of both raw and finished materials to Latin America and Asia.”<sup>976</sup> At these festivals, Mexico and Mexicans were maligned by racist and orientalist imagery; as Rydell notes, “Along with selected ‘types’ of Asians, Africans, and Afro-Americans, Mexicans and Cubans were put on view in villages on the entertainment avenues of the fairs that were also the areas of the exposition set aside for cheap thrills and monkey houses.”<sup>977</sup> Anti-Mexican sentiment had been cultivated for decades in *De Bow’s Review*, a leading Southern planter periodical, which claimed Indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers had “watered down” the virtues of each other’s “blood” through interracial mixing, creating a “mongrel” race.<sup>978</sup> The New Orleans Filipino-Mexican bassist Martin Abraham was nicknamed the racial epithet “Chink.”<sup>979</sup>

And *la Banda de Caballería* was similarly treated with disrespect: they were cheated out of \$800 from the gate; and the New Orleans *Mascot* denounced bandmembers for fraternizing with

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<sup>976</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73.

<sup>977</sup> Rydell, *All the Worlds a Fair*, 93-94.

<sup>978</sup> Michael Fuhlhage, “The Mexican Image through Southern Eyes: De Bow’s Review in the Era of Manifest Destiny,” *American Journalism* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 182–209.

<sup>979</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 106.

white women.<sup>980</sup> Later, the band also revealed to the national press that they were only paid \$100 per musician for six months of performances to audiences of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands.<sup>981</sup> Racial animosities, and the mythology of Southern white womanhood, combined into a toxic stew in one particularly charged encounter. The cornet player Rodolfo Rodríguez was accused of “lov[ing] unwisely” the daughter of Confederate veteran John C. Golding, and the former soldier shot Rodríguez, badly wounding him.<sup>982</sup> As Lima notes, the “solidification of a rigid black and white binary in the post-Reconstruction imagination often meant that Latinos would be counted as white in the popular press in descriptions of lynching, often for reasons that had more to do with diminishing the onus of the South’s lynching of blacks.”<sup>983</sup> Although Rodríguez was defended as a “pure-blooded Spaniard” by the *Daily Inter-Ocean*’s account of the lynching, it is clear that his “pure blood” did not save him from Southern chivalry.<sup>984</sup>

Given the imperial ambitions and white supremacist ideologies of the event’s architects, it is quite ironic that perhaps the most poignant legacy of this cotton showcase would not be its wares, but rather, its showcasing of an Afro-Mexican musical tradition. For decades after, the Exposition was remembered in popular media, not for displays of cotton machinery, but for the incredible performance of *la Banda de Caballería* on December 16, 1884.<sup>985</sup> For instance, *Century* magazine, an influential New York City-based publication with 250,000 subscribers, published a

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<sup>980</sup> “The Exposition and the Mexican Band,” *Mascot*, 13 June 1885, 9; and “Miss Bridget Magee’s Society Notes,” *Mascot*, 16 May 1885, 4.”

<sup>981</sup> *St. Louis Post*, June 21, 1885, 2; *Daily Picayune*, June 22, 1885, 3; in Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity,” 255.

<sup>982</sup> “Avenged His Daughter’s Dishonor,” *The Courier-Journal*, May 17, 1885, 5.

<sup>983</sup> Lima, “Louisiana,” 352. Ken Gonzales provides one of the few comprehensive attempts at documenting the historical erasure of Latinos from the history of lynching in the United States in Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>984</sup> “Another New Orleans Tragedy,” *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, May 17, 1885, 5; in Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity,” 231.

<sup>985</sup> Alain Derbez, *El jazz en México: Datos para esta historia* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014).

feature on a “Very Mexican Band,” which illustrated Mexican musicians performing *danzas*, *mazurkas*, *rigodones*, *habaneras*, military marches and three *danzones*.<sup>986</sup> Some members of the band stayed in New Orleans for several months, others several years, and still others, like Florencio Ramos, lived in New Orleans for the rest of their lives. They continued to play in throughout Louisiana: an eight-piece Mexican band, led by a T.F. Gloria, was photographed performing mazurkas on the steamer *Stella Wilds*’ maiden voyage in 1886,<sup>987</sup> while Payen’s “Mexican Band” came back to New Orleans in 1891, playing for some fifteen thousand people.<sup>988</sup> Mexican sounds permeated post-Reconstruction rural life. Camille Gilbert, a Black resident of New Orleans, remembered growing up in Natchez, Mississippi, that she often heard the “Mexican Band” play on a showboat.<sup>989</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1, trombonist George Fihle recalled that among Black and Creole of Color musicians in 1892, “Younger musicians...began to ‘swing.’ Older men used lots of Mexican music.”<sup>990</sup> Mexican music was a legacy of this exposition. Despite the racist and damning actions of New Orleans’s press and the organizers of the fair, the band did impress many New Orleanians across the color line. But it was their identification as people of color that resonated with Black New Orleanians. The Black Newspaper the *Huntsville Gazette* celebrated that the

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<sup>986</sup> Jesús Flores y Escalante, *Salón México: Historia Documental y Gráfica Del Danzón En México* (México: Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Fonográficos, 1993), 149.

<sup>987</sup> Joan Gandy and Thomas Gandy, *The Mississippi Steamboat Era in Historic Photographs: Natchez to New Orleans, 1870–1920* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1987), 78.

<sup>988</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Myth, Reality, and Musical Impact; A Preliminary Investigation,” *The Jazz Archivist* VI, no. 2 (December 1991): 1–14.

<sup>989</sup> Camille Duchesne Gilbert, interview by D. Clive Hardy, Tulane University, 1960; quoted in Stewart, “Mexican Band Legend,” 6.

<sup>990</sup> Lawrence Gushee, “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz,” *Black Music Research Journal* 14:1 (Spring 1994): 16.

musicians looked “like mulattoes” and had “made themselves very familiar to [both] white and colored people” in New Orleans.<sup>991</sup>

Black audiences no doubt appreciated the rhythmic grammar that was heard in this music. Valeria Priscilla Jiménez argues that “For the city’s African American population, Mexican *danzas* that had derived from the Afro-Cuban *danzón* offered familiar rhythms and new opportunities for performing popular music.”<sup>992</sup> Similarly, John Storm Roberts has argued that Mexican music’s “relatively familiar rhythms and strong external influences” accounts for its influence on African American musicians.<sup>993</sup> The Mexican band reinforced the Afro-Caribbean rhythmic substrates whose innovative reintegration marked the changing scene of Black Atlantic music. Mexican *danzas* and *habaneras* were already products of an Afro-Atlantic archipelago; through Veracruz—the unofficial capital of Afro-Mexico—*cinquillo* and *tresillo* rhythms revolutionized Mexican music in the nineteenth century in much the same way Cuban music was transformed following the Haitian Revolution.<sup>994</sup> Christopher Washburne, highlighting the *tresillo* rhythm’s structural role in Mexican music, argues that its prominence in this tradition helped “solidify its presence in early jazz” with the arrival of the Mexican band.<sup>995</sup> The band’s style, not coincidentally, appealed to the city’s Creole of Color population, who fused these rhythms and orchestrations into their own extant brass band traditions. As Rafael A. Tuiz Torres notes, the “musical nationalism” of *la Banda*

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<sup>991</sup> *Huntsville Gazette*, September 6, 1885, 2.

<sup>992</sup> Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity,” 263.

<sup>993</sup> John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 21.

<sup>994</sup> Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Incorporated, 2007), 252; Pamela J. Smith, “Caribbean Influences on Early New Orleans Jazz,” M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1986, 22-28; Vicente T. Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana: Ensayo de Clasificación y Antología* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM, 1961), 97; Arthur R. LaBrew, “The Brindis de Salas Family,” *Afro-American Music Review* 1, no. 1 (1981): 15–57.

<sup>995</sup> Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 59.

*de Caballería* ensured that no one regional music would “dominate” the band’s repertoire; it featured a “potpourri” of songs and playing techniques from throughout Mexico.<sup>996</sup>

Black audiences heard in this music a variation of a diasporic rhythm, the *cinquillo*, that had already entered deeply into New Orleans Afrodiasporic cultures, marking a signal of a unity in difference that was produced by a counter-plantation tradition. Collaborations ensued: the saxophonist Leonardo Vizcarra played with Louis Tio, and according to several jazz scholars, he may have taught Buddy Bolden how to read and write music.<sup>997</sup> Bunk Johnson repeatedly relayed that he studied with Wallace Cutchey, a Mexican music teacher who Johnson believes played with *la banda de Caballería*.<sup>998</sup> Eddie Edwards’s trombone teacher was the Mexican immigrant Manuel Guerra.<sup>999</sup> Bassist Martin Abraham remembered that he “learned from a Mexican professor who lived here for a while and died in New Orleans. I learned to play Spanish guitar and we had an orchestra of Mexicans who used to work in town. That was back, I would say, about 1904 to 1905.”<sup>1000</sup> Mexican musicians also reached rural outputs central to Afro-Louisianan life: clarinetist Louis James remembered then while growing up in Thibodaux, Louisiana, a Mexican trumpet player would “play his high C...first thing in the morning,” thereby alerting residents that new day had dawned. This unnamed musician was the music teacher for his friend, the prominent African

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<sup>996</sup> Rafael A. Tuiz Torres, “Las Bandas Militares de Música En México y Su Historia,” ed. Goergina Flores Mercado (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2015), 21–44.

<sup>997</sup> Bolden learned how to play cornet from his mother’s boyfriend, Manuel Hall, who played with Leonardo Vizcarra in Jack Laine’s band; Jiménez suggests that Vizcarra may have been responsible for teaching Bolden, since Hall could not read or write music. Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity,” 273. On Bolden, see Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 24; Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 30, 78.

<sup>998</sup> Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend,” 2; Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 103; Frederic Ramsey, Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1939), 24; Bill Russell, *New Orleans Style*, ed. Barry Martyn and Mike Hazeldine (New Orleans: Jazzology, 1999), 132..

<sup>999</sup> Gaye Theresa Johnson, “‘Sobre Las Olas’: A Mexican Genesis in Borderlands Jazz and the Legacy for Ethnic Studies,” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 226.

<sup>1000</sup> George W. Kay, “Chink Martin: An Interview with George W. Kay,” *Jazz Journal* 25, no. 4 (April 1972): 18-19; 39.

American bandleader, trumpeter, and fiddler Joe Gabriel.<sup>1001</sup> This passage of musical knowledge and creation of a crossborder, interracial community was yet another expression of the *frontera sónica*. It was for these reasons, perhaps, that bandleader Encarnación Payan wrote the band “endeared the name of New Orleans to [their] hearts” so much that it almost made them forget that they “were strangers and on foreign soil.”<sup>1002</sup>

The presence of Mexican influence is not hard to discern by studying sheet music of the era. The concerts of the Mexican Band enthralled the public imagination and resulted in dozens of sheet music renditions of songs the group performed, with published music editions boasting “as performed by...,” or “as sung by...” the “Mexican Military Band.” Junius Hart launched his publishing company in 1885 specializing in arrangements and transcriptions of Mexican music. By 1888, his catalog had grown to include hundreds of Mexican titles, making the music easily accessible to New Orleans bands.<sup>1003</sup> Other publishers, such as Narisco Martinez, followed suit. The pieces were performed at the city’s social clubs and at parades, and their Atlantic sound reached all classes and walks of life.<sup>1004</sup> “Sobre los Ojas” (“Over the Waves”) was an especially prominent standard, played frequently by the drummer Joe Watkins, George Lewis, and many others.<sup>1005</sup>

Yet there were other more systemic, and less archivally legible, influences. In the first instance, specific kinds of arranging and voice leading became commonplace in the decades after the Exposition. Triadic two-part writing for trumpets, and a convention to play with force and

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<sup>1001</sup> Louis James Interview, May 25, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1002</sup> “Letter to the Editor of the Picayune,” *The Daily Picayune*, September 7, 1885, 4.

<sup>1003</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Part III,” *The Jazz Archivist* XX (2007): 5.

<sup>1004</sup> Pamela J. Smith, “Caribbean Influences on Early New Orleans Jazz,” M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1986, 25-27.

<sup>1005</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 119; George Lewis, Interview, January 25, 1860, Hogan Jazz Archive.

brilliance—what Jack Stewart has called “the mariachi sound”—became commonplace among brass band arrangements and trumpet technique; pizzicato bass also may have been one of the instrumental techniques introduced by the musicians.<sup>1006</sup> Ben Harney, whose *Rag Time Instructor* (1897) stated that “rag time (or Negro Dance Time) originally takes its initiative steps from Spanish music, or rather from Mexico, where it is known under the head and names of Habanara, Danza, Seguidilla.”<sup>1007</sup> One specific rhythmic and voicing technique that Stewart has traced in both Mexican music and ragtime is the “Three-Over-Four,” which does not refer to a quarter note triplet figure but rather, offbeat three note chords, voiced in second inversion. This device was widespread in Mexican piano music in the late nineteenth century, and it appears in New Orleanian Paul Sarebersole’s “Rastabout Rag” (1897). It takes nine years before the device is found outside of New Orleans, when it appears in Charles L. Johnson’s hit “Dill Pickles.” By the time George Botsford writes the popular “Black and White Rag” in 1908, which uses this “Three-Over-Four” technique, this style of syncopation had become internalized nation-wide.<sup>1008</sup> Perhaps the band’s most widespread influence was the continued diffusion of the *habanera* which travelled with the the piano reductions derived from *la Banda de Caballería*’s repertoire; Scott Joplin’s “Solace: A Mexican Serenade” was chock full of *habanera*. John Storm Roberts suggests that “the habanera influence may have been part of what freed black music from ragtime’s European bass,” and

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<sup>1006</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Part III,” *The Jazz Archivist XX* (2007): 4.

<sup>1007</sup> This quotation appears in the preface to Ben Harney’s *Rag Time Instructor*, arr. Theodore H. Northrup (Chicago: Sol Bloom, 1897), cited in Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 49-50.

<sup>1008</sup> Jack Stewart, “The Mexican Band Legend: Part II.” *The Jazz Archivist XX* (2007): 5.

Joplin's reference to Mexico in the title suggests that, for many, it was the sister republic to the South helped "free" Black artists from this particular expression of European hegemony.<sup>1009</sup>

The Mexican Band also introduced new instruments to the Black brass band repertoire. *La Banda de Caballería's* saxophonist, Florencio Ramos, remained in New Orleans for the rest of his life, where he founded the Musician's Union and became the Crescent City's first full-time saxophonist. "While saxophone was played in New Orleans before 1884," writes Stewart, "the Mexican bands seem to have finally established its permanent presence."<sup>1010</sup> Clarinet was similarly marginal in pre-Exposition New Orleans brass bands, and its prominence in Mexican bands changed perceptions of its capabilities and its role in New Orleans music. The iconic blues musician and anthologist W.C. Handy recalled, "before the time of Leach and Tio, European and Mexicans played the clarinets in Negro bands where these instruments were used at all."<sup>1011</sup> George Lewis, the famous clarinetist associated with the New Orleans revival, saw the Mexican band parade and it influenced his love of clarinet.<sup>1012</sup> The claim of New Orleans saxophonist Richard "Dickie" Landry that the Mexican Band performances were "the first time that the New Orleans jazz players heard the clarinet sound" seems exaggerated.<sup>1013</sup> As Lori Fay Neprud-Ardovino notes, clarinets were used in the French opera as early as 1751, in *Acante and Cephise* by Rameau, and Gosse used them in 1757, and antebellum New Orleans followed French operatic

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<sup>1009</sup> John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 41.

<sup>1010</sup> Jack Stewart, "The Mexican Band Legend: Part III," *The Jazz Archivist* XX (2007): 4.

<sup>1011</sup> Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 64.

<sup>1012</sup> Rivera, "Huasteca y Son," 27.

<sup>1013</sup> "Era la primera vez que los jazzistas de Nueva Orleans escuchaban el sonido del clarinete." Luís Espinosa, "Cómo Porfirio Díaz cambió la historia de la música e influyó en el origen del jazz," *Cultura Colectiva*, September 14, 2020, <https://cultura colectiva.com/musica/como-porfirio-diaz-cambio-la-historia-de-la-musica>, accessed October 2, 2020. Translation by author.

trends quite closely.<sup>1014</sup> Additionally, clarinets became explicitly linked to the French Revolution, when oboe quintets were replaced by clarinets, a substitution “intended to stand in stark contrast, both in instrumentation and musical style, to the previous aristocratic wind bands, one of the familiar status symbols of that class.”<sup>1015</sup>

Yet there is no evidence that clarinet had yet entered New Orleans brass band or carnival traditions. U.S. American brass bands were slower to incorporate the clarinet into their formations than French military bands. While Patrick Gilmore began adding woodwinds as early as 1859 to the then-all brass Boston Brigade Band, major instrument manufactures such as C.G. Conn did not add woodwinds to their inventory until 1895.<sup>1016</sup> In fact, many early clarinetists, including Sidney Bechet and George Lewis, got their start on the fife, which was commonplace in Civil War and Reconstruction brass bands.<sup>1017</sup> Clarinets were still relatively difficult to obtain as late 1910, when Lorenzo Tio Jr. lent a clarinet to his student, Bechet, who had broken his.<sup>1018</sup> Music arranging changed as well. The sheet music collection of popular Creole of Color brass bandleader John Robichaux, housed at the Hogan Jazz Archives, had only three manuscripts that featured clarinet in the years of 1819 to 1884; while in the years of 1885-1917, one can find 2,797 manuscripts feature clarinet. It is clear that there was a sea change in clarinet repertoire of an incredible order of magnitude, and based on the above testimonies from W.C. Handy and George Lewis, it appears

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<sup>1014</sup> Lori Fay Neprud-Ardovino, “The Jazz Clarinet: Its Evolution and Use in the Early Jazz Orchestras before 1920” (D.M.A. Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1993), 8.

<sup>1015</sup> Neprud-Ardovino, “The Jazz Clarinet,” 9; David Whitwell, *The History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble, 1750-1800*, vol. 1 (Northridge, CA: WINDS, 1984), 98.

<sup>1016</sup> Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>1017</sup> Tom Bethell, *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 36; George Lewis, Interview, November 1, 1968.

<sup>1018</sup> Kinzer, “The Tio Family.”

that African American musicians initially identified the clarinet with Mexicanos—an association that may partially explain why the Tios were consistently called “Mexican.”<sup>1019</sup>

Another distinguishing feature of the New Orleans clarinet was their make. *La Banda de Caballería* appears to have introduced Eb-clarinets—higher and shriller than Bb clarinets and thus better able to cut through the wall of brass. They likely compensated those qualities with the Albert system design. Many early jazz clarinetists, including the Tios, sing the virtues of the Albert models, which had a larger bore, a fuller darker tone, fewer keys which made glissandos easier, and were considered more suited to outdoor playing.<sup>1020</sup> The Albert system is still typical of Turkish, Balkan, and *maqam* musical traditions, and allows for more elaborate pitch bends.<sup>1021</sup> By the late nineteenth-century this style of clarinet was rejected by symphonic musicians in favor of the newer Boehm system.<sup>1022</sup> But this was exactly why clarinetists like Omar Simeon (1902-1959), a student of Lorenzo Tio Jr., appreciated the Albert system: he said it was easier to get a “blue” tone, and countless peers of his generation argued that it had a much fuller tone in the lower register.<sup>1023</sup> These clarinets were so ubiquitous in New Orleans that African American clarinetist Edmond Hall (1901-1967) refused to believe that Boehm system had been invented when he was learning. He was only disabused of this notion when, while on tour in France, he visited the Selmer

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<sup>1019</sup> The John Robichaux Library: 1819-1917, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University; Neprud-Ardovino, “The Jazz Clarinet,” 54-105.

<sup>1020</sup> William J. Schafer and Richard B. Allen, *Brass Bands and New Orleans Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 32.

<sup>1021</sup> Boja Kragulj, “The Turkish Clarinet: Its History, an Exemplification of Its Practice by Serkan Çağrı, and a Single Case Study” (D.M.A. Thesis, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2011), 4; Albert R. Rice, *From the Clarinet d’Amour to the Contra Bass: A History of Large Size Clarinet 1740-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>1022</sup> Albert R. Rice, *The Clarinet in the Classical Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4; Neprud-Ardovino, “The Jazz Clarinet,” 511.

<sup>1023</sup> Omar Simeon, Interview, August 18, 1955, Hogan Jazz Archive; George Lewis, Interview, 1968, Hogan Jazz Archive; Neprud-Ardovino, “The Jazz Clarinet,” 17.

Factory in Paris and a factory manager showed him a Boehm Selmer clarinet from 1853. (“How wrong can I get?” he asked.)<sup>1024</sup>

But in his context, Hall was correct: Boehm system clarinets, for all intents and purposes, were not in circulation in, and did not travel to, New Orleans, suggesting an alternative genealogy of the instrument than France (where the Boehm system was dominant by the mid nineteenth-century). While I have not yet been able to establish if the *Banda de Caballería* used Albert system clarinets, it should be noted that Spain used the Albert system until the twentieth century.<sup>1025</sup> The Spanish virtuoso clarinetist Antonio Romero noted that in 1849, “The Boehm clarinet...in France has been enthusiastically welcomed by all the young clarinetists and is the only one that today is taught.” He later lamented in 1884, after nearly four decades of effort, that “Neither my good wishes, nor the public example I gave...were enough to get the Clarinet Boehm System to be generalized in Spain.”<sup>1026</sup> Given the lingering anti-French sentiment from the invasion of Maximilian, there is no reason to assume that Mexican bands or individual clarinetists would have outlaid significant capital to adopt this model associated with French hegemony.

Military bands had been incorporated into Mexican public life since the 1850s, when President Santa Anna and the Conservatives introduced the brass and wind band as part of “a secular patriotic ritual” and commission the composition of the Mexican national anthem.<sup>1027</sup> Liberal reformers transformed the nature of band performance with Juárez’s Presidency; Ariadna Acevedo-Rodrigo writes “[A]s Liberals gained political ground from the mid-nineteenth century

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<sup>1024</sup> Edmond Hall, Interview, April 11, 1957, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1025</sup> Gloria A. Rodríguez-Lorenzo, *The Clarinet in Spain: Miguel Yuste Moreno (1870-1947)* (Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag Münster, 2019), 27.

<sup>1026</sup> Antonio Romero, *Disertación leída por el opositor*, 1849, and Carta enviada al Ministro de Fomento (02 Oct. 1873); quoted in Gloria A. Rodríguez-Lorenzo, *The Clarinet in Spain: Miguel Yuste Moreno (1870-1947)* (Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag Münster, 2019), 25-26. The Boehm system was also used widely in Italy.

<sup>1027</sup> Guy P. C. Thomson, “Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism: The National Guard, Philharmonic Corps and Patriotic Juntas in Mexico, 1847-88,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, no. 1 (1990): 31–68.

onwards, and triumphed over the European Intervention and the Conservatives in 1867, it was their use of brass bands that became more visible...[these bands were] encouraged by nationalistic, modernizing leaders but transformed in the light of local needs and older forms of organisation.”<sup>1028</sup>

Thus, the clarinet had specific models and playing techniques associated with Mexican musicians and Mexican aesthetics. Just as the clarinet had previously been associated with the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth-century, in late nineteenth century New Orleans the instrument signified on the Mexican-freedpeople alliance. It was for this reason that the Tio’s cultural identification with Mexico likely helped them secure early clarinet spots in New Orleans’s most distinguished Black brass bands.<sup>1029</sup> In this regard, it matters that their clarinet was “heard” as Mexican. For instance, clarinetist August Laurent, who studied with Lorenzo Tio Jr., thought that the Tios were either Mexican or French.<sup>1030</sup> Drummer Abby “Chinee” Foster remembered that the musicians he played with growing up, used to suspect that “I were Indian, just like Lorenzo Tio.”<sup>1031</sup> The Tios would not have been able to enter New Orleans brass bands like the Excelsior when they did without the influence of *la Banda de Caballería* incorporating this instrument into

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<sup>1028</sup> Ariadna Acevedo-Rodrigo, “Playing the Tune of Citizenship: Indian Brass Bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico, 1876–1911,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27, no. 2 (2008): 256.

<sup>1029</sup> Several interviews with early jazz musicians, discussed above, reveal that the Tios were thought of as “Mexican.”

<sup>1030</sup> August Laurent, Interview, March 21, 1967, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1031</sup> Abby “Chinee” Foster interview, March 9, 1961

the outdoor repertoire, and without their performance it is uncertain if clarinet would have had the role it did in early jazz.

#### 4.5.3 From Tampico to Tampeeko: The Tios' Possible Veracruz Influences

The Tios themselves shaped this process, and another way to trace the influence of Mexican music in New Orleans is to explore the musical cultures in circulation in Veracruz when the brothers lived in Tampico. Thinking through what Mexican musical styles and community musical institutions the Tios might have interacted with is a topic that has not yet been addressed by anglophone scholarship. Charles Kinzer's seminal work on the Tios, including his exhaustive dissertation, dismisses the idea that the Tios developed an affinity with Mexican or Cuban-Mexican musical cultures, pointing out that they likely did not attend Mexico City's *Conservatorio de Música*, as had been rumored.<sup>1032</sup> Another erasure of their Mexican identity is present in Neprud-Ardovino argument that "The Tios' Mexican heritage added the precision of Spanish band practices to the New Orleans style."<sup>1033</sup>

But there is no reason to assume that it was a "Spanish," and not Mexican, band tradition which shaped their clarinet virtuosity and polyrhythmic grammar. Clarinet was rapidly taking on new meanings in Veracruz while the Tios lived there; as Guy Thompson notes, "By the end of the nineteenth century, few villages in central or southern Mexico were without their '*cuervo flarmoncio*'...which included clarinets." These municipal or community bands were symbolically charged institutions; Paul Freidrich claims that "Music correlates and symbolises the politics of

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<sup>1032</sup> Charles E. Kinzer, "The Tio Family and Its Role in the Creole of Color Musical Traditions of New Orleans," *The Second Line* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 20.

<sup>1033</sup> Neprud-Ardovino, "The Jazz Clarinet," 17.

Naranaja de Tapia,” and the town’s *cuervo filarmónico* (supposedly the best in Michoacán) was composed of musicians opposed to the rural oligarchy; “musical specialisation compensated for restricted access to the means of subsistence, in this instance because of the ruling faction’s preferential access to *ejidal* [communal] land.”<sup>1034</sup> These bands rarely performed in community fiestas in their own *municipio*.<sup>1035</sup>

These bands were, to say the least, demanding institutions. Frederik Starr’s travels to a Mazatec village and witnessing of a band training reveals the commitment involved:

Just across the way from the town-house, was a large house of the usual fashion, which we quickly learned was the rendezvous and practice-place of the town band. This consisted entirely of boys, none of them more than twenty years of age, and numbered upwards of thirty pieces. The leader was a man of forty, a capital trainer. The daily practice began at 4:30 in the morning, and was kept up until noon; then ensued an hour’s rest. At one, they were again practicing, and no break occurred until long after dark. During the days that we were there, a single piece only was practiced. It was our alarm clock in the morning, beat time for our work throughout the day, and lulled us to sleep when we retired for the night. Senior de Butrie (a local French coffee planter) insists that during the year and more that he has lived in the village, several boys have blown themselves, through consumption, into early graves.<sup>1036</sup>

When, in 1867, a Nahuatl indigenous *Ayuntamiento* (town hall or council) in Huitzilan assembled and decided to create a *cuervo filarmónico*, they required a financial contribution according to each family’s means. A refusal to donate resulted in imprisonment.<sup>1037</sup> In 1872 in Zapotitlan, with an Indigenous Totonac majority, Mariano Rojas was imprisoned by mayor Lorenzo Diego for losing his clarinet and refusing to replace it or come to practice. When Rojas complained to the *jefe político* of the entire district of Tetela that mayor Diego violated the Reform

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<sup>1034</sup> Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 191.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1036</sup> Frederick Starr, *In Indian Mexico: A Narrative of Travel and Labor* (Chicago: Forbes & Co, 1908), 237.

<sup>1037</sup> Thomson, “Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism,” 58.

Laws which abolished compulsory services, Diego countered that Rojas had enjoyed the privileges of musicianship for years, which included exemption from all taxes and from work on civic improvements, and therefore his lack of band practice was a violation of his obligations as a citizen.<sup>1038</sup> Communal demands were made on musicians, in part, because they were funded by the sale of titles to village commons that the *Ley Lerdo* and later, the Porfiriato mandated.<sup>1039</sup> In other words, community bands compensated for the loss of the commons and, in a way, maintained an alternative commons in sound. These were the counter-plantation institutions of the Mexico's disposed rural *campesinos* who would increasingly become a rural proletariat (*peones*) over the remainder of the nineteenth century.<sup>1040</sup> As Acevedo-Rodrigo notes, “[B]ands will be seen not so much as instruments of Liberalism, but as an example of locally specific forms of citizenship.”<sup>1041</sup> The communities described here were forty miles as the crow flies from Veracruz, where rural and

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<sup>1038</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59. Diego also imprisoned the mother of Mariano Vazquez, a musician who had left the municipality to reside in Otinla but had neglected to return his musical instrument or sheet music.

<sup>1039</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1040</sup> By 1883, an estimated 3 million landless agricultural workers lived in the countryside; by 1910, that number grew to an estimated 9.5 million out of a rural population of 11.6 million were agricultural wage workers or hacienda workers (*peones*), in a country with a total population of 15 million. This process began in earnest, ironically, with the rise to power of Ignacio Comonfort and Benito Juárez, who dismantled what they understood as two types of “corporate” power: the church and Indigenous communal landholding systems, but was advanced dramatically, and significantly more violently, during the regime of Porfirio Díaz. I draw much of my history on rural dispossession from Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican-American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 48. For landholding statistics, see Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Immigration to the United States 1897–1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 9; Jean Meyer, “Los obreros en la Revolución mexicana: Los ‘Batallones Rojos,’” *Historia Mexicana* 21, no. 1 (July–September 1971): 3; and Héctor Mora Zebadúa, Victor Palacio Muñoz, and Omar M. Guzmán Navarro, *Un Siglo del Programa del Proletariado en México (Partido Liberal Mexicano 1906)* (Chapingo: Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo; Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, 2008), 44. For more on Juárez and the *Ley Lerdo* which accelerated Indigenous dispossession, see Karl Schmitt, “Church and State in Mexico: A Corporatist Relationship,” *The Americas* 40, no. 3 (1984): 349–76.

<sup>1041</sup> Acevedo-Rodrigo explains defines Citizenship as such: “To the study of peasant politics, we need to add a new concept of citizenship. Here citizenship is understood as a set of social practices rather than a fixed status or an ideal enshrined in legal theory and codes. Acevedo-Rodrigo, “Playing the Tune of Citizenship,” 256-257.

urban communities developed their own *cuerpos filarmónicos*, prominent with clarinets, and which the young Tios undoubtedly were exposed to.<sup>1042</sup>

While *cuerpos filmarancios* demonstrate the intersection of intense, community-organized musical training and instrument traditions, Veracruz had its own, more specific, connections to the Afro-Caribbean cypher called the “common wind.” As discussed earlier, an important outpost of revolutionary privateers that included Haitians, Creoles of Color, and others, the Mexican coast and its port cities played important roles in the war with Spain and its naval component required safe passage and assistance from not only the Haitian state but the Haitian diaspora in New Orleans.<sup>1043</sup> Additionally, musical flows from Cuba, often themselves musical forms twice creolized from Haiti, transformed the cultures of the Veracruz coast. During the Cuban wars of independence, a Mexican ambassador remarked that the emigration of Cubans “continues at an extraordinary pace, especially to Mexico, New York, New Orleans and Florida.”<sup>1044</sup> Veracruz had a long history of *Afrodesciente* resistance, in no small part informed its location adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.<sup>1045</sup>

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<sup>1042</sup> *Cuerops Filarmonicas* proliferated the entire country during these decades, in dialogue with the same social forces of the liberal regime which both abolished compulsory service or punishment and ensured land was on the market. The latter had long-term negative effects for rural Mexicans. For articles on *Cuerops Filarmonicas* in other parts of the state, see Ariadna Acevedo-Rodrigo, “Playing the Tune of Citizenship: Indian Brass Bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico, 1876–1911,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27, no. 2 (2008): 255–72. For a contemporary analysis of the Music Band of the State of Oaxaca, see Charles V. Heath, *The Inevitable Bandstand: The State Band of Oaxaca and the Politics of Sound* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

<sup>1043</sup> Johanna von Grafenstein Gareis, “Auge y Decadencia En Las Relaciones Intramericanas: México y El Caribe En Los Años 1763-1821” (Congreso LASA-97, Guadalajara, 1997); Carlos Vidales, “Corsarios y Piratas de La Revolución Francesa En Las Aguas de La Emancipación Hispanoamericana,” *Caravelle*, no. 54 (1990): 247–62; Jesús María Puente González, “Las insurrecciones de esclavos en Haití y el imperio español en la época de Carlos IV” (Master’s Thesis, Santander, Spain, Universidad de Cantabria, 2012).

<sup>1044</sup> “[C]ontinúa de modo extraordinario la inmigración de los hijos del país (hombres y mujeres), especialmente para México, Nueva York, Nuevo Orleans y la Florida.” Quoted in Bernardo García Díaz, “El Caribe En El Golfo: Cuba y Veracruz Fines Del Siglo XIX y Principios Del XX,” *Anuario X* (1995): 47.

<sup>1045</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, “Los Mexicanos Negros, El Mestizaje y Los Fundamentos Olvidados de La ‘Raza Cósmica’: Una Perspectiva Regional,” *Historia Mexicana* 44, no. 3 (1995): 403–38. Mary Niall Mitchell also suggests that “Free black people from New Orleans also may have chosen to migrate to Veracruz because it was a part of Mexico with a relatively large population of African descent since the country’s colonial period,” in *Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future After Slavery* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 60.

Afro-Cuban exchange was a particularly powerful facet of this influence. The iconic Afro-Cuban poet, Nicolás Guillen (1902-1989), explained: “When I want to joke with a Veracruzano, I tell him that its port is the only possession that Cuba has duly conquered and colonized.”<sup>1046</sup> The musical, dance, and theater styles circulating in Veracruz during the Tios’ formative years were deeply influenced by Santiago de Cuba and the Caribbean more broadly. The Mexican musicologist Vincent Mendoza tells us that “One of the most powerful influences that Mexico felt came from the Antilles, especially from Cuba; it has had a profound influence on the production of lyric songs. It is called the Creole dance or the habanera.”<sup>1047</sup>

Most scholars agree that the *habanera* was first disseminated in Mexico through Veracruz, Tamulipas, Tabasco, and Campeche along the Yucatan—exactly the location where the Tios were building a commune and, later, living as cigar rollers. “La Paloma,” which became a national song of Mexico with Mexicana soprano Conchita Mendez’s performance of it, was a Cuban-born *habanera* that was popular with organ grinders in Cuba during the 1850s.<sup>1048</sup> Romantic songs from Veracruz in the last third of the nineteenth century, including “Canción de Baonegres” and “El Hijo del Truno” were characterized by the *habanera* rhythm.<sup>1049</sup> Mendoza has shown that Cuban

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<sup>1046</sup> “Cuando quiero bromear con un Veracruzano, le digo que el puerto es la única posesión que tiene Cuba, debidamente conquistada y colonizada.” Nicholas Guillen, quoted in Díaz, “El Caribe En El Golfo,” 47.

<sup>1047</sup> “Una de las influencias más ponderosas que ha recibido México procedente de las Antillas, muy especialmente de Cuba y que ha influido hondamente en la producción de cantos líricos es sin duda la danza criolla o danza habanera.” Vincente T. Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana: Ensayo de Clasificación y Antología* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM, 1961), 97. As Nahayeilli B. Juárez Huet explains, “*Guaracha, habanera, son, danzón, rumba, mambo, chachachá...* were, among others, some of the rhythms which were appropriated and incorporated into popular taste and dances in Mexico, a testimony to the influence of Cuban and Caribbean music in general.” “Guaracha, habanera, son, danzón, rumba, mambo, chachachá... fueron, entre otros, varios de los ritmos apropiados e incorporados en los gustos y bailes populares de México, como testimonio de la influencia de la música cubana y del Caribe en general.” Nahayeilli B. Juárez Huet, “Lo ‘Afro’ En Las Industrias de La Música y El Cine: El Caso Afrocubano En México,” in *Circulaciones Culturales: Lo Afrocaribeño Entre Cartagena, Veracruz y La Habana*, ed. Freddy Avila Domínguez, Ricardo Pérez Montfort, and Christian Rinaudo (Marseille, France: IRD Éditions, 2011), 165.

<sup>1048</sup> Maria Teresa Linares, *La Música Popular* (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1970), 38.

<sup>1049</sup> Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana* 80, 82, 86, 120, 418, 437; Pamela Smith, 23. Famous compositions such as “Ilusiones Perdidas”, “Amor por Amor”, “Tú y to”, “Tus Besos”, “La Tapatía”, and “Carmela” all bore the influence

*habanera* took two forms in Mexico, a characteristic duple meter and a 6/8 variant, and a liminal rhythmic space was consciously developed.<sup>1050</sup> Likely, the *habanera*'s 6/8 form was linked to *son hauteseca* own indigenous variation of a "Duple over Triple" concept, a concept from which the *Habanera* was also derived, further deepening a polyrhythmic Gulf grammar.<sup>1051</sup> Bolero was another style where Mexican music became imbued with Cuban rhythmic innovations; Ned Sublette suggests that by the 1880s, the Cuban bolero had been "taken to heart in Mexico," and was distinguished from Spanish Bolero with its frequent use of *cinquillo* patterns, which itself was introduced to Eastern Cuban musical forms by Haitian refugees following the Haitian Revolution.<sup>1052</sup> Thus, the cultural creolization of the Haitian Revolution touched Cuba, Veracruz, and then New Orleans in the 1880s, just as Cuban artistic workers touched each location.<sup>1053</sup>

Mexico and Cuba also shared a circuit of performance institutions and musicians. The Afro-Cuban violinist Claudio Brindis de Salas of Havana, who studied in Paris, toured the Caribbean and Mexico in 1877 and 1878.<sup>1054</sup> Since the nineteenth century, Cuban popular music was made known through the popularity of *Los Bufos Habaneros*, a popular theater group which Laura Podalsky explains "represented a radical alternative to bourgeois theater" because of its incorporation of African-derived music, its lampooning of aristocracy, and its incorporation of

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of *habanera*, as did the works of Mexican composers Miguel Erdo de Tejada, Feliilpe Villanueava, Ernesto Elorduy, Abundio Martínez, and Teofil Pomar. See Juan S. Garrido, *Historia de La Música Popular En México* (México: Editorial Extemporaneos, 1981), 12.

<sup>1050</sup> Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 101.

<sup>1051</sup> Jesús G. Camacho Jurado and María Eugenia Jurado Barranco, "Son Huasteco Identidad Musical de Una Región," in *Culturas Musicales de México*, ed. Jacinto Armando Chacha Antele and Xilonen M. C. Luna Ruiz, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Dirección General de Culturas Populares, Indígenas y Urbanas, 2018), 194–218.

<sup>1052</sup> Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Incorporated, 2007), 252.

<sup>1053</sup> "The exchange went both ways: Argeliers León writes that by 1878, Mexican *corridos* were found in Cuban-published sheet music, along with a style of guitar accompaniment, where "the introduction of a rhythmic raking, very segmented and constant, in the first guitar; tonally accented in the second guitar." Argeliers León, *Del Canto y El Tiempo* (Havana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1984), 274.

<sup>1054</sup> Arthur R. LaBrew, "The Brindis de Salas Family," *Afro-American Music Review* 1, no. 1 (1981): 15–57.

vernacular language.<sup>1055</sup> The literary giant Ruben Campos wrote in 1930 that the *habanera* “Te vas y a la mar te elajas” was popularized by *Los Bufos*, and suggested that the group moved to Veracruz and Merida after the right-wing massacre of Cuban separatists at the Villanueva theater in 1868.<sup>1056</sup> This massacre was one of the contributing factors to the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878) and led to a major exodus of Cuban artists and cigarmakers.<sup>1057</sup>

These were some of the musical and political influences circulating in Veracruz and Tampico during the Tio’s childhoods. As we have seen from their house-hopping in the 1860s and 70s, the Tios were not living in an aesthetic and musical bubble during their seventeen-year sojourn in Mexico. Nor were Louis and Lorenzo Sr.’s father and mother living in a bubble before their move to New Orleans. They were deeply bound to the rhythms of Tampico, and Mexico’s rich, varied, and complex histories intersected with these Creole of Color family from New Orleans. It would not be long before the popular steamship song “Tampeeko” became a Gulf Standard:

Below the grand old Rio Grande  
you'll find a town they call Tampeeko,  
That's where my baby is waitin'  
Night and day,  
When I get back I know  
she'll vamp my blues away,  
That's why I say: I'm Tampeeko bound.<sup>1058</sup>

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<sup>1055</sup> “[R]epresentaba una alternativa radical al teatro burgués por su incorporación de la jerga, su rechazo de las unidades aristotélicas, su tono paródico y sus comentarios políticos.” Laura Podalsky, “Cuba: Guajiras, Mulatas y Puros Cubanos: Identidades Nacionales En El Cine Pre-Revolucionario,” *Revista de Estudios Historicos Sobre La Imagen*. Archivos de La Filmoteca 31 (1999): 158.

<sup>1056</sup> Rubén F. Campos, *El Folklore En Las Ciudades: Investigacion Acerca De La Musica Mexicana Para Bailar y Cantar* (México: Publicaciones La Secretaria De Educacion Publica Talleres, 1930), 193.

<sup>1057</sup> Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1898* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

<sup>1058</sup> José Castaneda, “Tampeeko,” *Jazz Archivist* XIII (1998-1999): 14–21.

The Tios brought Tampico sounds to the New Orleans clarinet tradition. They not only expanded the New Orleans's brass bands tradition, but connected the repressed democratic Gulf ecosystem of cigar rollers, Black and Brown agricultural colonies, and transborder diplomacy to the cultural border-hopping heard in early jazz—the *frontera sónica*.

#### 4.6 Conclusion: The Changing Same of the *Frontera Sónica*

When the Ninth Regiment of Immunes was drafted for the purpose of recruited African Americans to fight in Cuba in 1898, many African Americans found symbolism in fighting to liberate Cuba and in the footsteps of Afro-Cuban general Antonio Maceo. Stella A. E. Brazley, an African American poet based in Brooklyn, wrote the poem “The Colored Boys in Blues” in 1899, which compared Black service to the Haitian Revolution:

Ye scions of a warlike race,  
Renew the prestige of your sires,  
And by your valor win the place  
Where glory flames with radiant fires,  
With those great heroes, brave and pure,  
Men like Maceo, Toussaint L'Ouverture.<sup>1059</sup>

Several members of New Orleans' Onward Brass Band were recruited to the Ninth, and made up some of the noncommissioned officers in charge of training and leading the group, including Peter Duconge, James MacNeal, and Francois Castry.<sup>1060</sup> But this war, despite the

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<sup>1059</sup> W. Hilary Coston, *The Spanish-American War Volunteer; Ninth United States Volunteer Infantry Roster and Muster, Biographies, Cuban Sketches* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1899), 81; Michele Mitchell, “‘The Black Man’s Burden’: African Americans, Imperialism, and Notions of Racial Manhood 1890-1910,” in *Complicating Categories: Gender, Class, Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Eileen Boris and Angelica Janssens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 87; Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 168.

<sup>1060</sup> John McCusker, “The Onward Brass Band and the Spanish-American War,” *The Jazz Archivist* XIII (1999 1998): 24–35.

attempts of Black troops to shape it and influence its meanings, was not part of what I call the *frontera sónica*: this was not a transnational collaboration from below, but rather, a war for U.S. Empire.<sup>1061</sup> Despite their association with the Onward Brass Band, the Tios refused to fight for the United States military. Perhaps this is why, when Lorenzo Jr. was aggressively recruited to play in the well-paying U.S. Military Band during WWI, he refused.

The Tios, for all their complex views of Blackness, were perceptive of the connection between U.S. foreign policy and racism in New Orleans. Louis R. Tio remembers that his father, Lorenzo Sr., was impacted by the reign of Jim Crow: “My father then decided that he seen the change...how the people being to segregate...Prejudice begin...So he told my mother, this is no place for us.”<sup>1062</sup> Shortly after the Spanish-American war, they moved to Bay St. Louis, Missouri, on the Gulf Coast, but the experience of racism did not diminish.

In 1907, after forty years living in the American South, Lorenzo Tio Sr. decided he could not take it anymore. He opted to return to the land of his birth in Veracruz. Despite his storied career and his extensive New Orleans connections, his memories of Veracruz and Tampico still provided a more appealing alternative to life in United States. Lorenzo Sr. was hardly the only Creole of Color who considered leaving the United States South during these years: Daniel Desdunes had just moved to Omaha, and many other Black and Creole of Color musicians would soon find employment in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Indeed, Lorenzo’s older brother, Joseph Marcos Tio, had left New Orleans in 1883 for Mexico City, although he passed away before these events.<sup>1063</sup> And perhaps, too, Tio read to the newspapers of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*,

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<sup>1061</sup> Mitchell, “The Black Man’s Burden,” 77-100

<sup>1062</sup> Louis R. Tio, Interview, October 26, 1960, Hogan Jazz AR hive.

<sup>1063</sup> Joseph fell ill during travel, and died in Mexico City in 1884. As Kinzer notes, “According to Tio family oral history, Joseph had never become acclimated to social conditions in New Orleans, and intended to resettle

which were distributed from nearby Saint Louis by the Mexican exile Flores Magón. One article read:

Mexicans have been abandoned to the forces of luck in this country - akin to the way they are treated in Mexico...excluded from hotels and restaurants...found guilty and sentenced in the twinkling of an eye; the penitentiaries are full of Mexicans, who are absolutely innocent. In Texas, Louisiana, and in other states they live without hope.<sup>1064</sup>

Meanwhile, the political moment Mexico at this moment could not have been more unstable and hopeful. This was at the very beginning of Porfirio Díaz's collapse; Díaz announced "free" elections in 1907 in response to major labor unrest which began in Veracruz. In 1906, the textile industry went on strike, centered at the modern industrial textile plant at Río Blanco (on the outskirts of Orizaba, Veracruz). What began as a local strike turned into a regional battle that spread across several states, involving tens of thousands of workers. "What made this effort unique," writes Justin Chacón, "was that members the leadership were committed anticapitalists."<sup>1065</sup> The Governor of Veracruz, Teodoro A. Dehesa, expressed his sympathy with the workers, and he made his distaste for capitalist abuses quite known and publicly condemned the Diaz government and his so-called *Científicos*. These acts of dissent threw fuel on the fire that was the Mexican Revolution, which began in earnest 1910.<sup>1066</sup> It seems like it would have been very out-of-character for Lorenzo Tio Sr. to make the decision to move to Veracruz without some knowledge of these seismic shifts; indeed, Tio, had he made it to Veracruz, would have been

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permanently in Mexico." Charles Kinzer, "The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933," PhD diss., (Louisiana State University, 1993), 148

<sup>1064</sup> Colin M. Maclachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution*, 9

<sup>1065</sup> Charles D. Ameringer, *The Socialist Impulse: Latin America in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009), 57; Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican-American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 186.

<sup>1066</sup> Karl B. Koth, "'Not a Mutiny But a Revolution': The Río Blanco Labour Dispute, 1906-1907," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 18, no. 35 (1993): 40.

obligated to participate in the Mexican Revolution in one of the country's most left-leaning states. Lorenzo Sr. communicated directly with the Mexican government, and according to his son, Louis

R. Tio:

He told my mother he was going to write to this Mexican consul, which he did. He writ and told them that he wants to come back to Mexico. Well, the consul sent him a letter back. My father had taken sick. We moved from Bay St. Louis back here [to New Orleans]. Then the letter came in from Mexico. Told him to bring all his—get all these papers set up, come on back to Mexico, all transportation would be paid.<sup>1067</sup>

Lorenzo Tio passed away before said travel could place, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1908. “Had he lived we never would have been here [In New Orleans]...we would've been back in Mexico” explained his son Louis R., and certainly, as Vernhettes and Lindstörn note, “the New Orleans school of clarinet playing would not have become what it became.”<sup>1068</sup>

But this school also would not have “become what it became” without the critical assistance provided by the Mexican state to Creoles of Color undergoing repression in the 1850s, a disposition that continued into the early 1900s. Indeed, it is not every day that a foreign state offers to expedite visas and cover travel expenses for African-descended musicians. No scholarship on the Tio family has acknowledged the implications of this gesture. Jonathon Fox has asked: “In the case of transnational citizenship, however, the reference point is not as clear—citizen power in relation to what?... If one extends the more society-based approach to citizenship horizontally across borders, then the focus would be on membership in transnational civic or political communities.”<sup>1069</sup> The Tios were citizens of the *frontera sónica*, through family members

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<sup>1067</sup> Louis R. Tio, Interview, October 26, 1960, New Orleans, The Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1068</sup> Louis R. Tio, Interview, October 26, 1960, New Orleans, The Hogan Jazz Archive; Vernhettes and Lindstörn, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1*, 158.

<sup>1069</sup> Jonathan Fox, “Unpacking ‘Transnational Citizenship,’” *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (2005): 171–201.

that remained in Mexico,<sup>1070</sup> through their relationships with the members of *la Banda de Caballería*, and most of all through their music.

As we have seen, revolutionary visions of an emancipatory age were never far from the lips and ears of the cigar rollers, musicians, and the denizens of the *frontera sónica*. Scott and Hébrard write of an Atlantic flow of “ideas and concepts [which] were exchanged along with mutual aid, memories, and cigars.”<sup>1071</sup> But what if all of these were undergirded by a more fundamental form of communication of identity creation? Indeed, it seems that the most influential, and most innovative, form of alliance building was in the domain intercultural music making. Mexico continued to be a resource for African Americans and Creoles of Color through music making that animated the lived experiences of musicians on both sides of border, providing a dynamic instrumental tradition to fellow dreamers of a world beyond racial capitalism. This all-important history of Mexican, Haitian, Cuban, and Afro-Louisianan creolization during in the long durée of the plantation and the counter-plantation provided an important historical counterpoint to the clarinet’s boundary defining explosions in second-line performance and the history of the New Orleans brass band.

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<sup>1070</sup> This is alluded to in Rose Wynn Tio’s Interview in Hogan Jazz Archive, 1995.

<sup>1071</sup> Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 2.

## 5.0 Redefining Africa, Reimagining Freedom: Afro-Caribbean Ecosocialisms and Music in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes

### 5.1 Introduction

*There is no material content, no formal category of artistic creation, however mysteriously transmitted and itself unaware of the process, which did not originate in the empirical reality from which it breaks free.*

- Theodor Adorno<sup>1072</sup>

The influential New Orleans clarinetist George Lewis was not, like his grandmother Alice Zeno, able to speak the Wolof language. Zeno was descended from a Senegalese slave who was sold to a Louisiana planter in 1803.<sup>1073</sup> Yet Lewis did retain a multi-generational legacy that dated back to the Middle Passage: he and his family had a garden. Lewis “remembered some idyllic years he spent with his first wife, Emma, in a little rented house down the road. Emma had raised chickens and hogs and kept a vegetable garden in the backyard while George played his clarinet.”<sup>1074</sup> This garden was located in Mandeville, a small Louisiana town located in the sugar parish of St. Tammy, and constitutes one expression of a continental Black practice that took on a special significance in the Atlantic world: the proliferation of ecologically sound, nutritionally productive, small-scale agricultural production in the cracks of the plantation system. These

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<sup>1072</sup> Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” in *Aesthetics and Politics*, by Walter Benjamin et al. (London: Verso Books, 1980), 190.

<sup>1073</sup> Tom Bethell, *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 10-12.

<sup>1074</sup> Tom Sancton, *Song for My Fathers: A New Orleans Story in Black and White* (New York: Other Press, LLC, 2010), 87.

archipelagos of gardens not only created much-needed sustenance for the enslaved and their kin; they pointed towards another possible way of life and economic development. This path, despite massive effort, resistance, and some flashes of success, was ultimately denied to Black American freedpeople after the conclusion of the Civil War.

Indeed, Lewis's brief recollection of his family's garden is an expression of a centuries-long inheritance, built and tended by generations of enslaved dissidents whose refusal of plantation agriculture led them to leave their own imprints in both soil and soul. This agro-botanical knowledge, stored and reinvented during violent Atlantic crossings, was as salient a form of African knowledge as the Wolof vocabulary of Lewis's grandmother. For the novelist Jamaica Kincaid, gardening is a site of both identity recuperation and historical analysis. While planting crops outside her home in Vermont, Kincaid admired how her garden "resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it" and reflected a hermeneutics of Afro-Indigenous pasts and futures: "I only marveled at the way the garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings)."<sup>1075</sup> In gardening, Lewis's family joined and was joined by Black cultural workers across centuries.

As a diasporic phenomenon, gardening could be seen as a performance of memory, resistance, and cultural recuperation. But gardening, like emancipation, derived meaning precisely because it interacted with and against its negation: plantation monoculture, slavery, and after the conclusion of the Civil War, wage labor. This chapter traces these two erstwhile negations of the

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<sup>1075</sup> Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 8. This passage is quoted and discussed in Carole Boyce Davies, "Jamaica Kincaid, Caribbean Space and Living Dislocations," *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 19 (Summer 2018): 6–25, and Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 200.

plantation society, arguing that both Black music making and land practices were sites where freedom was negotiated and enacted. While many have focused on how secular and sacred music are interconnected and sometimes inseparable in the Black Atlantic musical tradition—how the spiritual is part of everyday life<sup>1076</sup>—I propose a similar theme by suggesting that Black cultural and agricultural activity were mutually constitutive. I trace the music-making practices of sugar plantation workers through the Antebellum period to Emancipation and Jim Crow, and highlight how these large groups of workers, families, and artists performed the social relations in collective music that stood in stark contrast to the gruesome exploitation and genocide of the plantation system. But they did not invent these social relations from scratch. In the communal gardening complex, autonomous production and collective work rhythms had long been a creative laboratory from whence a musical form was born, one capable of uniting Black workers during the most harrowing of hours. During slavery, surpluses that these gardens generated were sold in an expansive array of internal markets managed by enslaved people and free people of color. The resources obtained therein might be used to purchase whiskey or other self-servicing goods, but they could also contribute to collective resources of extended kinship groups, sometimes used to contribute to manumission. New Orleans mutual aid societies continued this tradition of collective resource management and continue to the present day.<sup>1077</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> Teresa L. Reed, *The Holy Profane: Religion in Black Popular Music* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Gerdès Fleurant, “The Song of Freedom: Vodou, Conscientization, and Popular Culture in Haiti,” in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, ed. C. Michel and P. Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 51–63.

<sup>1077</sup> On self and collective manumission, see Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006). In music and mutual aid societies, see Christina Schoux Casey, “De-Colonizing New Orleans: Social Aid & Pleasure Club Second Lines,” in *Life after Lines: Tim Ingold across the Humanities*, ed. Gunhild Moltesen Agger, Jørgen Riber Christensen, and Jens Kirk (Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg Universitetsforlag, 2020), 199–121.

In the transition to freedom, these gardens were expanded to form the basis of a new social system to replace plantation slavery.<sup>1078</sup> Surpluses generated from these lands were redirected towards the development of new institutions: schools, churches, and collective provisions for all. Freedpeople showed their commitment to building their own society, even at the cost of short-term stability, and often refused to work on plantations during the transition to wage labor. Many pooled resources to rent or buy land. Others simply claimed the plantation as their own. Their subjectification as a rural wage-labor proletariat was a reluctant, violent, and complicated process, and several strikes and spirited musical demonstrations stood between the end of the Civil War and the hegemony of cane planters over Black laborers.<sup>1079</sup>

Music played a paradoxical role in this transition to wage labor. A major incentive for Black fieldhands to return to plantations was a new institution, sometimes funded by planters: the plantation brass band. Where planters had enticed slaves with musical instruments during slavery, they now funded instrument purchases and instruction.<sup>1080</sup> But despite the intention of planters, Black musicians turned these bands into an autonomous space where Black communal futures were not only sounded, but generated. Not unlike urban New Orleans, Black social life on

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<sup>1078</sup> On collective resources management in the emancipation period, see several articles in Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Land & Labor, 1865*, vol. 1, 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), which are cited and discussed below. See also Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 277-301.

<sup>1079</sup> Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969).

<sup>1080</sup> On the purchasing of instruments by planters during slavery, see N. Herbemont, "On the Moral Discipline and Treatment of Slaves," *Southern Agriculturalist* IX (January 1836); Guion Griffis Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 143; Robert Criswell, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" *Contrasted with Buckingham Hall, the Planter's Home: Or, A Fair View of Both Sides of the Slavery Question* (New York: AMS Press, 1852); Ronald L. Byrnside, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 22. On plantation bands, see Karl Koenig, "The Plantation Belt and Musicians Part I: Professor James B. Humphrey," *The Second Line* XXXIII (Fall 1981): 24-49; Gene Miller, "The Carpetbagger and the Professor," *New Orleans Music* 4, no. 6 (June 1994).

Louisiana plantations was structured by mutual aid associations known as Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs (SAPCs) which had music at the core of their festivities and fundraising. An astonishing amount of jazz musicians from the sugar parishes, many of whom participated in these societies, made up the first and second generations of jazz innovators. Joe Banks, Joe Gabriel, Willie James, Lewis James, Neddy James, Albert Jiles Jr. and Sr., Isiah “Big Ike” Robinson, Jim Richardson, Big Ike K, Mutt Carey, Louis Nelson, Chris Kelly, Sam Morgan, William B  b   Ridgley, Sunny Henry, Punch Miller, Harrison Barnes, Jimmy “Kid” Clayton, Pops Foster, and John Casimir, each brought the traditions of work songs and the historical memory of plantation resistance into the early genomes of jazz.<sup>1081</sup> As Bruce Boyd Raeburn surmises, “Understanding the early development of jazz in New Orleans requires an appreciation of the interconnectedness of the city with the rural hinterland...[which produced] a community of transplanted plantation players.”<sup>1082</sup> I argue the musical artistry and understanding of freedom of these plantations transplants was deeply connected to the communal resistance prefigured by autonomous gardens.

Hierarchies of race and gender, and conditions of extreme exploitation, also were “transplanted” from the plantation to urban New Orleans.<sup>1083</sup> My analysis of the migrating community of rural plantation players contrasts their communities’ mass counter-plantation movement in the sugar parishes with the resurgent plantation in postwar Louisiana. They brought with them centuries of slave and freedpeople’s resistance to the sugar complex, as well as a unique

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<sup>1081</sup> Karl Koenig, “The Plantation Belt and Musicians Part 1: Professor James B. Humphrey,” *The Second Line* XXXIII (Fall 1981): 24–49; Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “New Orleans Jazz Styles of the 1920: Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band,” in *Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band: Complete Recorded Works in Transcription*, ed. John Joyce Jr., Bruce Boyd Raeburn, and Anthony M. Cummings (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 2012); Samuel B. Charters, *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* (Belleville, NJ: Walter C. Allen, 1958).

<sup>1082</sup> Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “New Orleans Jazz Styles of the 1920: Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band,” xx-xxi.

<sup>1083</sup> Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and Black Sense of Place,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 947–63.

form of music. When George Lewis was asked if any other trumpet players sounded like Chris Kelly (born and raised on the Magnolia Plantation), he responded, “Not exactly, no. I know a lot of fellows tried to play like him...till he died he had that [unique] tempo.”<sup>1084</sup> Trombonist Sunny Henry remembered how the march step was different on Magnolia plantation, slower: “[When] I came here [to New Orleans] I had to learn how to walk all over again.”<sup>1085</sup> Bassist Sylvester Handy went even farther: “Jazz comes from the country, not from New Orleans...blues and jazz feeling came from the country.”<sup>1086</sup>

In addition to supporting the creation of independent institutions, which came of age during Reconstruction, the gardening complex served as a model for what emancipation might look like. Wage labor was not, despite the comments of many white observers, the limit of freedom. Frederick Douglass was one of many who suggested that the deprivation of land ownership by freedpeople robbed the Civil War of its emancipatory potential:

The Civil War of 1861-5 ended slavery. It left us free, but it also left us homeless, penniless, ignorant, nameless and friendless. Life is derived from the earth...Russia’s liberated serf was given three acres of land and agricultural implements with which to begin his career of liberty and independence. But to us no foot of land nor implement was given. We were turned loose to starvation, destitution and death.<sup>1087</sup>

Yet freedpeople put up a fight before they were denied land. Plantations abandoned by white planters evading Union troops became sites of freedpeople agency, where, as Eric Foner notes, “[freed] slaves sack[ed] the big houses and destroy[ed] cotton gins; they then commenced planting

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<sup>1084</sup> George Lewis, Interview, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1968, HJA.

<sup>1085</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, October 21, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1086</sup> Sylvester Handy, Interview, December 13, 1961, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1087</sup> Frederick Douglass, “Introduction,” in *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition. The Afro-American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature*, ed. Ida B. Wells and Robert W. Rydell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1893).

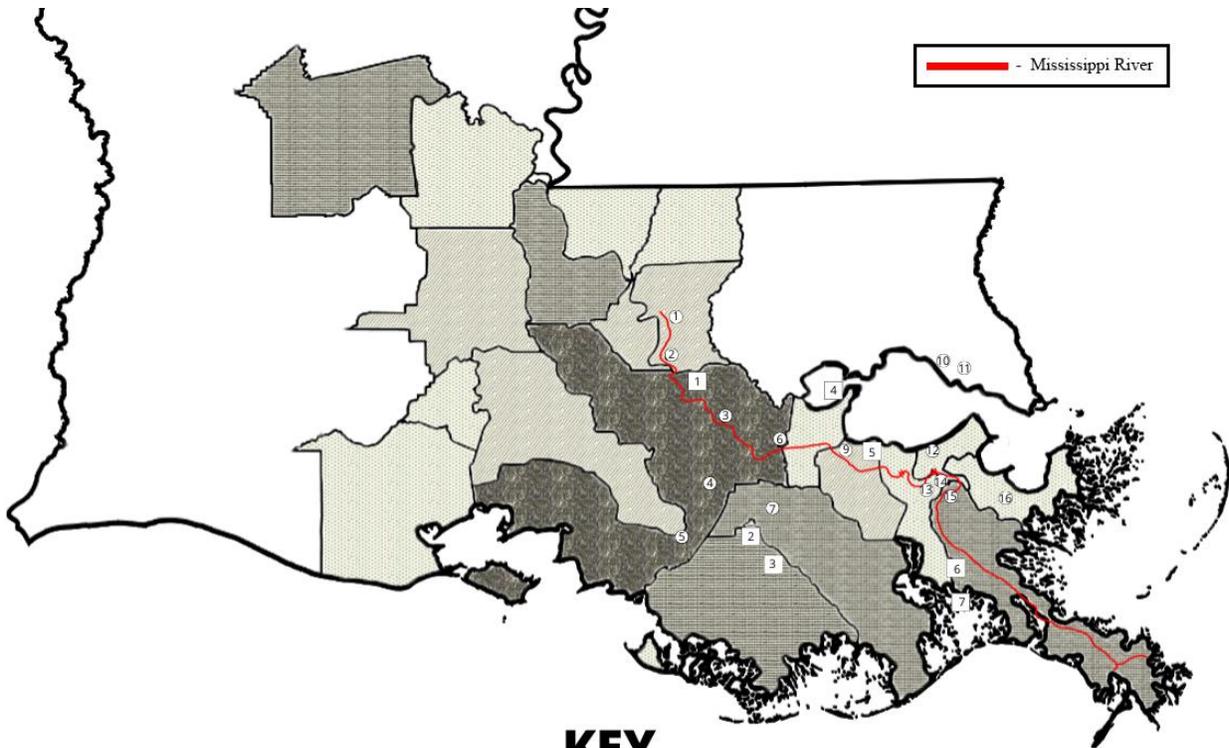
corn and potatoes for their own subsistence.”<sup>1088</sup> “They destroy every thing [*sic*] on the plantation,” complained the planter John Minor, and noted that “The most of them think, or pretend to think, that the plantation & every thing [*sic*] belongs to them.”<sup>1089</sup> When they destroyed sugarcane, they also destroyed the social relations of plantation hierarchy, reclaiming both the land and their relations. Freed people in the American south were joined in their destructive reclamation by comrades across oceans and centuries: revolutionaries in Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti all burned cane as ways of both ceremonializing and inaugurating their resistance.<sup>1090</sup>

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<sup>1088</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 51-118.

<sup>1089</sup> Entry for February 24<sup>th</sup>, February 26<sup>th</sup>, and January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1863, William J. Minor Plantation Diary (1861-1868), Minor Papers, Mss. 519, 294, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University, Special Collections, hereafter referred to as LLMVC. See Enrico Dal Lago, *Civil War and Agrarian Unrest: The Confederate South and Southern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 315.

<sup>1090</sup> “In the aftermath of the abolition of slavery (1886), a persistent counterplantation culture fueled much of the resistance against Spanish colonialism, oppression, and manifold forms of exploitation during the republican era and Batista’s two regimes. In all three instances, rebels resorted to the wholesale burning of sugarcane fields.” Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Revolutionary Cuba: A History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 11. For equivalent moments in Jamaica and Haiti, see examples below, and Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

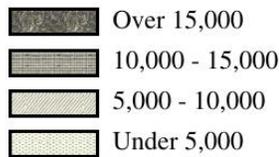


**KEY**

**LOUISIANA SUGAR PRODUCTION**

1859, by Parishes

CROP IN HOGSHEADS



**Plantation Belt Locations**

Indicated by ○

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Baton Rouge    | 9. Sellers           |
| 2. Plaque Mines   | 10. Covington        |
| 3. Donaldsonville | 11. Mandeville       |
| 4. Napoleonville  | 12. Milnburg         |
| 5. Morgan City    | 13. Gretna           |
| 6. Lutcher        | 14. Algiers          |
| 7. Thibadoux      | 15. Bertrandville    |
| 8. Houma          | 16. Delacroix Island |

**Early Jazz Musicians Born on  
Sugar Plantations or Sugar  
Districts Indicated by □**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Pops Foster<br>(McCall Plantation)   | 4. Kid Ory<br>(Woodlawn Plantation)                      |
| 2. John Robichaux<br>Joe Gabriel<br>Albert Jiles Sr<br>Albert Jiles Jr<br>Neddy James<br>Isaiah "Big Ike" Robinson<br>(Near or In Thibodeaux) | 5. Thomas "Matt" Carey<br>Jack Carey<br>(Near Hahnville) |
| 3. Sonny Henry<br>Harrison Barnes<br>Chris Kelly<br>Sam Morgan<br>Isaiah Morgan<br>(Magnolia Plantation)                                      | 6. Jim Robinson<br>(Deer Range Plantation)               |
|   | 7. William Bebe Ridgley<br>(Plantation in Jefferson)     |

Figure 4: Early 1900's New Orleans jazz musicians born in sugar districts and sugar production levels in 1859 (pre-Civil War). The graphic was designed by myself. The sugar data is compiled from J. Carlyle Sitterson, J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), 49.

Cash crops such as sugar cane and tobacco were hated because they destroyed the Black bodies that cultivated them while empowering their jailkeepers. Sugar cultivation was so strenuous and dangerous for enslaved workers that Louisiana suffered a natural decrease in the slave population, unlike in the cotton country.<sup>1091</sup> But Black farmers recognized sugar was destructive to the Earth, and its uncanny ability to sap the fertility of the soil prevented alternatives to plantation agriculture. Complex, diverse polycultures were replaced with single or double-crop plantations that extended for miles. These monocultures led to biodiversity loss, causing pollinators to go extinct, and sometimes halving soil nutrition within one generation.<sup>1092</sup>

Freedpeoples' resistance is often told in terms of marronage to swamps or abroad to Mexico or Canada, or in acts of collective revolt. Yet perhaps the most common forms of resistance were less the dramatic but no less consequential practices of autonomy developed by slaves over several centuries, by growing alternatives to cash cropping—what they call “slave crops.”<sup>1093</sup> Provision grounds and autonomous markets, which traded foodstuffs and other cultural wares, was their antebellum “future in the present.”<sup>1094</sup> As Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggests with the Haitian peasantry, they “measured its [their] liberty in Sunday markets and in the right to work on its garden plots.”<sup>1095</sup> The most famous such market, located in nineteenth century Louisiana, is better known for its association with jazz. *Le Place de las Nègres*, otherwise known as Congo Square,

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<sup>1091</sup> Richard Follett, “Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters,” *Journal of Family History* 28, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 510–39.

<sup>1092</sup> AW Wood, “Soil Degradation and Management under Intensive Sugarcane Cultivation in North Queensland,” *Soil Use Manage* 1 (1985): 120–23; C. S. Dominy, R. J. Haynes, and R. Van Antwerpen, “Long-Term Effects of Sugarcane Production on Soil Quality in the South Coast and the Midlands Areas of Kwazulu-Natal,” *Proceeds of the South African Sugarcane Technical Association* 75 (2001): 222–27.

<sup>1093</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 78.

<sup>1094</sup> For the phrase of the “future in the present,” see C. L. R. James, *The Future in the Present: Selected Writings* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977).

<sup>1095</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation*, (Monthly Review Press: New York, 1990), 44.

was said to be so important for independent crop trading that, according to the architect Benjamin Latrobe, the “whole colony would have starved” without its markets.<sup>1096</sup>

In creating these systems of resistance and autonomy, enslaved people were striking at the very logic of the plantation complex. “The independent economic activities of slaves,” write Morgan and Berlin, “had far reaching consequences, shaping the social structure of slave society and providing material basis of the slaves’ distinct culture.” This culture, they argue, “influenced the hopes and aspirations they carried into freedom, given direction to the post-emancipation struggle for equality.”<sup>1097</sup> “[N]ot only a stepping-stone toward liberation,” Elizabeth Dougherty notes that “the slave gardens were a powerful site of creolization.”<sup>1098</sup> This can be seen in the “staggering array of crops” that these spaces supported, including, in the case of one Jamaican garden, *abbay* (African-oil palm), Angola or pigeon or *gungo* peas, bananas, *bissy* (or African kola nut tree), cabbage (leaves from cabbage tree), calabashes, *calalu* (green vegetable and comprising many different plants), cashews, *chocho*, coconuts, custard apples, maize, *mammee apples*, (*mammee* gum was used by slave doctors for chiggers and *mamme* bark against lice), naseberries, okra, oranges, palms, varieties of peppers, pimento pineapples, pumpkins, shaddocks, yams, and sweetsops, to name just a few.<sup>1099</sup> As I show later, the yam had a special role in this matrix of

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<sup>1096</sup> Quoted in Jerah Johnson, “New Orleans’s Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 32, no. 2 (1991): 117–57.

<sup>1097</sup> Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, “Introduction: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas,” in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>1098</sup> Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2019), 43.

<sup>1099</sup> Berlin and Morgan, “Introduction: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas,” 9. For an overview of crop diversity in plantations, see Robert Dirks, *The Black Saturnalia: Conflict and Its Ritual Expression on British West Indian Slave Plantations* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1987), 70; B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (1984; Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), 212; Jerome S. Handler, “The History of Arrowroot and the Origin of Peasantries in the British West Indies,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 2 (1971): 46–93.

identity and social reproduction, which is why John H. Parry argues that the history of the Caribbean could be traced in yams no less than sugar.<sup>1100</sup>

How all of this related to the United States South, and the efforts of freedpeople to implement a new mode of production, is a complex historical episode. “The [post-Civil War] cooperative effort in the countryside was not a success story,” writes Edward Magdol, “but that should not obscure the freed people’s self-assertive and conscious effort to re-create a world of their own.”<sup>1101</sup> Magdol reminds us that the defeat of a Black agrarian republic in postwar Louisiana did not portend to its irrelevance. I take a cue from Robin D.G. Kelley, by moving past evaluating the “success” of a social movement to accomplish its stated objective and instead “explore the different ways self-proclaimed renegades imagined life after the revolution and where their ideas came from.” Like Kelley, I believe deeply that “Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge.”<sup>1102</sup> I argue that this “new knowledge” and its “revolutionary dreams” in the fields animated rural to urban migrants who were overrepresented in the New Orleanian musical laboratory. Musical practices were deeply tied to these gardening spaces, and they carried their ethos into jazz. As trombonist Jim Robinson explained (himself from the Deer Range plantation), collectivity, communication and interdependence were more important than individualistic virtuosity:

Now if them people don't work together, you can blow your brains out and you can't, you ain't getting nowhere. Now, if that banjo and that drum are going just as fast as a cyclone, [and] you can't execute your horn like you want to...It's too fast, understand? But as long as that drum and that piano and that banjo and bass, that must work

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<sup>1100</sup> John H. Parry, “Plantation and Provision Ground: An Historical Sketch of the Introduction of Food Crops into Jamaica,” *Revista de Historia de América* 39 (1995): 1. The yam itself had many varieties—not only yellow or white, but also, *afu*, *abckra*, and “Negro.” (Ira Berlin 9)

<sup>1101</sup> Magdol, *A Right to the Land*, 139.

<sup>1102</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 8-9.

together. Well, that's the whole thing. Any man got a band should get that together: that drum and bass and banjo and piano. Because that's the main thing; that's your background, and if that's clicking, your band got to go right.<sup>1103</sup>

In Jim Robinson's words, the sublime in this music is not the quest for virtuosity or seamless individual self-expression. The art lies, rather, in the collective management of a shared sense of time and space, one which propels communication, synergy, and communally reinforcing expression, even under complex and dystopian regimes. Such is apt phenomenological practice for the kinds of autonomous institution building that gardening portended to; it would also serve as resource in neo-planation spaces, such as turn-of-the-century Storyville or prisons.<sup>1104</sup>

Employing works from Black feminist philosophers as well as histories of Afro-Atlantic provision grounds, my major theoretical proposal offered here is that these collective ontologies (the experience of being) in both gardening and plantation music-making are transliterations of an Afro-Caribbean or Black Atlantic struggle to redefine time, subjectivity, and labor. Permaculture-based Black agricultural production demonstrated both African and Indigenous American influence—but the context in which these gardening techniques were deployed nonetheless manifested something “new.” They emerged in response and effectively commented on the dehumanizing, ecocidal, and “rational” conditions of the plantation mode of production and existence. Even when independently grown foodstuffs formed the basis of an impressive array of

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<sup>1103</sup> Jim Robinson, Interview, December 10 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1104</sup> Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and Black Sense of Place,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 947–63; Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013).

internal markets, as it did in Jamaica or in New Orleans's Congo Square, they were still spaces where capital was not only disavowed but transcended.

I am interested in tracing the ways in which musical practice served as an extension, a substitute, and a continuation of the practices of collectivity developed in these gardening complexes. For it was not only foodstuffs which were grown in these beds, but new social relations, and new peoples. When this social fabric was disrupted by the reimposition of plantation monoculture, music figured prominently in Black resistance. Resistance and collective musicking was of a different nature in the sugar parishes than the cotton districts: Ralph Shlomowitz has shown that collective resistance around labor-based demands was shorter-lived amongst cotton workers than Louisiana's cane cutters, due to the collective nature of cane-cutting work and workers' intense proximity.<sup>1105</sup>

Music was a large part of cane-cutters' collective organizing strategies.<sup>1106</sup> Workers played in bands to signal their discontent with wage cuts in the sugar bowl's capital, Thibodaux, resulting in both a massacre and a ban on Black bands.<sup>1107</sup> But ongoing worker absenteeism—that is, the refusal to work and grow the “slave crop”—led to an altogether unexpected outcome: bands were created and instruments were bought by sugar barons, such Henry Warmoth on his Magnolia Plantation, to attract workers and encourage freedpeople to accept year-round employment. Among rural to urban migrants, almost all jazz musicians came from the sugar regions, and the aforementioned Morgan, Kelley, and others learned to play their instrument in these brass bands. It was certainly manipulative for plantation owners to create these vehicles to engender submission

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<sup>1105</sup> Ralph Shlomowitz, “‘Bound’ or ‘Free’? Black Labor in Cotton and Sugarcane Farming, 1865-1880,” *Journal of Southern History* 50 (November 1984): 570–95. See also Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 43.

<sup>1106</sup> In sync with what I call “brassroots democracy” and discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>1107</sup> Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 134-135.

to plantation discipline. But I am driven by a different question: what did Black musicians make of these institutions, and how did such bands continue the values of collectivity that appear in Afrodiasporic autonomous land practices?

As of yet, no study has focused on how the conditions of sugar work, or the articulation of their alternative in the slave provision grounds and/or the post-emancipation commune, influenced jazz or early jazz musicians. Perhaps there is a token paragraph or chapter on “early life” in the occasional jazz biography which makes mention of the “sunup to sundown” of sugar cane work, but a thorough analysis has evaded modern scholarship. Perhaps this is rooted in the anti-positivist, and anti-materialist, tendency of cultural studies and modern scholarship writ large to separate intellectual practice from labor entirely.<sup>1108</sup> Stuart Hall, an architect of cultural studies, criticized this orientation. In the 1990s as a distinct United States practice of cultural studies became increasingly institutionalized, he described his “nagging doubt that this overwhelming textualization of cultural studies’ own discourses somehow constitutes power and politics as exclusively matters of language and textuality itself.”<sup>1109</sup> These methodologies often ignore labor or political economy. While some scholars have invoked the textual practice of invoking land among African American writers,<sup>1110</sup> I emphasize the material-spiritual aspects of gardening and of music making: social practices that require congregating, coordinated action, individual responsibly within a collective, the creation of new tools and new techniques for using them, and an onto-epistemic world that blurs the line between self and other. In that sense, I also move

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<sup>1108</sup> Nancy Cantor and Steven Schomberg, “Poised between Two Worlds: The University as Monastery and Marketplace,” *EDUCAUSE Review* 38, no. 2 (March 2003): 12–21.

<sup>1109</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 273.

<sup>1110</sup> Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Keguro Macharia, “Queering Helga Crane: Black Nativism in Nella Larsen’s Quicksand,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 254–75.

beyond a notion of labor and material conditions that ignores the living labor of the Earth. I apply, rather, an ecocritical lens to the labor history of early jazz.<sup>1111</sup>

This chapter is organized in the following sections. Part one is a literature review of the Afro Atlantic gardening complex, in which I hope to illustrate the expansive reach and reoccurring practice of gardening and communal farming as an alternative and antidote to the destructive practices of plantation agriculture across the Black Atlantic. Part two focuses on a more music-specific chronology to this Afro-Atlantic gardening corridor, examining colonial legislation banning and permitting sound, slave markets, and work and “counter-work” songs. Part three focuses on the phenomena of plantation brass bands and zooms in on struggles around land and labor that consumed Louisiana’s sugar parishes in the decade before many early rural jazz icons were born. I am particularly interested in tracing the connection between bands and their surrogation of the collectivism and autonomy in the provision grounds.

It is important to temper our expectations of our sources. In parsing out various testimonies of sounds, songs, and soil practices from slave life across the Caribbean, we would do well to follow Ralph Ellison’s advice in his comments on white observations of United States slave music: “It is important to remember that they saw and understood only that which they were prepared to accept.”<sup>1112</sup> In a similar register, it may not come as a surprise that explicit references to gardening by jazz musicians who had recently migrated from the plantation districts to New Orleans were rare. But this may be because interviewees, themselves under-interviewed and rarely recorded, did

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<sup>1111</sup> As Eric Prieto notes, “Ecocriticism tends to have a strong activist component...This, no doubt, is at its core. Such politically oriented modes of criticism can play a real role in shaping the values of readers and improving the quality of public debate over important policy issues.” Eric Prieto, “The Uses of Landscape: Ecocriticism and Martinican Cultural Theory,” in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, ed. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 237.

<sup>1112</sup> Sidney W. Mintz, “Forward,” in *Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. John F. Szwed and Norman E. Whitten Jr. (New York: Free Press, 1970), 3.

not have their experiences with plant life emerge as a dominant theme among interviewers' questions. I can say that the topic was never broached by any of the interviewers in the Hogan Jazz archive which I have consulted. This is hardly the fault of the interviewers, whose main concern was not parsing out the social visions of freedpeople and their descendants. When such a question was presented, in one memorable 1940 interview to Kid Ory, he spoke at length about his flower patches and his chicken farm.<sup>1113</sup> Because of this paucity of sources, I believe it is necessary to trace these obscured links by exploring the social environs in which the musicians were embedded. A communalist ethos ran a chain from independent gardens in Louisiana's sugar plantations to mutual aid societies in urban New Orleans, forged out of distinct Afro-Atlantic traditions of solidarity, innovation, and resistance. These same forces produced the culture of mutual aid, collective improvisation, and reimagining of the commons that can be heard in early jazz.

## **5.2 Theory of the Counter-Plantation and an Overview of Gardening Literature**

*We need history, but not the way a spoiled loafer in the garden of knowledge needs it.*

- Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse of History"

Kamau Brathwaite's poem "Circles (for Melba Liston)" opens by challenging the quadrilateral geometry of the plantation. "[M]usic will never come out of your green horn in squares," he writes, "because it does not grow on cotton wool plantations."<sup>1114</sup> Rather, he hears it as "Circles" (the name of the poem). He links Liston's trombone something beyond the plantation production, "for

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<sup>1113</sup> Dave Stuart, "Kid Ory," *Jazz Information* 2, no. 9 (1940): 5–8.

<sup>1114</sup> Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "Jazz Music," *Sargasso* 1, no. 1 (1984): 1–7.

it curls like your hair around its alabama root, circles like fishwater around your children's sticks," creating a "riddim" that "explodes the prison and burns the clock." Brathwaite thus links Columbian time, prisons, and plantations to the hegemony of the "square." Inside the liberated space of the circular trombone lives a "blue lagoon," recalling the Blue Lagoon of Montego Bay, which lies at the foot of Cockpit Country, Jamaica, the site of violent antislavery upheavals that contributed to the demise of slavery on the island and the consequent establishment of self-sufficient, counterplantation ecological villages.<sup>1115</sup> Brathwaite thus hears in Liston, the brilliant jazz arranger and performer whose association with Dizzy Gillespie transformed big band jazz, a continuum spanning maroon ecologies in Jamaica to Black Alabama's material and spiritual economies both inside and outside of the cotton plantation.

While I have not found any evidence that Liston took gardening and ecology as seriously as Brathwaite did in his homage to her, several New Orleans jazz musicians gave accounts of the delight and nourishment they experienced as youth growing and harvesting self-provisioned food. Jelly Roll Morton remembered being "spoiled" by his godmother, Eulalie Echo, when she took him to pick berries at his godmother's strawberry farm in Biloxi.<sup>1116</sup> Pops Foster, who grew up on Harry MacCall's sugar plantation, remembered sneaking in the fruit orchards managed by his parents and other sugar workers: "Around the big house there was a fence, and inside there were all kinds of fruit and nut trees...They had bitter-orange trees, big black fig trees, and pecan trees. Us kids could ask to go through the gate and get the fruit if we wanted, but we'd climb the fence and steal it. If we got caught, we got a good lickin."<sup>1117</sup>

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<sup>1115</sup> Jean Besson, *Transformations of Freedom in the Land of the Maroons: Creolization in the Cockpits Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2015).

<sup>1116</sup> Phil Pastras, *Dead Man Blues: Jelly Roll Morton Way Out West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 52.

<sup>1117</sup> Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster*, location 259 (Kindle Version).

In order to trace the music within counterplantation complex, it is vital we take seriously the Black Atlantic institutions that gave it meaning and context. Casimir suggests several such institutions in post-revolutionary Haiti by which this intertwining project of revolution, group identity formation, and mastery of the environment came to be. One of the most important of these was the *lakou* land management system and the proliferation of *boug-jardins* “garden villages,” of which communal economics was a fundamental role and small markets formed an alternative to states’ visions of export agriculture.<sup>1118</sup> In Jamaica, beyond the Euclidean geometries of the plantation, Barry Higman has demonstrated that slaves were able to cultivate alternative concepts of spatial order in their provision grounds, resisting the “total imperial design on man and the land.”<sup>1119</sup> Visual studies scholar Jill Casid has described these slave gardens as “counter-colonial landscapes,” and part of a “resistance in the plantation machine.”<sup>1120</sup> From Haiti to Jamaica to Louisiana, different degrees of autonomy were measured by access to slave controlled land, where they fashioned a different geometry of existence.

My purpose here is not tell a “fairy tale version of slavery.”<sup>1121</sup> It is to acknowledge the rich anthropological literature that highlights the importance of gardens as sites of Afro-Atlantic cultural creation. James C. Scott, writing on Southeast Asian farmers, describes “crop choice as escape agriculture.” In his words, webs of vegetation and non-market production “present a nearly

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<sup>1118</sup> For more on *boug-jardins*, see Anglade Georges, *Atlas Critique d’Haïti* (Montreal: Groupe d’Études et de Recherches Critiques d’Espace & Centre de Recherches Caraïbes de l’Université de Montréal, 1982), 83.

<sup>1119</sup> B. W. Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2001), 291.

<sup>1120</sup> Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 196.

<sup>1121</sup> *Ibid.* For more skeptical views on the emancipatory potential of provision grounds, see Heather V. Vermeulen, “Thomas Thistlewood’s Libidinal Linnaean Project: Slavery, Ecology, and Knowledge Production,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 18–38; and Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana’s Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

intractable hieroglyphic to any state that may corral them,” and he argues that this very resistance to the state through crop choice comes to “represent the essential character of a people.”<sup>1122</sup> Similar ontological sovereignty through ecological stewardship was present in the Caribbean. Carney and Rosomoff argue that “It was in ‘Negro’ food plantations and in the yards around slave dwellings where the African components of the Columbian Exchange made their initial New World appearance.”<sup>1123</sup> The connection between plant-life and African diasporic identity and cultural recreation is embedded in the very word diaspora, which itself etymologically derives from sore and seed, and thus provides “an apt metaphor for the forced transplantation of peoples and plants.”<sup>1124</sup>

The metaphor of diaspora is powerful precisely because it points to the historical and material basis in the autonomous gardens where a spiritual heritage was sustained and transfigured. If these provision grounds were where African cultural-scientific knowledge first entered the New World stage, it is also where African legacies were maintained the longest through cosmovision and social organization. Not only did foodways (specific culinary traditions; i.e., *consumption*), resonate through these autonomous spaces, but also forms of communal *production* continue well into the current century. Crops such as okra, sesame, guinea squash, millet, sorghum, rice, and black-eyed peas first made their presence known in the subsistence plots that slaves created through their own initiative. Their contributions in these spaces reshaped the Atlantic world, as

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<sup>1122</sup> James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 195, 174.

<sup>1123</sup> Judith Ann Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 125.

<sup>1124</sup> Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, “Yam, Roots, and Rot: Allegories of the Provision Grounds,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 34, no. 1 (2011), 59. As Nalo Hopkinson writes: “One threat of Caribbean history is of peoples who were forced to chop away their native languages, customs, and beliefs in an attempt to make them into ciphers without memory. But language, custom and belief are growing things. Chop them up and, like yams, they just sprout whole new plants. To re-member is to reassemble the limbs of a story, to make it whole again. A sense of history gives these next few stories limbs—branches with which to grasp at and weave centuries’ worth of dis-membered deeds.” Nalo Hopkinson, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root: Caribbean Fabulist Fiction* (Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities, 2001), 1, quoted in DeLoughrey, “Yam, Roots, and Rot: Allegories of the Provision Grounds,” 62.

Thomas Jefferson noted when he celebrated the emergence of sesame, commenting that it was the slaves “who alone have hitherto cultivated it in the Carolinas & Georgia.”<sup>1125</sup> Gardens in Louisiana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba served as dynamic spaces of cultural resistance and the agency of the enslaved. On the Isle de France, for instance, Dorit Brixus argues that “[e]nslaved persons’ continuous struggle to remake their lives by employing plant knowledge” was a decidedly political act, creating a psychological and social space whereby “slave knowledge shaped, enriched, and initiated plant practices conducted in the colony,”<sup>1126</sup> contributing, ironically, to the nutritional enrichment of all in ways that planters were unable to provide.

These gardens, operating outside of the capitalist world-system, created not only foodways between Africa and the Americas but also practices that embedded language, spiritualities, creation myths, and alternative non-capitalist ways of relating to the land. These new practices were informed by African roots but were given new meanings along diasporic routes. In many ways, as the discussion below will illustrate, Afrodiasporic agricultural systems overlapped with the concept of “Indigenous foodways,” which Quechua scholar Mariaelena Huambachano describes as “the distinctive ways of growing, preparing, storing, and sharing foods such as edible plants, food crops, and animals by Indigenous peoples within a geographic area, and the way they preserve such foodways through cultural principles such as respect, reciprocity, and biological sensibility.”<sup>1127</sup> Huambachano makes it clear that these systems are not frozen in place, but take on specific meaning in response to capitalist modernity: “Indigenous foodways are the opposite of

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<sup>1125</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Anne Cary Randolph, March 22, 1808, in Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson’s Garden Book*, ed. Edwin Morris Betts (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 368.

<sup>1126</sup> Dorit Brixus, “From Ethnobotany to Emancipation: Slaves, Plant Knowledge, and Gardens on Eighteenth-Century Isle de France,” *History of Science*, no. Journal Article (2019): 5.

<sup>1127</sup> Mariaelena Huambachano, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Foodways in the Andes of Peru,” *Review of International American Studies* 12, no. 1 (2019), 90.

mechanized industrial agricultural systems.”<sup>1128</sup> Many indigenous groups continue to trace cultural and genealogical descent through sacred animals and plants: for Pacific Northwest tribes the wild salmon holds cultural and spiritual value; for Native Hawaiian/Kanako Maoli, taro root is considered an ancestor; for the Yaqui people of Sonora Mexico, descent is traced through the *Bobok* toad (or *bufa alavarius*).<sup>1129</sup> This metaphysic, which considers crops and fauna as siblings or as parents, proliferates across indigenous cosmologies.

Do African diasporas have parallel connections to land, identity, and cosmology? One striking thread which attests to this idea is how yams have taken similar meanings in Afro-Caribbean culture and literature. In Erna Brodber’s *The Rainmaker’s Mistake*, a novel set in Jamaica’s transition from slavery to freedom, history, memory, and liberation are embedded in the metaphor and materiality of yams. The text’s main characters, we are told by the narrator, are grown from “brown yams,” who become “Black people” who are “young and old, big and small, male and female, brothers and sisters, children of one father dug from an everlasting underground source.”<sup>1130</sup> An Afrofuturist text that plays with time, myth, and modernity, Brodber reveals this was “an oft-told tale”<sup>1131</sup> in Jamaica, pointing to an Afro-Caribbean hermeneutics that speaks of descent from sacred crops.

Brodber is not the only writer or poet to speak on the significance of yams to Black ontologies. Kamau Brathwaite has suggested that yams, as tubers brought by West Africans to Jamaica, are part of a web of “underground resources,” a “secret-name, soul-source, connected

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<sup>1128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1129</sup> Anahí Ochoa, “Environmental Justice and Psychedelic Therapy: Yaqui Water Rights Activism and Toad Exploitation in the Sonoran Desert.” Paper delivered at the Multispecies Justice, Multispecies Worlds Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

<sup>1130</sup> Erna Brodber, *The Rainmaker’s Mistake* (London: New Beacon Books, 2007), 2.

<sup>1131</sup> Kelly Baker Josephs, “Beyond Geography, Past Time: Afrofuturism, *The Rainmaker’s Mistake*, and Caribbean Studies,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 17, no. 2 (2013), 127.

with nyam (eat), yam (root food), nyame (name of god),”<sup>1132</sup> “plant his yam and with it nyame:onyame:yam of god. A little piece of Africa on mourning ground.” Nyam is a word that means “to eat” in several Niger-Congo languages and was heard in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Louisiana creole. Brathwaite’s decision to connect these words links spirituality, memory, and planting provisional food on one’s own terms, all as an expression of a rhizomatic linguistics in which yam reflects “the cultural distinction between the provision grounds and the plantation.”<sup>1133</sup>

Amongst Black American writers, Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man* positions both yams and Black musical conceptions as forms of cultural recuperation and Black self-determination against the white gaze and the European geometry of modernity. The narrator experiences “an intense feeling of freedom,” upon eating the yam, and elaborates that “I no longer had to worry about who saw me or what was proper. To hell with all that, and as sweet as the yam actually was, it became like nectar with the thought.” He then explains to the vendor, “They’re my birthmark...I yam what I am!”<sup>1134</sup> Ellison employs the yam as both the allegory and materiality of Black self-knowledge, writing that it challenged “all that spiral business, that progress goo,” and revealed the “lie that success was a rising *upward*. What a crummy lie they kept us dominated by. Not only could you travel upward toward success but you could travel downward as well.”<sup>1135</sup> Yams served a meaning as deep to Black identity and liberation as music: Ellison scholar John Wright has argued that “Music...was for Ellison...that expressive penetration into ultimate reality whose forms, patterns of evolution, traditions, and metamorphoses supplied the clues not only to the souls

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<sup>1132</sup> Kamau Brathwaite, *Mother Poem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121.

<sup>1133</sup> Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, “Yam, Roots, and Rot: Allegories of the Provision Grounds,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 34, no. 1 (2011), 61.

<sup>1134</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 264-266.

<sup>1135</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 498-499.

of black folk but to the rhythms and style and soul of modern civilization.”<sup>1136</sup> But it seems that the foodways of yams, and the forms of *terra*-identity and communal agriculture they pointed to, lay a similar foundation in Ellison’s narrator’s assault on Western modernity and its geometry of progress. The consistency between yams of the provisional grounds, which did not seek “progress” in terms of raw productivism to seek profit, connects to the blues’ and jazz’s own non-teleological, cyclical harmonic language, which pointed “up” and “down” simultaneously (such in the false tonic resolution in second four measures of a standard blues).

The interaction between gardening and music making must be understood in the nature of the production itself. These spaces across the plantation belt were both schools of pan-African plant knowledge and application, and where a new type of production was being forged, one that foregrounded both a social relation and ecological relation. In fact, alternative forms of production produced new social relations (or emphasized African pre-capitalist ones).<sup>1137</sup> New production techniques such as the use of the long-handled iron hoe, which was prevalent in African agricultural systems, was used in these gardens and eventually in plantation agriculture as well. Unlike the use of horse and plow, enslaved communities preferred to use the hoe to cultivate the soil in groups. When Moravian missionary C.G.A. Oldendrop complained that the labor of twenty slaves was needed to do the work of “one man and boy with two horses,” Oldendrop thought slaves were merely ignorant of his more efficient techniques, but transplanted Africans opposed the cult of efficiency with their own modes of production and distinct conceptions of humanity, a battle between, for Carney and Rosomoff, “the commodity fields of the plantation” and the “shadow

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<sup>1136</sup> John S. Wright, “The Conscious Hero and the Rites of Man: Ellison’s War,” ed. Robert O’Meally (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 180.

<sup>1137</sup> For a discussion of alternative social projects and slaver resistance 18<sup>th</sup> century area within the vicinity of the Dahomean Empire, see James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011), Chapter 1.

world of [Black] cultivation.”<sup>1138</sup> The former employed a language that connected time, commerce and commodification, especially present in the uniquely English phrase that time is something that is “spent.”

### 5.3 The Death World of Sugar and the Life World of Gardens

A sardonic and startling paradox lies at the core of the plantation complex: the more fertile the land and the richer the soil, the less food was grown and the higher the rate of malnourishment. Greater yields of white profits and Black death went hand in hand, with the perceived usefulness of soil as its vector. Food historian Sam Hilliard puts it mildly: While “the southern plantation had no inherent characteristics that necessarily inhibited food production,” there nonetheless exists “abundant evidence that food shortages did occur and that agriculturists in some areas made no real effort to provide foodstuffs enough for their own use [*sic*].”<sup>1139</sup> The “inherent characteristic” was, of course, the pursuit of profit, and it was slaves, not masters, who suffered the most during collapses in prices or a bad harvest.

Lacking a moral compass with regards to their property, perceptive planters nonetheless realized the profound illogic within monocultural crop production. In 1842, South Carolina’s State Agricultural surveyor Edmund Ruffin denounced the “barbarous usage” of soil by growing cotton on the same land every year, leading to widespread depletion of soil.<sup>1140</sup> This ecological rift was

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<sup>1138</sup> Judith Ann Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 125.

<sup>1139</sup> Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (University of Georgia Press, 1972), 21-23.

<sup>1140</sup> Ruffin, *Private Diary*, 107, 177; Drew Gilpin Faust, “The Rhetoric and Ritual of Agriculture in Antebellum South Carolina,” *The Journal of Southern History* 45, no. 4 (1979): 541–68.

acutely felt on Louisiana's sugar plantations: "The great curse of this country is that we are all planters and no farmers to wind up the crops" remarked Kenneth Clark in 1855;<sup>1141</sup> while a planter's journal in 1850 urged "diversification" and wrote: "This sugar mania should give place to a little interest in other things on a plantation besides sugar cane."<sup>1142</sup> But "competitive pressures," or rather, addiction to capital accumulation, prevented even self-interest from prevailing. According to a visitor from New York in 1853, one "may search the world over to find the science of such money-making reduced to such perfection, and become of such all-engrossing influence, as in New Orleans."<sup>1143</sup> New England schoolmaster Timothy Flint, writing in 1826, captured what was already a widely-known truism of Louisiana: "Throughout this country, the region of plantations is the region of wealth and sickness, and of the pine woods, of health and poverty."<sup>1144</sup>

Louisiana's plantation black belt was a particularly brutal setting for the confrontation between the plantocracy, the demands of commodity production, the laws of nature, and the well-being of Black bodies. In 1910, the United States census noted that the back and brown clay known as alluvial soil made up one-third of Louisiana's land, one of the highest proportions in the world, much of it located in what was called the sugar bowl of the delta, which extended a thirty miles width from the Mississippi river, seventy miles beyond the coast to the southeast.<sup>1145</sup> Soil richness was a harbinger of Black death and overwork. Because oftentimes "river bottoms" were actually lower than rivers, "great earthworks" needed to be constructed such as levees ten to thirty feet in

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<sup>1141</sup> Kenneth Clark to Lewis Thompson, 1855, Lewis Thompson Papers; quoted in Joseph Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), 54.

<sup>1142</sup> Franklin *Planters' Banner*, June 20, 1850.

<sup>1143</sup> A. O. Hall, *The Manhattaner in New Orleans* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1852), 91-95.

<sup>1144</sup> Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years, Passed in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi*, 2nd ed. (1826; New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), 329.

<sup>1145</sup> *U.S. Census*, 1910.

height to prevent flooding. Since planters (and primarily their slave labor force) were responsible for creating and maintaining these levees, “none but the wealthy could afford to cultivate, much less to buy, these river bottoms.”<sup>1146</sup>

The scale at which these monocultural commodity laboratories developed can scarcely be understated, and Louisiana was their 19<sup>th</sup>-century capital. Filling the void left by the Haitian Revolution, Louisiana quickly overtook Saint-Domingue’s previous sugar output and challenged the rest of the Caribbean for supremacy. As the agricultural journal *De Bow’s Review* commented in 1853, “there are but few estates either in Mexico, Cuba, or any of the West India Islands which equal...the average plantations in Louisiana.”<sup>1147</sup> One British observer in the sugar estates south of Baton Rouge called the view “one of the most striking of its kind in the world. If an English agriculturist could see six thousand acres of the finest land in one field, unbroken by hedge or boundary, and covered with the most magnificent crops of...sprouting sugarcane...he would surely doubt his senses.”<sup>1148</sup> What was experienced as utopia for this British traveler was an ecological and humanitarian catastrophe for Black and native peoples. The African American traveler Nancy Prince, approaching the Crescent City from the Mississippi River in 1853, chose not to disembark when she was overcome by the sight of “poor slaves, who were laboring and toiling, on either side [of the Mississippi river], as far as could be seen with a glass.”<sup>1149</sup> She decided to stay in her ship instead of entering this “historic hell.”<sup>1150</sup>

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<sup>1146</sup> Roger W. Shuggs, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana*, 2nd ed. (1939; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 5.

<sup>1147</sup> *De Bow’s Review* 15 (Dec. 1853), 647-48.

<sup>1148</sup> William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 2 vols. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863), vol. 1, 388.

<sup>1149</sup> Nancy Prince, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince, Written by Herself*, reprinted in *Collected Black Women’s Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1853; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

<sup>1150</sup> Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery’s Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

As Prince's observations indicate, these conditions were not only capital-intensive but death-intensive. In 1833, British military officer Thomas Hamilton noted that "The cultivation of sugar in Louisiana is carried on at an enormous expense of human life. Planters must buy to keep up their stock, and this supply principally comes from Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina."<sup>1151</sup> Unlike cotton plantations, sugar regions saw not increase but natural decrease of the slave population.<sup>1152</sup> Planters of sugar in Louisiana thus shared with their Saint-Domingue sugar-producing predecessors "a genocidal state of affairs maintained by an astounding rate of slave consumption." As demonstrated in this dissertation's introduction, sugar production as a technology and several core sugar producing families were byproducts of Haitian immigration.<sup>1153</sup> As Trevor Burnard wrote about Jamaican sugar planters, "few groups in human history have been more interested in profit seeking...and less concerned about the morality with which they treated the human capital."<sup>1154</sup> One Barbados planter marveled at cane's destructivity, with language that borders the erotic. "[I]t was a strong and lusty Plant, and so vigorous, as where it grew, to forbid all Weeds to grow very near it; so thirstily it sucked the Earth for nourishment, to maintain its own health and gallantry."<sup>1155</sup> The plant was the perfect metaphor for the extractivist European project.

If Louisianan sugar growers shared with Atlantic plantocracies a worldview that accepted murder through overwork, what they did not share with their Caribbean counterparts was a

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<sup>1151</sup> Captain Thomas Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1833), 2:229-230; quoted in Roderick A. McDonald, "Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993),

<sup>1152</sup> Richard Follett, "Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters," *Journal of Family History* 28, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 510-39.

<sup>1153</sup> Doris Lorraine Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean*, Book, Whole (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 240.

<sup>1154</sup> Trevor Burnard, "Toiling in the Fields: Valuing Female Slaves in Jamaica, 1674-1788," in *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, ed. Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 3

<sup>1155</sup> Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1657; Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 2011), 157.

growing season or an ideal climate. Sugarcane was simply not meant to be grown in Louisiana. “Sugar cane, of course, is at best an exotic plant in the United States,” writes Shuggs, and notes that “a frostless growing season of 250 days could not compare with the full year of Cuba and other tropical countries.”<sup>1156</sup> “Thoroughly disgusted with everything connected with sugar,” wrote a Rapides Parish planter in an 1852 letter after losing crop due to an early frost. “This is one of the incidents of this climate by which a man is foiled in making any fair calculation on planting...in my opinion [it] is the last spot that any man should hold land or risk sugar proper.”<sup>1157</sup> The recipient of this letter, absentee plantation owner Lewis Thompson, was later urged to buy a sugar plantation for his son. He refused, explaining it was for his son’s good: “[Such a gift] does not strike me as being the most agreeable to the owner who wishes to enjoy himself in a more quiet manner.”<sup>1158</sup>

As McDonald comments, “The cultivation of sugar was a race against time. Sugarcane cannot withstand the frosts that occur annually in Louisiana. Consequently, the sugarcane harvest came nine or ten months after the date of planting, compared to the fourteen to eighteen months necessary for full maturation.”<sup>1159</sup> But if planters might lose their crop, workers could lose their lives in the battle against nature. The equation of monastic time, the reduction of time to productivity and profitability, made its brutality felt with a particular insistence in Louisiana’s sugar fields: “[C]rucial to the determination of when to start the harvest were the planters’ estimate both of the speed with which the crop could be cut and processed, and the date of the first killing frost. The work routine of Louisiana sugar plantation slaves reflected the intensity of the sugar

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<sup>1156</sup> Shuggs, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana*, 14; see also Rupert B. Vance, *Human Geography of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 219-220.

<sup>1157</sup> K. M. Clark to Lewis Thompson, December 1853, quoted in J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), 18.

<sup>1158</sup> Lewis Thompson papers, 1858; quoted Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 52.

<sup>1159</sup> Roderick A. McDonald, “Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations,” in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 276.

crop's cycle."<sup>1160</sup> These work routines would not bend to the nutritional needs of enslaved people: as Woodville K. Marshall assessed for the Windward Islands, "planters do not intend for their production schedule to be damaged by any inconvenient dispersal of the labor force," even if this risked the destruction of their human property to starvation.<sup>1161</sup> Planters obsessed over their crops at the expense of their human property, even when it was not in their self-interest to do so. One planter complained: "We very often find planters comparing notes and making suggestions as to the most profitable modes of tilling the soil...but how seldom do we find men comparing notes as to their mode of feeding, clothing, nursing, working, and taking care of those human beings intrusted [*sic*] to our charge[?]"<sup>1162</sup>

What was an economic and logistical challenge for planters was thus experienced as genocide through overwork and starvation by generation after generation of enslaved migrant laborers. Slaves planting, cutting, and grinding sugarcane had a higher-than-average mortality rate due to, according to B.W. Higman, the "extreme hours of heavy labor and the brutality of [sugar's] gang-driven system."<sup>1163</sup> Beyond the cane itself, the creation of ditches and the logging of Cyprus in swamps despite threat of death by snakes or mosquitos made for, in the words of Paquette, "a world in which each day's tasks claimed life by the inch."<sup>1164</sup> It was grinding season, beginning in mid-October or early November and lasting the following six to ten weeks, when these agricultural

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<sup>1160</sup> Roderick A. McDonald, "Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 276.

<sup>1161</sup> Woodville K. Marshall, "Provision Ground and Plantation Labor in Four Windward Islands: Competition for Resources During Slavery," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 209.

<sup>1162</sup> A Mississippi Planter, "Management of Negroes upon Southern Estates," *DeBow's Review* 10, no. 6 (June 1851): 622.

<sup>1163</sup> B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 374.

<sup>1164</sup> Robert L. Paquette, "'A Horde of Brigands?' The Great Louisiana Slave Revolt of 1811 Reconsidered," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 35, no. 1 (2009): 81.

factories operated nearly twenty four hours a day as slaves worked incessantly to execute the impossible. Solomon Northup recalled working “without intermission” to keep pace with the sugar mills,<sup>1165</sup> and Thomas Hamilton observed that “the fatigue is so great that nothing but the severest application of the lash can stimulate the human frame to endure it.”<sup>1166</sup> One commentator claimed that being assigned the grinding season was “as equivalent to a death warrant.”<sup>1167</sup> Pregnancies during these periods often resulted in miscarriages;<sup>1168</sup> in the instances when childbirth did occur, it could prove fatal for the mother. The former slave Edward De Bieuw of Lafourche Parish recalled that “My ma died ’bout three hours after I was born,” and explained: “He [my dad] said ma was hoein.’ She told the driver she was sick; he told her to just hoe right-on. Soon, I was born, and my ma die[d] a few minutes after dey brung her to the house.” Many children were born stunted.<sup>1169</sup> After emancipation, similar conditions on sugar plantations ensured that life was still fragile, revealing that the logic of sugar continued to claim lives. Kid Ory recalled of his mom’s passing: “To this day, I have never learned what caused her illness or her death. I don’t think it could have been from some old age ill because she wasn’t that old.”<sup>1170</sup> They lived, and worked, on a sugar plantation.

It is not, of course, that slaveowners did not try to preserve their human capital when they fell ill. During the antebellum period, the enslaved people of Oakley, when sick, were usually seen

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<sup>1165</sup> Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841* (Auburn, NY: Applewood Books, 1853), 161, 248-249.

<sup>1166</sup> Quoted in John S. Kendall, “New Orleans’ Peculiar Institution,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 23 (1940): 874.

<sup>1167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1168</sup> Richard Follett, “Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters,” *Journal of Family History* 28, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 510–39.

<sup>1169</sup> Rickie Solinger, “Racializing the Nation: From the Declaration of Independence to the Emancipation Proclamation,” in *The Reproductive Rights Reader: Law, Medicine, and the Construction of Motherhood*, ed. Nancy Ehrenreich (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 265.

<sup>1170</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), Chapter 3.

by a doctor.<sup>1171</sup> A white emigrant from Saint-Domingue/Haiti, themselves long trained in slave overwork, mainstreamed the cesarean section in United States medical practices by experimenting on Louisiana slave women with malformed pelvises due to vitamin D deficiency, with mixed results.<sup>1172</sup> These treatments were often resisted; as Byrd and Clayton write, “For many accounts neither African Americans [nor] South American Africans, nor Caribbean Africans fully accepted White Western-trained physicians unless they were coerced.”<sup>1173</sup> As we will see, Afro-Louisianans developed their own medicine, embedded in religious systems such as Vodou, and with several treatments in common with their Haitian counterparts.<sup>1174</sup> But in many cases, slaveowners found it was more lucrative to work slaves to death and replace them afterwards with the surplus they generated. Planters did not have to travel very far to replenish their labor force. In 1931 Frederic Bancroft wrote that New Orleans hosted “the most busy and picturesque slave emporium... [it was] the modern Delos of the trade for the lower Southwest.”<sup>1175</sup> These were quasi-mythic sites, full of spectacle, and at the St. Louis Hotel’s weekly slave auction, music was provided “from a regular orchestra,” slaves were often dressed in costumes, and lighter-skinned “fancy girls” were ceremoniously sold as sex slaves.<sup>1176</sup>

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<sup>1171</sup> Eliza Prrie Bowamn Lyons, Doctors receipts, 1835-185, Oakley Collection, Audubon State Commemorative Area, St. Francisville, Louisiana; Allie Bayne Windham Webb, *Mistress of Evergreen: Rachel O’Connors Legacy of Letters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Laurie A. Wilkie, “Medicinal Teas and Patent Medicines: African-American Women’s Consumer Choices and Ethnomedical Traditions at a Louisiana Plantation,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 15, no. 2 (1996): 119–31.

<sup>1172</sup> Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 165.

<sup>1173</sup> W. Michael Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, *An American Health Dilemma: A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race: Beginnings to 1900* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 183–84)

<sup>1174</sup> Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 73-77.

<sup>1175</sup> Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (1931; Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1996), 312. Delos, the mythical birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, was a large commercial center in the Aegean where goods, including slaves, were sold.

<sup>1176</sup> Joseph Roach, “Slave Spectacles and Tragic Octoroons: A Cultural Genealogy of Ante-bellum Performance,” *Theatre Survey* 33, no. 2 (November 1992): 171. See also Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 91.

The unforgiving rhythm of ecology, time, and planter quest for profits at all cost placed enormous burdens on the labor force. But Louisiana's poor climate for growing sugar did not stop the expansion of its economy or the growth of its slave population: from 1824 to 1861, cane sugar emerged as southern Louisiana's principal cash crop, and the slave population of the sugar region rose dramatically from 20,000 to 125,000.<sup>1177</sup> Louisiana's sugar parishes thus held a special reputation for approaching the most hellish conditions in the slave south. Abolitionist Frances Trollope claimed that "to be sent south and sold [was] the dread of all the slaves north of Louisiana."<sup>1178</sup> Travelogue E.S. Abdy overheard planters threatening to send their misbehaving slaves "down river to Louisiana" in the early 1830s in an attempt to enforce labor discipline.<sup>1179</sup>

Enslaved people were thus entrapped in one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's most brutal amalgamations of climate, capital, and horrific violence. How did they respond? I argue that Louisiana's enslaved (and then freedpeoples in postbellum Louisiana) developed a particularly powerful counter-plantation form of culture and ideology, which they transmitted within their gardens, their work slowdowns, and through their music. They knew the system they were operating in was both wrong and profoundly illogical. Their knowledge was marked in their

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<sup>1177</sup> J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South* (Lexington, Ky: Greenwood Pub Group, 1953), 28-30, 60. Thus, as with Cuba where both slaves and sugar production expanded exponentially, the Haitian Revolution profoundly altered Louisiana's political economy as well. It may not come as a surprise that sugar deeply tied these three regions together, as not only a technology of production but as a site of a particular organization of material and cultural resistance, found in the alternative economies developed by plantation dissidents.

<sup>1178</sup> Frances Milton Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. Pamela Neville-Singleton (New York: Penguin Classics, 1832), 246; quoted in Roderick A. McDonald, "Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 275.

<sup>1179</sup> E. S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America: From April, 1833, to October, 1834*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1835), 3:103-4; quoted in Roderick A. McDonald, "Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 275.

bodies, their human ecologies: “My arm got caught in dat machine an’ tore it sompin’ awful. Durin’ slavery de white folks didn’ treat de n-----s right, an’ de n-----s star getting’ tired of it.”<sup>1180</sup>

These problems were not localized to the South. Nineteenth-century observers were keenly perceptive of the loss of soil fertility and the devastating geo-social changes caused by the plantation system. Karl Marx noted that “Capitalist production...disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing...All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil.”<sup>1181</sup> Frank Law Olmstead similarly complained that Virginia slaveowners profited by “transmuting the soil of the country into tobacco—which was sent to England to purchase luxuries for its masters—and into bread for the bare support of its inhabitants, without making any return [to the soil].”<sup>1182</sup> Diminishing returns and ecological collapse ravished the South, even as planter profits thrived; as Eugene Genovese noted in *The Political Economy of Slavery*, “The South’s inability to combat soil exhaustion effectively proved one of the most serious economic features of its general crisis.”<sup>1183</sup> But while nineteenth-century philosophers and scientists perceived the contours of this crisis, it was Caribbean slaves who provided an alternative, a subject to which we now turn.<sup>1184</sup>

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<sup>1180</sup> Charles Grandy in Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 115. Grandy is actually describing a cotton gin, but such accidents were equally, if not more, common on sugar plantations.

<sup>1181</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 637-38. As Foster and Clark have argued, “In effect, the slave colonies were indirectly exporting their soil via cotton fiber [and sugar] to England.” John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, *The Robbery of Nature: Capitalism and the Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), 31.

<sup>1182</sup> Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, vol. 1, 304.

<sup>1183</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (Wesleyan, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 85-88.

<sup>1184</sup> Among scientists, see Justus von Liebig, *Letters on Modern Agriculture* (London: Walton and Maberly, 1859), 175-78, 183, 220; Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 162; John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 149–63. See also Brett Clark, Daniel Auberbach, and Karen Xuan Zhang, “The Du Bois Nexus: Intersectionality, Political Economy, and Environmental Injustice in the Peruvian Guano Trade in the 1800s,” in *Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action*, ed. Leslie King and Deborah McCarthy Auriffeille (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 113–28.

## 5.4 Mapping Garden Values onto Music: Work Song as a Struggle Over Time

### 5.4.1 The “Counter Work” Song

*Dat little gal was borned rich an free.  
She's de sap from out a sugah tree;  
But you are jes as sweet to me;  
My little colored chile.*

- Katie Sutton, “Three Slave Lullabies”<sup>1185</sup>

In opposition to the death-economy of the plantation, gardening spaces where new futures were imagined, born, and regrown—where, perhaps most viscerally, Black folks were able to articulate anticapitalist aspects of Black expressive culture: “A critique of productivism: work, the labor process and the division of labor under capitalism,” “A critique of the state revolving around a plea for the dissociation of law from domination,” and “A passionate belief in the importance of history and historical process”<sup>1186</sup> are what Gilroy identifies as the three central critiques offered by Black music. Black gardening complexes also manifested these critiques of plantation capitalism, and the interface between agro-botanical labor and Black music is taken up here.

There is an overwhelming number of examples of work song as a space of collective critique and phenomenology, but most scholars have tended to highlight the performance of these songs while performing plantation labor and not when on slaves’ provision grounds.<sup>1187</sup> The latter

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<sup>1185</sup> Judith Tick and Melissa J. de Graaf, “Three Slave Lullabies,” The Feminist Sexual Ethics Project of Brandeis University, accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.brandeis.edu/projects/fse/slavery/lullabies/three-lullabies.html>.

<sup>1186</sup> Paul Gilroy, *“There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack”: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 199.

<sup>1187</sup> Susan Mathew, “African Music: A Sound of Dissent,” *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* 7, no. 2 (2019): 35–37; Gale P. Jackson, “‘Rosy, Possum, Morning Star: African American Women’s Work and Play Songs’: An Excerpt From Put Your Hands on Your Hips and Act Like a Woman: Song, Dance, Black History,

spaces were some of the most striking on the whole plantation, even to white nineteenth century observers. Walking through the “negro village” on Westmoreland estate, Jamaica, in 1816, Matthew Lewis commented that the divisions between home, garden, and personal property was blurred by a botanical abundance: “[T]he whole village is intersected by lands, bordered with all kinds of sweet-smelling and flowering plants.”<sup>1188</sup> The esteemed naturalist Philip Gosse marveled at the litany of trees in these slave gardens—papaw, coconut, shaddock, lime, star-apple, mango, breadfruit—and an undergrowth that included “the lively tender green of the Plantains and bananas planted in regular avenues, the light tracery of Yams, the Chochos, the Melons and Gourds, the numerous sorts of Peas, and other climbers, among which several species of Passion-flower throw their elegant foliage...these are the originary, might I say universal, features of a Jamaican Negro-garden.”<sup>1189</sup>

Part of their beauty lay in their disruption of the plantation’s quadral geometry. The plantation was marked by straight, neatly ordered lines demarcating monocultural grids; in contrast, noted the white Jamaican attorney James Simpson in 1832, it was “impossible” to “make any survey of the land by the negroes, and they generally cultivate it in a straggling way.”<sup>1190</sup> These “straggling” landscapes were both fiscally and geometrically illegible to Euro-American planters, and they did not conform to its gardening ideal. In 1844, the influential landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing opined that “the mind can only attend with pleasure and satisfaction, to one object, or one composite sensation, at the same time,” and therefore concluded that “there is

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and Poetics in Performance,” *Journal of Black Studies* 46, no. 8 (November 2015): 773–796; Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963), Chapter 5; Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 161-167.

<sup>1188</sup> Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (London: John Murray, 1834), 85; quoted in Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed*, 262. (The next two citations also appear in the same volume by Higman.)

<sup>1189</sup> D.B. Stewart, ed., *Gosse’s Jamaica 1844-45* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica Publications, 1984).

<sup>1190</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

something unpleasing in the introduction of fruit trees among elegant ornamental trees.”<sup>1191</sup> Yet mixtures of fruit trees and ornamental trees, not to mention dozens of other plant species, were exactly what was present in the “negro-gardens” that Matthew Lewis encountered. This intercropped sublime was an important manifestation of the “social, linguistic, epistemological, and psychological labor”<sup>1192</sup> slaves performed to execute their vision of social and eco-social harmony.

Such practices are broadly resonant with other nineteenth century Afro-Atlantic communitarian activities. In *Flash of the Spirit*, by Robert Farris Thompson, and in *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*, by members of the Georgia Writers’ Project of the WPA (1940), the Senegambian practice that Thompson refers to as “randomizing the flow of paths” is presented as a means to slow the movement of evil.<sup>1193</sup> This belief that evil travels in straight lines “promoted an African American response in the form of superstitions,” especially manifest in, according to Tobin and Dobard, in “Quilts, their decoration, their construction techniques, and their final placement on actual graves [which] all reflect the concern of keeping unwanted evil and/or spirits away.”<sup>1194</sup> Straight lines became more evil as the oppressive geometry of plantations made their weight felt. “[T]he best [way to plant],” explained Richard Ligon, “is by digging a small trench of six inches broad, and as much deep, in a straight line, the whole length of the land you mean to plant...and so continue them the whole length of the trench, to the land’s end.”<sup>1195</sup> Robert Farris Thompson argues that “The discretionary

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<sup>1191</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening...* (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), 80-81.

<sup>1192</sup> Kevin Meehan, *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 29.

<sup>1193</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), 222; Georgia Writers’ Project, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1940).

<sup>1194</sup> Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 49.

<sup>1195</sup> Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 157,

irregularities of design” indicate “resistance to the closure of the Western technocratic way,” and it is difficult to imagine a more dramatic enclosure than plantations.<sup>1196</sup> The straight lines of plantation boundaries, and the endless fields of upright cane, stood as geoengineered monuments to Afrodiasporic commodification, and the uncanny uniformity that marked their environs was not lost on their enslaved workforce.

Slave gardens manifested this randomized flow, and its epistemological grammar reinforced communitarian trends in Black music. The “impossible” incongruity of slave gardens and intercropping were reflected in the seemingly constant hemiolas of Black Atlantic music, which thrives on the experience of a multiple time signatures weaving on and out simultaneously.<sup>1197</sup> These sonic and rhythmic practices generated responses of wonderment and hostility from white observers. “So strangely they vary their time, as ‘tis a pleasure to the most curious ears” remembered one otherwise racist Barbados slaveowner,<sup>1198</sup> while one Benjamin Latrobe declared about Congo Square dances: “I have never seen anything more brutally savage.”<sup>1199</sup>

Music did not only metaphorically map onto gardening practice. Across the Caribbean, communal sound announced the return to these commons from the plantation enclosure. In Jamaica, the conch shell signaled to slaves when their shift was done and they may return to their provision grounds, or what they called the “shellblow grounds.”<sup>1200</sup> Conch shells were also used

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<sup>1196</sup> Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 221-22; Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 15.

<sup>1197</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, “Black Music in the Circum-Caribbean,” *American Music* 17, no. 1 (1999): 1–38; Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>1198</sup> Richard Ligon and Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire, and War in the West Indies* (New York: Walker & Co, 2011)

<sup>1199</sup> Quoted in Dubois, *The Banjo*, 114. *Daily Picayune*, October 12, 1879.

<sup>1200</sup> Joseph Struge and Thomas Harvey, *The West Indies in 1837* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1838), 224-25; Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed*, 263.

in urban markets where foodstuffs produced in provision grounds were traded or sold, “at the out-ports, the conche-shell and negro song are heard for miles up the stream” explained one British military officer.<sup>1201</sup> Not coincidentally, when plantations were burnt *en masse* in the winter of 1831-32 near Montego Bay, planters were terrified at the sudden effectiveness of these conch shells, not to announce their scheduled shifts, but to coordinate collective arson of biblical proportions. “The conch shell was heard to blow in every quarter, accompanied by huzzas and shouts from the infatuated slaves”<sup>1202</sup> reported a traumatized witness, while another witnessed “whole fields, each perhaps contained twenty, third, forty acres or upwards were thus ignited,”<sup>1203</sup> and “the sky became a sheet of flame, as if the whole country had become a vast furnace.”<sup>1204</sup> One Reverend stayed awake all night, terrified at the sound of the conch shells and fearing for his life. The auralty of the conch shell thus contained not only the utopian vision of the provision grounds, but also the will to eliminate the demonic grounds of the plantation complex. This resonant body martialled collective resistance in the largest slave revolt in Jamaican history.<sup>1205</sup> A genre of songs that reference cane-burning can be understood as euphoric visions, giving voice to a collective fantasy. Black sugar workers tending their provision grounds were overheard lamenting the ecological destruction in “Lousy Anna (Louisiana): “Old debble, Lousy Anna [Louisiana] / Dar scarecrow for poor nigger/ Where de sugar-cane grow to pine-tree /And de pine-tree turn to sugar.”<sup>1206</sup> And another tune sung by enslaved Afro-Creole sugar workers depicted a destitute planter suffering the effects of an arson: “Toutes mes cann’ sont brulées, Et je suit ruiné” (All my

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<sup>1201</sup> Bernard Martin Senior, *Jamaica, as It Was, as It Is, and as It May Be* (London: T. Hurst, 1835), 121.

<sup>1202</sup> Mathieson, *British Slavery and Its Abolition*, 212, quoted in Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 111.

<sup>1203</sup> Senior, *Jamaica as it Was*, 179, quoted in Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 112.

<sup>1204</sup> Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies*, 55, quoted in Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 112.

<sup>1205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1206</sup> Roderick A. McDonald, “Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations,” in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 278.

cane is burned, and I am ruined).<sup>1207</sup> The auralty of the counter-plantation simulated the confrontation with the plantation, and such songs and sounds were often created off-stage, in the provision grounds.

Songs that accompanied plantation labor did, of course, form an overwhelming part of Afro-Caribbean repertoire. A Saint-Domingue sugar planter, writing in 1838 from Paris after the Revolution unturned his life, remembered the forms of gossip and communication built into work songs:

A Negro singer faced a line of field slaves and sang songs that he improvised on the spot; the slaves answered in a chorus, and many with excellent pitch. The singer mixed in jokes, and all the line broke out laughing without stopping work. When I went to see them, I was an inexhaustible source of songs, in which they mixed praise and requests for things they wanted. They sang about those known as good masters, and didn't spare the reputation of those who passed for too severe. They had a refrain, repeated on all the plantations: "Happy as a slave on Galliffet."<sup>1208</sup>

Other songs were no so positive. The prominent British abolitionist Granville Sharp recorded a song witnessed by the observer of Barbadian slave culture, William Dickson, in 1785-86. By this period, sugar had been the dominant plantation crop of Barbados for a century, and an Antiguan planter Samuel Martin noted that "the refined Barbados managers exceed all our islanders" in demanding of their slaves the most exacting and dangerous process of refining sugar by boiling the sugar at record temperatures.<sup>1209</sup> Sugar plantations developed as self-contained industrial

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<sup>1207</sup> Maud Cuney Hare, *Six Creole Folk-Songs with Original Creole and Translated English Text - Sheet Music for Voice and Piano* (Read Books, 1921), 24.

<sup>1208</sup> Comte de Vaublanc, *Souvenirs* (Paris, 1838), 1:177; David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 17.

<sup>1209</sup> Samuel Martin, *An Essay upon Plantership* (London: Samuel Clapham, 1765). See also Dwayne Scheid, "The Political Economy of Ceramic Production in Barbados: From Plantation Industry to Craft Production" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, 2015), 169.

complexes, each with its own individual labor force and a sugar works on site.<sup>1210</sup> As we have seen, work songs emerge in dialogue with the industrial, collectivized, and high human cost of sugar production.

The two verses read as:

Oh — Massa buy me, he won't killa me  
Oh, Massa buy me, he won't killa me  
Oh [be]'for he kill me, he ship me regulaw.  
[Be]'For I live with a bad Man oh la —  
[Be]'for I live with a bad Man Obudda-bo  
[Be]'For I live with a bad Man oh la —  
[Be]'for I would go to the River side Regulaw

The song contains French syllables, evidence of diasporic Haitian creolization occurring on these sites and had a call and response pattern: “A Single Negro (while at Work with the rest of the Gang) leads the Song, and the others join in chorus at the end of every verse.” The call and response, another sonic Afro-Atlanticism, is also an enactment of mutual acknowledgment both with the other and with the land.<sup>1211</sup>

Such work songs performed multiple functions. They certainly commented on the nature of work, and they also spread news and rumor about the nature of work, politics, and rebellion. They also could slow work down. One planter banned “drawling tunes” on his plantation because “their motions are almost certain to keep time with the music.”<sup>1212</sup> One African American Texan performing prison labor explained singing “kept a man from being singled out for whipping

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<sup>1210</sup> Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

<sup>1211</sup> John R. Rickford and Jerome S. Handler, “Textual Evidence on the Nature of Early Barbadian Speech, 1676-1835,” *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 9, no. 2 (January 1, 1994): 221–55; Jerome S. Handler and Charlotte J. Frisbie, “Aspects of Slave Life in Barbados: Music and Its Cultural Context,” *Caribbean Studies* 11, no. 4 (1972): 5–46.

<sup>1212</sup> “Management of Negroes,” *DeBow's Review* 10 (March 1851): 328; also discussed in Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 161.

because he worked too slowly,” and that songs were selected because “you can either slow it up or make it fast...When you’re working and the Convicts get tired and they say ‘Come on, you all, let’s rock a while,” and they get together [by slowing down the beat]...that’s the way they fool the boss.”<sup>1213</sup> This sonically mediated social solidarity provided protection from abusive overseers who punished slowdowns or individual expressions of weakness. In short, work songs during slavery allowed field gangs to slow down labor and affect plantation productivity by altering the collective pace of work by rhythm and cadence in song, and some songs explicitly announced this function.<sup>1214</sup> In 1939, Robert Duncan Bass, based in Pee Dee country, South Carolina, shared his family’s song library, which was passed down generations and generations from enslaved plantation workers. One song reproduced the coded language to coordinate work slowdown. “This old song is traditional in our family,” Bass explains in a 1931 article:

Sheep and the goats  
Going to the pasture:  
Sheep say to goats,  
“Can't you walk a little faster ?”  
Goat say to sheep,  
“I have a sore toe” –  
“Excuse me goat, I did not know.”<sup>1215</sup>

The allusion to “sheep” is a compelling metaphor for those who remained unaware of the collective action subtly intoned to slow down the rhythm of labor. Enslaved women cotton spinners on George Johnson’s plantation in Virginia, on the other hand, used song to speed up work so they make their quota and avoid threading by night: “Keep yo’ eye on de sun, See how she run, Don’t

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<sup>1213</sup> Bruce Jackson, ed., *Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 17-19.

<sup>1214</sup> Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (1963; reprint, New York: Dover, 1991), 28– 29, 85– 92, 115– 19.

<sup>1215</sup> Robert Duncan Bass, “Negro Songs from the Pedee Country,” *Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (December 1931): 418–36.

let her catch you with your work undone.” As the son of one of these spinners, Bob Ellis, explained, this song “made de women all speed up so dey could finish fo’ dark catch ‘em, ‘cause it mighty hard handlin’ dat cotton thread by fire-light.”<sup>1216</sup>

Whether by decelerating or accelerating, Black work songs made it clear that while planters held a monopoly on violence, and that their rule over time was contested. Devonya Natasha Havis writes that the “work song” should be considered “a vernacular critique of expenditure for a ‘monstrous Other’ [which] altered time and the different time altered Work...the ‘work song’ transforms time and launches a critique of work as labor.”<sup>1217</sup> Shona Jackson, similarly, has argued that the struggle between forms of labor involve a metaphysical distinction between “Pre-Columbian time” and “time as progress.”<sup>1218</sup>

Musical interactions with collective labor only intensified with emancipation. In the case of Haiti’s post-emancipation peasantry, who successfully pushed back the efforts of landholders to build back the sugar system and instead constructed society based on mass rural smallholding, institutions which mediated collective labor always placed music at their center. These labors collectives, called *combites*, have drawn significant comment from anthropologists. As Melville Herskovits notes:

The scene in a field where a large *combite* is at work is an arresting one...The *simidor*, who leads the singing as he works with the others, adds the rhythm of his song to the regular beats of the drum, thus setting the time for the strokes of the implements wielded by workers...its sound can carry far, however, and thus not only beats the time for the hoes, but notifies all concerned that the *combite* is underway.<sup>1219</sup>

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<sup>1216</sup> Bob Ellis in Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 88-89.

<sup>1217</sup> Devonya Natasha Havis, “Nimble or Not at All: The Ethico - Political Play of Indeterminacy,” 145-148.

<sup>1218</sup> Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>1219</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1964), 72.

*Combites* not only announced themselves to the wider community, but also were the sources of news and gossip where a shared political discourse took shape.<sup>1220</sup> Valerie Kauseen suggests that the *combite* was based on Yoruba antecedents, but warns that “the ideal of the small farm was no pre-lapsarian fantasy, no attempt to return to an idyllic pastoral time of a lost Africa.” Rather, the *combite* reflected how Yoruban agricultural practice become highly politicized as their practitioners were unwillingly “integrated into the New World sugar plantation system, and their utopian dreams were most certainly derived from the modern transcultural experience of enslavement and revolution.”<sup>1221</sup> The new rhythms that came to characterize these spaces were thus also marked by revolution. “Finally,” remarked Gérard Barthélémy after Haitian Revolution, “it is rhythm that will allow the group to reclaim work by imposing now, freely, his own cadence. Gone are the days when it was the commander's whip that determined the cadence to follow, twelve hours a day.”<sup>1222</sup> But even during slavery, rhythm was a site of contestation, and it was mediated by work song. Munroe surmises, “Rhythm was the motor of a model of self-sufficient labor generated by the people that operated outside the control of the state.”<sup>1223</sup> Yet, since provision grounds and gardens expanded with increased plantation production, their rhythms grew in proportion to the impositions of the plantation economy. Black communal music is a striking metaphor of the limited autonomy achieved within the demonic grounds of the plantation, as Black workers created sonic space that could sustained a resistant ontology through collective sound. It

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<sup>1220</sup> Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, (New York: Schocken, 1972), 436.

<sup>1221</sup> Valerie Kausen, *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 9.

<sup>1222</sup> “Finalement, c’est entre autres choses le rythme qui va permettre au groupe de se réappropriier le travail en imposant désormais, librement, sa propre cadence. Fini le temps où c’était le fouet du commandeur qui déterminait la cadence à suivre, douze heures par jour.” Gérard Barthélémy, *Créoles Bossales: Conflit En Haïti* (Matoury, French Guiana: Ibis Rouge Éditions, 2000), 161-162.

<sup>1223</sup> Martin Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 71.

was a song which was the shadow of plantation cultivation, and the negation of plantation capitalism.<sup>1224</sup>

#### 5.4.2 The Meanings and Parameters of Anti-Music Legislation

Perhaps most revealing of this dialectical between the needs of the plantation economy and the ambivalent role of communal music making can be seen in planter legislation on sound practice. Regulations and outright bans on Black music became increasingly frequent through expansionary periods of sugar production. In Barbados, precisely at the moment when sugar had become ascendant, a 1688 law prevented both slaves from leaving their plantation “at any time, especially Saturday-nights, Sundays, or other Holidays,” and also, predicting their usefulness in the Jamaican rebellion, fined plantation owners or managers who “shall suffer any slaves to assemble together...to beat drums, or blow horns, or shells, or to use any loud instruments.”<sup>1225</sup> Keeping both bodies and sound confined to single plantations was of utmost importance. Indeed, according to one British official, dances were not forbidden, but the law's intent was to frustrate communication among slaves from different plantations by preventing slaves from “using or keeping of Drums, Horns, or other loud Instruments, which may call together, or give sign or notice to one another, of their wicked designs and purposes.”<sup>1226</sup> It is quite striking that this exact sentence later appears fifty-six years later in article 36 of the 1740 Slave Code of South Carolina.<sup>1227</sup>

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<sup>1224</sup> For a study of bodily destruction amongst sugar-workers and a division of labor based on work-induced disabilities, see Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>1225</sup> Richard Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados from 1643, to 1762* (London: Richard Hall, 1764), 113.

<sup>1226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1227</sup> “1740 | Slave Code of South Carolina, Articles 34-37,” Duhaime.org, accessed October 29, 2020, <http://www.duhaime.org/LawMuseum/LawArticle-1501/1740-Slave-Code-of-South-Carolina-Articles-34-37.aspx>.

Between 1720 and 1740, the plantation infrastructure, and South Carolina's slave population, exploded, so much so that slaves began to outnumber whites in Charles Town and "[t]he slave quarter, standing at the center of these huge agricultural factories" became "the heart of African-American life in the countryside."<sup>1228</sup> Colonial administrators from the Carolinas and the British Caribbean clearly communicated how best to manage their evolving problem of unruly sound. Returning to Barbados, the 1820s were another expansionary period of sugar production, and on cue, clause 11 of the 1826 "Slave Consolidation Act" provided that the Governor or Commander-in-Chief could, by proclamation and for whatever reason and length of time, prohibit slave owners from allowing their slaves "to assemble together and dance," which was an obvious contingency in "the event of a threatened revolt."<sup>1229</sup>

A similar script was followed in St. Kitts: after the Union of 1707, which ended the French and British partition of the island and brought it under British rule, sugar production expanded, and English and Scottish investment grew accordingly. 1707 was the same year that the prominent Glasgow merchants William McDowall and James Milliken began developing sugar plantations in the colony, and by 1712 McDowall had secured more than 800 acres, each acre capable of producing one ton of sugar every 18 months.<sup>1230</sup> In 1711, as part of this massive wave of sugar consolidation, a law was passed that made it illegal for slaves to communicate "at a distance by beating drums or blowing horns;" the law was passed, again, in 1722.<sup>1231</sup>

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<sup>1228</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 162.

<sup>1229</sup> Jerome S. Handler and Charlotte J. Frisbie, "Aspects of Slave Life in Barbados: Music and Its Cultural Context," *Caribbean Studies* 11, no. 4 (1972): 9.

<sup>1230</sup> Stuart M. Nisbet, "Early Glasgow Sugar Plantations in the Caribbean," *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 31, no. 1/2 (2009): 121.

<sup>1231</sup> Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 156; Colin A. Palmer, "Africa in the Making of the Caribbean: The Formative Years," in *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society*, ed. Brian L. Moore et al. (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 48.

Cuba experienced its sugar boom starting in the 1830s; the industry came to dominate the island “chiefly in the generation from 1834 to 1867,” as Jenks notes, “and during that period Cuba was the richest colony in the world.”<sup>1232</sup> It was at this exact moment—in 1839—that Captain-General Joaquín de Ezpeleta issued a proclamation requiring white supervision of *toques de tambores*, drum and dance gatherings that according on Sunday and feast days.<sup>1233</sup> In each case, the timing and purpose of such legislation demonstrates that Black music’s frequency, and the counter-plantation valances of its production, increased in intensity with the rise of the plantation system. Each colonial government learned, through their own experiences, that the successful management of a sugar colony with large numbers of overworked slaves working in close proximity required a new role, that of a landscape DJ: music and its semiotic mobility had to be administratively restrained.

The balance of power between slave mobility, slave sound, and plantation production affected the United States South as well. Ex-slave Robert Williams remembers that planters were keen to prevent poor whites from listening to the music of Black songsters: “We could dance on Saturday nights. A banjo player would be dere an’ he would sing...We had a time of our life. Po’ whites would come over to see de dance. De master wouldn’t ‘low de po’ whites on his place an’ dey would have to steal in to see de dance.”<sup>1234</sup> In the case of Louisiana, legislation regarding Black music and dance closely maps with the chronology of the region’s sugar production. Sugar expansion took off by 1831, when the technology of boiling vacuum pans led to massive

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<sup>1232</sup> Leland H. Jenks, *Our Cuban Colony—A Study in Sugar* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), 21.

<sup>1233</sup> Theresa A. Singleton, *Slavery Behind the Wall: An Archaeology of a Cuban Coffee Plantation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 178.

<sup>1234</sup> Robert Williams in *Weevils*, 326.

profitability by transforming sugar processing which in turn expanded cane cultivation.<sup>1235</sup> The next major breakthrough came in the mid-1850s, with the process of clarifying cane juice by means of bisulphite lime (adding at least \$10 profit per hogshead of sugar) and the introduction of bagasse furnaces led to significant increases in capital returns and financed new outlays for slaves and land.<sup>1236</sup>

Congo Square's famed dances became likewise regulated and criminalized in seemingly direct proportion: in 1837 the city council authorized "free negroes and slaves to give balls on the Circus Square from 12 o'clock until sunset [only] under surveillance of the police." In 1845, the council required that slaves at such dances have written permission from their masters. They also limited the dances to two-and-a-half hours, and restricted them to the four summer months of May through August. This also aligned with the schedule of sugarcane growing and harvesting, since the fall months, incidentally, were when the truly arduous and sometimes life-consuming process of cutting and grinding began in earnest, while the winter was reserved for planting. And finally, in 1856, the city council adopted an ordinance making it unlawful to "beat a drum, blow a horn, or sound a trumpet" in the city limits, as it was a threat to public "immorality" and "indecenty."<sup>1237</sup>

Colonial administrators and plantation managers were nonetheless unsuccessful in their attempt to corral music and celebration to specific plantations through legislation. "Outlaw slave parties," where slaves from distant plantations might gather for dancing and fiddling "and stay out all night," were both commonplace and risky; encounters between revelers and a slave patrol often

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<sup>1235</sup> *Southern Agriculturalist*, IV (1831), 162-64; Joseph Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), 136.

<sup>1236</sup> *Franklin Planter's Banner*, January 13, 1853; Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 152.

<sup>1237</sup> New Orleans City Council Ordinances, 1856, book 11, no. 3121 O.S., Art. 1, sec. 7, 9, 11; no. 3131 O.S.; Daily Picayune, March; Jerah Johnson, "New Orleans's Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 32, no. 2 (1991): 151. For grinding and planting season, see Follet, Follett, "Heat, Sex, and Sugar," 511-513.

ended in violence.<sup>1238</sup> As the slave Charles Crump explained, “We ain’t ‘lowed ter go nowhat at night...Dat is, if dey knowed it.”<sup>1239</sup> Elizabeth Ross Hite, enslaved in Louisiana’s sugar parishes, remembered that slaves boldly repossessed the sugar mill after the master went to sleep. “De slaves had balls in de sugar house. Dey would start late an’ was way out in de field whar de master could not heah dem. Not a bit of noise could be heahed.” As to not alert the master, slaves danced by a low candlelight, and by the next day they had to hide any post-dance weariness or a “whippin would follow.”<sup>1240</sup> In these spaces, the values of the counter-plantation become articulated to re-socialize the antisocial world of the plantation. What planter Thomas Tryon experienced as “perpetual Anger and Tyranny”<sup>1241</sup> (that is how he described a sugar factory) became a space instead where “de slave had some fine times” doing “de buck dance and de shimme” and “sake[ing] dere skirts” to the left and the right, a dance reminiscent of the *bamboula* which had a distinct Saint-Domingue genealogy.<sup>1242</sup>

Planters were nonetheless restrained in their ability to fully suppress Black music. This was not only, or even primarily, because of the ability of slaves to steal off in the night. Rather, slaveowners depended on Black music to sustain the social order of the plantation as much as slaves depended on it to coordinate work rhythms. One South Carolina planter who had been having trouble with productivity and discipline supplied the enslaved with fiddles and drums and

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<sup>1238</sup> Jefferson Franklin Henry in George P. Rawick, *The American Slave* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1972), 12(20): 188; quoted in Camp, Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 69.

<sup>1239</sup> Charlie Crump in Rawick, *American Slave*, 14(1):213; also quoted in Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 69.

<sup>1240</sup> Elizabeth Ross Hite, date unknown, WPA Ex-Slave Narrative Collection, LSU.

<sup>1241</sup> Philippe Rosenberg, “Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2004): 609–42.

<sup>1242</sup> Freddi Williams Evans, *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011), 102; Jeroen Dewulf, “From the Calendas to the Calenda: On the Afro-Iberian Substratum in Black Performance Culture in the Americas,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 519 (2018): 3–29.

“promoted dancing.”<sup>1243</sup> Frederick Douglass remembered that slaves were compelled to sing while they worked: “A silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers.”<sup>1244</sup> And, just as slaveowners were dependent on the diverse crops grown in slave gardens (and without which, they would have suffered malnutrition or starved<sup>1245</sup>) they were also dependent on slave music for entertainment and emotional connection. In Philadelphia, a white planter exile from the Haitian Revolution fantasized that he would return to his plantation in Abricots and listen to his slaves’ “tambourines and bamboulas.”<sup>1246</sup> Another planter wrote: “I allow dancing, ay, I buy a fiddle and encourage it, by giving the boys the occasional supper.”<sup>1247</sup> Robert Criswell writes of a “Col. Buckingham” and his family, whose slaves “were tolerable musicians, and these having formed a band, played occasionally in the summer evening in the lawn before the hall, for the amusement of the family.”<sup>1248</sup> Plantations required music simply to function: it was impossible to coordinate the backbreaking, endless, highly synchronized work without it. But planters were emotionally dependent on Black music for the same reason they were dependent on slave gardens: enslaved workers were the only people on the plantation committed to social reproduction and responsible communal stewardship.<sup>1249</sup> Their music reflected these social bonds that the planter could not access.

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<sup>1243</sup> N. Herbemont, “On the Moral Discipline and Treatment of Slaves,” *Southern Agriculturalist* IX (January 1836); Guion Griffis Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 143.

<sup>1244</sup> Douglass, *My Bondage*, 97.

<sup>1245</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 87. Slaveowners were also dependent on slave medicine, much of which grown in their gardens.

<sup>1246</sup> Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery’s Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 28.

<sup>1247</sup> “Management of Negroes,” *DeBow’s Review* 11, no. 4–5 (November 1851): 372.

<sup>1248</sup> Robert Criswell, “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” *Contrasted with Buckingham Hall, the Planter’s Home: Or, A Fair View of Both Sides of the Slavery Question* (New York: AMS Press, 1852), 113. In plantation memoirs, there are numerous examples of white masters admiring Black music.

<sup>1249</sup> The reproduction of life and the reproduction of labor power are at the core of social reproduction theory. See Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press,

### 5.4.3 Black Atlantic Music as Ethno-Botanical Communication

Planter permissiveness of music was a weak link in the planter blockade on enslaved workers' communication. Indeed, not only did slaves continue, albeit in more clandestine registers, to share music and news-within-music; they were also successful at distributing such works abroad. Haiti loomed large in these cultural transfers. In Venezuela in 1801, a colonial administrator complained: "There is going around quite openly among the freemen and slaves of the hill country news of the capture of the Spanish island of Santo Domingo by the Negro Toussaint, and . . . they display great rejoicing and merriment at the news, using the chorus 'Look to the firebrand [tisón],' as a response to the words 'They'd better watch out!'"<sup>1250</sup> On Georgia's rice coast, white observers witnessed a dance called the "the sioca," which was described as "a voluptuous dance imported from San Domingo [Haiti]."<sup>1251</sup> As song and dance were transported across colonial borders to other parts of the enslaved African diaspora, so were ideas, outlooks, news, and traditions—a sonic common wind.<sup>1252</sup> In addition to dances and songs, instruments such as the *banza* or banjo (which was first documented in Jamaica by the botanist Hans Sloane in 1687

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2012), 1. Jason W. Moore has integrated the unpaid "labor" of nature and challenging the dualisms between human and "natural" production in his essay "The Capitalocene Part II: Accumulation by Appropriation and the Centrality of Unpaid Work/Energy," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45, no. 2 (February 23, 2018): 237–79. I do not have the capacity to address social reproduction theory directly in this chapter, but I wish to point out that it is clear that enslaved people were much more concerned in their survival and reproduction as a community than their masters, and this orientation was also captured in a metaphysical and philosophical connection to the land, its ecosystems, and the socially-integrating aspects of communal music.

<sup>1250</sup> Academia Nacional de la Historia, Caracas, Sección Civiles, Signatura A13–5159–2, report of 24 Feb. 1801; David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 188.

<sup>1251</sup> Ralph Betts Flanders, *Plantation Slavery In Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 171.

<sup>1252</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018).

during his 15-month stay in the colony) were spread throughout American slave societies.<sup>1253</sup> Although Laurent Dubois describes it as the “first truly ‘African’ instrument”—its unique tuning and materials incorporated several distinct influences from West to Central Africa—he and other scholars suggest its diffusion throughout the Southern United States and Caribbean was from Jamaican and Haitian influences.<sup>1254</sup>

In 1850s Louisiana, as I discussed in this dissertation’s introduction, a song circulating amongst slaves in the sugar plantations of St. John the Baptist Parish commented on current events then happening in Haiti, including mass hunger and the new administration of President Fabre Nicolas Geffrard (1859-1867).<sup>1255</sup> But Haiti was not the only creolizing influence. Perhaps most dramatically, in 1841, the New Orleans press grew fearful that too many now-free Jamaicans were working on Mississippi River steamboats. One overseer in Bayou Sara, the second largest steamboat port on the lower Mississippi river, claimed to overhear slaves planning to celebrate an event for August first, which marked the 1833 British decree ending slavery in its colonies. A widespread hysteria of a Haitian Revolution-scale uprising spread like wildfire, and again, dancing and musicking were banned.<sup>1256</sup> As Kerr-Ritchie argues, “annual celebrations of West Indian emancipation contributed to popular mobilization for the overthrow of American slavery.”<sup>1257</sup> It would not be surprising if Jamaican musical and dance culture spread with the clandestine envoys

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<sup>1253</sup> Hans Sloane, M.D. *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christopher and Jamaica* (London, 1707), Volume I, xlvi, Republished online by BHL Biodiversity Library: <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/11242>; Arthur MacGregor, “The Life, Character and Career of Sir Hans Sloane,” in his anthology *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>1254</sup> Laurent Dubois, *The Banjo: America’s Africa Instrument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 91; Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara, eds., “Africa’s Creole Drum: The Gumbé as Vector and Signifier of Trans-African Creolization,” in *Creolization as Cultural Creativity* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2011), 137.

<sup>1255</sup> Alice Zeno, interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1256</sup> New Orleans *Commercial Bulletin*, April 29, 1841; New Orleans *Picayune*, July 23, 1841

<sup>1257</sup> Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First: Emancipation Day in the Black Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 113.

of West Indian liberation. “By their very character and synchronicity,” this assemblage of revolt, clandestine celebration, and music “reveal[s] a transnational African response to capital and the political masters of the capitalist world.”<sup>1258</sup>

Surely, however, these songs interacted with more than their negation: they also spoke of utopian possibilities related to a redefined relationship with land. The motif of “striking the land,” itself a musical instrument, as discussed in Chapter 1, is evidence of this redefined terrestrial relationship. Its reoccurring movement across Afro-Atlantic spaces is one manifestation of counter-plantation aesthetics. The Haitian peasantry created an onto-epistemic alternative to plantation agriculture and the capitalist world market during a time in which slavery expanded. These alternatives did not come from elites but were generated at the level of communities; as Gonzalez notes, they were “never the results of state policy.”<sup>1259</sup> Forest regrowth, seen as lost profits to foreign observers and several Haitian heads of state, represented for the rural majority a sacred space. Haiti’s “overgrown roads and hidden hillside farms” represented the “willful creations of an independent-minded people” who built “fiscally illegible landscape[s]” to resist the recreation of a plantation economy by Haiti’s post-independence rulers. For these *cultiveurs*, “the collapse of sugar exports and the destruction of the plantation infrastructure represented success.”<sup>1260</sup>

The centrality of the land and the enchanted ecosystems which Haitians built and expanded are replete in popular culture, secreted in both musical forms and poetic knowledge. The soil, in

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<sup>1258</sup> Michael O. West and William G. Martin, “Haiti, I’m Sorry: The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International,” in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution*, ed. Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 83.

<sup>1259</sup> Johnhenry Gonzales, *Maroon Nation*, 56.

<sup>1260</sup> Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 3-4.

particular, has often been representative as a site for an intersubjective ethics between humanity and ecology. In the words of Haitian poet Jacques Romain, “It’s not God who betrays us. We betray the soil and receive his punishment: drought and poverty and desolation.”<sup>1261</sup> The political ecologist Sophie Sapp Moore has noted that the Haitian Creole word “teh” is multivalent, and can refer to Earth and soil, but also human being and planet. The onto-epistemic world embedded within Haiti’s Creole language, argues Moore, leads the “radical charge towards a life of freedom; it is radical to equate one’s life with soil.”<sup>1262</sup> The realm of the botanical has long played important roles in the long-term insurgencies of Haiti’s plantation dissidents; for instance, maroons not only made use of the mountainous island’s topography but also the hollows and cavities inside the *mapou* tree’s knotty trunk and roots. The *mapou* tree continues to have a sacred power in Haitian religious culture; certain *lwa* reside inside within and they are also considered “doors” to the spiritual world which can only be opened by the very highly initiated.<sup>1263</sup> Because *lwas* reside in tress, an implicit cultural mechanism slows or challenges deforestation.

In addition, several Vodou songs contain coded mention of botanical life and their cultural implications. The Haitian song “Twa Fey,” meaning “Three Leaves,” both reflects diasporic Kongolese cosmovision<sup>1264</sup> and refers to the leaves of a plant that, dropped, leads to cultural

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<sup>1261</sup> Jacques Roumain, *Masters of the Dew*, trans. Langston Hughes and Mercer Cook (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1947), 45.

<sup>1262</sup> Sophie Sapp Moore, “Soil Science and Radical Life,” paper delivered at University of Wisconsin, September 26th, 2020.

<sup>1263</sup> Mercedes Foucard Guignard, *Répertoire Pratique Des Loa Du Vodou Haïtien* (Reme Art Publishing, 2006), 20.

<sup>1264</sup> For a definition of “cosmovision” as opposed to cosmology, see Alfredo López Austin, “Cosmovisión y Pensamiento Indígena,” in *Conceptos y Fenómenos Fundamentals de Nuestro Tiempo*, (Mexico City: UNAM, 2012), April 2012: “el conjunto estructurado de los diversos sistemas ideológicos con los que el grupo social, en un momento histórico, pretende aprehender el universo, engloba todos los sistemas, los ordena y los ubica.” (a structured set of diverse ideological systems with which the social group, within a [particular] historical moment, tries to understand the universe, encompassing all systems, the order, and the environment.)

forgetting, but sings: “*If I gather them I remember.*”<sup>1265</sup> Songs like “Twa Fey” demonstrate how “to plant a garden of cassava, edda, and plantain can be read as performing a collective act of memory” and how this memory was above all reproduced in “songs and chants.”<sup>1266</sup> Musical instruments themselves served as bridges between the ecological and the human worlds, and a collapsing environment might mean the inability to produce new instruments. For the Haitian contemporary *tanbou* drum maker and theorist Jean-Michel, “the *tanbou* is the union of the botanical being with the animal being” and as such “represents these two beings that serve to connect you, as an object communication, to the universe.”<sup>1267</sup> As Rebecca Dirksen surmises, “cultural expressions associated with the Haitian countryside are often encoded with traditional ecological knowledge.”<sup>1268</sup>

#### 5.4.4 Harvest Festival as a Terrain of Cultural Struggle

Relationships between ecology and music making permeated Black Atlantic music, with notable examples in Jamaica and the United States South. As early as 1680, the Reverend Morgan Godwyn, an Englishman, complained of the “idolatry” in slave dances in Jamaica, noting that “they use their Dances as a means to procure Rain: Some of them having been known to beg this

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<sup>1265</sup> “The song presents the Kongolese notion of the universe as though it were speaking of three worthless leaves falling into a pool.” *Digital Library of the Caribbean*, s.v. “Twa Fèy, Twa Rasin,” <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00004160/00001/1j> (accessed April 12, 2017). See also Laurent Dubois, *The Banjo: America’s Africa Instrument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>1266</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 200.

<sup>1267</sup> Jean-Michel Yamba, interview, quoted in Rebecca Dirksen, “Haiti’s Drums and Trees: Facing Loss of the Sacred,” *Ethnomusicology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 55.

<sup>1268</sup> Rebecca Dirksen, “Haiti’s Drums and Trees: Facing Loss of the Sacred,” *Ethnomusicology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 45.

Liberty upon the Week Days.”<sup>1269</sup> The United States South is no exception. The following husking song was orally transmitted, related to harvest ritual of corn. The shucking or “chucking” of corn was a festive event; as John W. Blassingame notes, “slaves enjoyed the evening away from the quarters, meeting friends and sweethearts, drinking the cider or hard liquor, eating cakes and pies, telling tall stories and singing hilarious songs.”<sup>1270</sup> “According to tradition,” Bass explained, “the ears of corn were hauled from the field at harvest time and piled in two equal heaps before the barn door. Upon the first warm, moonlight night the slaves were divided into equal groups, with a leader appointed for each group, and set to husking. From time to time the leaders led this song to encourage the workers.”

Ho, bru' Handy, ho!  
I neber was 'tacked  
By no nigger nation,  
Ho, bru' Handy.<sup>1271</sup>

The invocation of a Black nation as inspiration for executing communal labor shows how music expressed the “future in the present,” how dreams of a new society and the social relations of its collective polyphonic production approximated the interdependent labor structures found in kinship-based, collective labor arrangements. Links such as these permeate the United States South.

During and after Reconstruction, these traditions formed the basis of reinvented social relations. These songs might relate to crop cycles, they could undergird collectivist relations that made the harvest possible, or they could create the conditions for communal gathering and healing.

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<sup>1269</sup> Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate, Suing for Their Admission into the Church* (London, 1680), 33.

<sup>1270</sup> John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 117-18

<sup>1271</sup> Robert Duncan Bass, “Negro Songs from the Pedee Country,” *Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (December 1931): 422.

“While historians have explored how the labor regimens of the South’s crops shaped the lives of Africans and their descendants,” writes Evan P. Bennett, less has been made of what Black farmers “thought of the crops they grew, or how communities of black farmers imposed meaning on the crops remain less developed. Not so with the experiences of white farmers. Much has been written, much of it by white farmers themselves, of tobacco’s role a cultural touchstone.”<sup>1272</sup> Despite this historiographical gap, Black farmers left a robust musical and performance tradition that connected the rhythms of the tobacco growing season with communal renewal through dance and music.

Communities in Cedar Grove, North Carolina celebrated the tobacco harvest with community dances whose participants included agricultural workers from distant parishes—uniting both farmworkers and the spirituality of the land with song and dance. Music scholar Kip Lornell interviewed the inhabitants of Cedar Grove and found that the African American “barn dance” tradition dated back at least to the 1880s and possibly earlier—which would square it with the tradition of communal land ownership and the quest for an agrarian society. “Such dances were directly tied to the agrarian cycle of planting, working in the fields, and harvesting.”<sup>1273</sup> For community member Odell Thompson, the corn shucking marked the beginning of the festival season: “When you gather the corn out of the field and haul it into the barnyard, you put it in piles. After they get it all together, they’d call a bunch of hands to shuck the corn. That’s what they’d call that corn shuck. Then that night they’d pull of a dance.”<sup>1274</sup> This community reflected the self-sufficient tendencies that animated connections between music, social labor, and the agricultural

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<sup>1272</sup> Evan P. Bennett, “Black Farmers and Bright Tobacco in the Piedmont South,” in *Beyond Forty Acres and a Mule: African American Landowning Families since Reconstruction*, ed. Debra Ann Reid and Evan P. Bennett (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 190-191.

<sup>1273</sup> Kip Lornell, “Banjoes and Blues,” in *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*, ed. Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zugg III (Duke University Press Books, 1989), 222.

<sup>1274</sup> Interview with Odell Thompson, quoted in Kip Lornell, “Banjoes and Blues,” in *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*, ed. Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zugg III (Duke University Press Books, 1989), 222.

cycle: “Cedar Grove was also a self-contained settlement where most of the people’s needs—dry goods, clothing and education—were taken care of by the community.”<sup>1275</sup> In the case of Cedar Grove’s barn dancing tradition, we can see how music expressed the connection to land, labor, and sense of identity.

Songs changed function and meaning in context of the varieties and the recipients of the crops. Harvest festivals embodied some of these tensions, becoming sites of cultural struggle throughout the South. “So deeply has the culture of cotton entered in the mode of life of the American South,” wrote Robert Vance in 1935, “that the whole area is characterized by activities and attitudes which have grown up about the cultivation of the plant.”<sup>1276</sup> White southerners obsessed over harvest days of a region’s primary cash crop; schools, churches, and community leaders all participated in celebratory events, which were home to “[a]gricultural orations” in which crops like sugar and cotton became quasi-mythic “verbal and ritual symbol[s].”<sup>1277</sup> Rituals also dominated sugar country; and throughout southern Louisiana, slaves and masters often joined in an end-of-the-harvest celebration. Such ceremony began with the *commandeur*<sup>1278</sup> of each plantation choosing the tallest cane left uncut, and with the “best laborer” (*le meilleur couteau*) adorned it with a ribbon, then “brandishing the knife in the air, sang to the cane as if it were a person, and danced around it several times before cutting it.” Once the *commandeur* cut the stalk

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<sup>1275</sup> Lornell, “Banjos and Blues,” 277.

<sup>1276</sup> Robert B. Vance, “The Profile of Southern Culture,” in *Culture in the South*, ed. W.T. Couch (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 30.

<sup>1277</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, “The Rhetoric and Ritual of Agriculture in Antebellum South Carolina,” *The Journal of Southern History* 45, no. 4 (1979): 543.

<sup>1278</sup> *Commandeurs* were slaves endowed with special influence and authority over other slaves, often equal and sometimes greater to white overseers. While slaves with varying degrees of power was common throughout the South, the *commandeur* was an institution specifically tied to Haiti and, in fact, this class was instrumental in organizing the 1791 Revolution. See William E. Wiethoff, “Enslaved Africans’ Rivalry with White Overseers in Plantation Culture: An Unconventional Interpretation,” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 3 (2006): 442; Kona Shen, “The Haitian Revolution 1791,” Brown’s Department of Africana Studies, October 27, 2015, <https://library.brown.edu/haitihistory/5.html>, accessed October 21, 2020.

was cut, the “men, women, and children mounted in empty carts,” and began a parade from the fields to the master’s house, “waving colored handkerchiefs in the air, and singing as loud as they could.” Waiting for the procession, the master “gave a drink to every Negro,” and the day ended with a dance.<sup>1279</sup> Such ceremonies not only enacted plantation hierarchies and provided some social release after a torturous growing season; they also honored the masters’ crop, albeit in ways that made slave culture legible.

African American agricultural songs also commented on these crops in ways intended to ridicule planters during harvest season. One song from Louisiana during the antebellum period includes the following lyrics: “I will go cut cane, dear friend, (*M’allé coupé canne, chère amie*,) I will make money, beloved, (*M’allé fait l’argent, mo trésor*) and bring it to you. (*Pour porter donné toi*.)” This song was widely interpreted as a “song of mockery” that ironically exposed the absurdity of the economic expropriation of slave labor in the sugar region.<sup>1280</sup> Another song reprinted in *Harper’s* shows that slaves honored the complex annual harvest milestone with a not-so-hidden transcript, singing the following song at a cotton festival: “White man sets on de fence ant figures / Cotton is all dun picked / He’s got a mighty knack fur ter cheat po’ niggers / Cotton is all dun picked / An’ er rake away de leaves, an’ we’ll all hab a dance / Tune up de banjer—pling, plang,

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<sup>1279</sup> Alcée Fortier, *Louisiana Studies: Literature, Customs and Dialects, History and Education*, vol. 2 (New Orleans: F. F. Hansell, 1894), 128-129; this episode is also discussed in Kevin David Roberts, “Slaves and Slavery in Louisiana: The Evolution of Atlantic World Identities, 1791-1831” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 232, and Shirley M. Jackson, “Black Slave Drivers in the Southern United States” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 1977), 58.

<sup>1280</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Gombo Zhèbes: Little Dictionary of Creole Proverb* (New York: Applewood Books, 1885), 4; Emilie Le Jeune, “Creole Folk Songs,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* II (1919): 454–62; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans In Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth-Century* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1995). 198.

plung.”<sup>1281</sup> Another song, remembered and recorded by Frederick Douglass, was sung during Christmas:

We raise de wheat,  
Dey gib us de corn;  
We bake de bread,  
Dey gib us de cruss;  
We sif de meal,  
Dey gib us de huss;  
We peal de meat,  
Dey gib us de skin  
And dat's de way  
Dey takes us in.<sup>1282</sup>

These three songs—somewhat startling indexes of exploitation and malnourishment—suggest that festivals shared by masters and slaves were spaces where critique could be aired about what one freedman later denounced as the “slave crop”—cotton or sugar.<sup>1283</sup>

Another genre of festival, and one less recorded by disinterested white observers, were those tied to slaves’ own provision grounds. Watermelons, especially, were celebrated in an annual harvest festival that seems to have been organized and attended by slaves.<sup>1284</sup> Such crops were raised for slave consumption, (and sometimes that of the master’s family) were rarely sold in slave-organized markets, and were not produced for mass export to the global or regional market.

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<sup>1281</sup> Opie P. Read, “Cotton Is All Done Picked,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* LXXV (November, 1887) 971.

<sup>1282</sup> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 253.

<sup>1283</sup> Elizabeth W. Pearson, ed., *Letters From Port Royal Written at the Time of the Civil War* (Boston, 1906), 181.

<sup>1284</sup> Often, holidays such as Christmas are emphasized by historians as spaces of Black celebration. Frederick Douglass among others have spoken of the intense preparation amongst enslaved people to celebrate Christmas, and such celebrations shared important qualities across the entire Southern plantation corridor. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855); Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 31-32; Arthur Anison Winfield Jr., “Slave Holidays and Festivities in the United States” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Atlanta University, 1941), 67; Mary D. Lake, “Pioneer Christmas Customs of Tarrant County,” *Publication of the Texas Folk-Lore Society* V (1926): 107–11. For a case study of Christmas celebration in post-emancipation setting and one linked to the struggle for land reform, see Steven Hahn, “‘Extravagant Expectations’ of Freedom: Rumour, Political Struggle, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865 in the American South,” in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, ed. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott (New York: Routledge, 2013), 334–64.

“Frequently, in the height of the watermelon season,” notes Arthur Anison Winfield Jr., “permission would be granted the slaves to have a grand feast to which the slaves for miles around were invited. Much singing and dancing went on at these feasts, also.”<sup>1285</sup> Alternate harvest festivals of slaves, which highlighted their own foodways in distinction to the commodity-ways of abusive planter class, were thus a cultural terrain by which the counter-plantation challenged the symbolic hegemony of the plantation.

#### 5.4.5 Watermelon Culture and its Discontents

Watermelons, predictably, became subject to an intense cultural struggle after emancipation. They quickly were read by both white and Black as a refusal of export agriculture and were viewed as offensive to “uplift”-oriented northerners and recalcitrant white Southerners alike. In 1865, two Republican unitarians from Boston, William Channing Gannett and Edward Everett Hale, suggested that Black people’s growing of watermelons was an act of “neglect,” opining that it would be “the more provident and intelligent” for Black gardeners to focus on growing cotton.<sup>1286</sup> In 1868, a freedman in Washington County, Georgia, was walking along “with a watermelon on his shoulder,” when a white passerby ordered him to give him the watermelon. The freedman refused, so “the white man struck him on the head with the butt of a pistol, knocking his brains out.” Rather than let this Black man keep his watermelon and the independence the fruit implied, he killed him.<sup>1287</sup>

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<sup>1285</sup> Winfield Jr., “Slave Holidays and Festivities in the United States,” 42.

<sup>1286</sup> William Channing Gannett and Edward Everett Hale, “The Freedmen at Port Royal,” *North American Review*, July 1865, 19; quoted in William R. Black, “How Watermelons Became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 1 (2018): 85.

<sup>1287</sup> *Macon Daily Telegraph*, August 14, 1868. A similar event happened in Memphis in 1866: A Memphis freedman “bought three melons for fifteen cents.” When “warned by a white person of the folly of his course” by a

Nonetheless, watermelon festivals continued well into the twentieth century, with pronounced impacts on the generation of Black Louisianans who produced jazz. Several future jazz musicians spoke at length about their love of watermelons, as well as the complex class and race associations imbricated into the fruit. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, banjoist Danny Barker, of a Creole of Color family, frequently discussed his illicit love of watermelon “spec’s,” what he explained was “supposedly rotten fruit” and which he was obliged to hide from his grandparents. “While I forged myself with [watermelon] spec’s with my young uncles I looked about the people cautiously, so that I could duck or hide or quickly turn away my face and head in case a Barker or someone who knew them should see me eating spec’s like an orphan or piccaninny, as colored youngsters who did such things were called.”<sup>1288</sup> The trumpeter Henry “Kid” Rena, was considered New Orleans’s best cornet player in the late 1910s and early 1920s and was a good friend to Louis Armstrong. When he was nine years old, he was attacked by an Italian boy for possessing a watermelon; the Judge ruled the Italian boy’s favor, and Rena was put into Jones’ Waif Home, where he began learning bugle.<sup>1289</sup> Jazz bands were often hired to play at “watermelon parties” during the formative years of the music; cornetist and ironworker Emmet Harding, for instance, played at Miss Merle Richardson’s Watermelon Party on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1917.<sup>1290</sup>

Watermelons were subject to vicious and racist caricature precisely because they symbolized Black independence and an alternative spirituality to the cultures of cotton, sugar, and rice. The watermelon was “a symbol of black freedom, as African Americans used the fruit to both celebrate and enact their emancipation;” while whites depicted the fruit as “proof that African

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white observer, he proceeded with the purchase; within a few hours he was dead. *Public Ledger* (Memphis), September 7, 1866. Black, “How Watermelons Became Black,” 14. This account apparently suggests that he died of “sickness.”

<sup>1288</sup> Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Springer, 2016), 32.

<sup>1289</sup> Karl Koenig, “Under the Influence: Four Great New Orleans Cornetists,” *Basin Street*, 1994, 15.

<sup>1290</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

Americans were unworthy of freedom.” This partly explains the “an air of desperation to racist watermelon imagery in the Jim Crow era—a bizarre need to make African Americans devour the fruit again and again.” What emancipation had unleashed, and its central questions around land, culture, and agriculture, could not be put away, and these anxieties were projected onto the autonomous crop production of freedpeople, most powerfully symbolized in the watermelon.<sup>1291</sup>

#### 5.4.6 Maroon Ecosystems in the Long Song

Before returning to the place-specific struggles over land in postwar Louisiana’s sugar bowl, there is a last subtopic that necessitates our consideration: the communities of escaped slaves, known as maroons or *cimarrons*, who were particularly prevalent in Louisiana. The ecosystems and economies that these groups of plantation dissidents created were of immense importance for still unfree peoples. In Louisiana’s *ciprière*, or swamp region, maroons created music which celebrated and communicated their agro-botanical capabilities to others and future generations. According to George Washington Cable, one song descended from maroons contained the following lyrics:

Little ones without father,  
Little ones without mother,  
What do you do to earn money?  
The river we cross for wild berries to search;  
We follow the bayou a'fishing for perch l'a'zanc.  
And that's how we earn money.<sup>1292</sup>

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<sup>1291</sup> Black, “How Watermelons Became Black,” 80.

<sup>1292</sup> George Washington Cable, *Creoles and Cajuns: Stories of Old Louisiana* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

Another song commemorated the maroon “St. Mâlo,” executed in 1793 by the Louisiana Spanish government.<sup>1293</sup> Mâlo was an iconic leader because he helped organize a prolific maroon settlement in *Bas du Flueve*, where runaway slaves transitioned from a theft-based economy to self-sufficient production. “Although some of the maroons continued to raid plantations and kill cattle,” writes Gwendolyn Hall,

there was a move toward production and trade for economic survival. They cultivated corn, squash, and rice and gathered and ground herbs for food. They made baskets, sifters, and other articles woven from willow and reeds. They carved indigo vats and troughs from cypresswood.<sup>1294</sup>

Cable’s song is useful because it adds to this index of cultivation. It is evident that maroons also gathered berries, hunted, and fished. Just as we today have this aural archive that records maroon accomplishments for modern day historians, such songs disseminated the news to enslaved peoples on disparate plantations that another world was possible.

Often celebrated for their military skills, it was maroons’ permaculture ecosystems which provided concrete alternatives to the contradiction of soil degradation and malnutrition in the plantation system. A nineteenth century observer of the Seminole maroon community in Florida wrote, “We found these negroes in possession of large fields of the finest land, producing large crops of corn, beans, melons, pumpkins, and other esculent vegetables. [I] saw, while riding along the borders of the ponds, fine rice growing; and in the village large corn-cribs were filled.”<sup>1295</sup> In the rainforests of Eastern Cuba near Santiago de Cuba, a Cuban army captain found a maroon

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<sup>1293</sup> Cable, “Creole,” 815.

<sup>1294</sup> Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans In Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth-Century* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1995), 203.

<sup>1295</sup> Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 19. See also Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica: University Press of the West Indies, 2006), 246.

settlement of thirty was home to three hundred banana plants; twenty plots of corn (most of which was dry); and an equal amount of land planted with “an extraordinary abundance” of taro root, rice, yams and sweet potatoes, peanuts, green tobacco, and fruit.<sup>1296</sup> Even prior to military training, “making gardens was one of the first tasks for each newly formed maroon group,” explains Richard Price, and whenever land was cleared, “everyone work[ed] together,” and new arrivals were given food until they, too, could become self-sufficient.<sup>1297</sup>

When evaluating the economies of death that permeated plantation life, the ecosystems based on interdependence could not have appeared as more powerful symbols to those still enslaved. It should not be so surprising that maroon culture powerfully influenced Louisiana’s Black musicians, both the anonymous singers of “The Ballad of St. Mâlo,” and key jazz-era figures. In Sidney Bechet’s *Treat it Gentle*, the quintessential jazz clarinetist shares both career details and magical realist interpretations of slave culture. Core to his connection of these two spaces is his theory of “the Long Song,” a communal crucible where diasporic memory is selectively remembered and forgotten through musical performance. Bechet connects the mythic and his own personal history by describing his grandfather, a “slave named Omar,” a one-armed maroon who only “practiced to shoot with his left hand.”<sup>1298</sup> The description invokes the maroon figure Bras-Coupé, a maroon who was said to resist arrest and multiple assination attempts and lost an arm in the 1830s.<sup>1299</sup> Certain details of this Louisiana semi-legend echo those of the maroon

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<sup>1296</sup> José Pérez Malo in Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Asuntos Políticos, Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 618, no. 19,763). quoted in Gabino La Rosa Corzo, *Runaway Slave Settlements in Cuba: Resistance and Repression* (Chapel Hill, South Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways And Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica: University Press of the West Indies, 2006), 247.

<sup>1297</sup> Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 10, 315; Quincy Saul, *Maroon Comix: Origins and Destinies* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018), 56.

<sup>1298</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1960), 9.

<sup>1299</sup> Bryan Wagner, “Disarmed and Dangerous: The Strange Career of Brás-Coupe,” *Representations*, no. 92 (2005): 117–51; Bryan Wagner, *The Life and Legend of Bras-Coupé: The Fugitive Slave Who Fought the Law, Ruled*

revolutionary François Mackandal, who also lost an arm, leading John Bardes to conclude that Mackandal's story was circulated in Louisiana by "Saint-Domingue slaves and their descendants" and eventually became reimagined as Bras-Coupé.<sup>1300</sup> The story is an example of Stuart Hall's observation that "folklore represents itself as the 'traditional wisdom or truth of the ages' but in fact, it is deeply a product of history."<sup>1301</sup>

If Bras-Coupé was a kind of creolizing of Mackandal's legendary maroonage, then Omar represents jazz practice a continuation of that creolization. In Bechet's rendering, he manifested a practice of musical creation which helps consolidate a Black Atlantic historical consciousness across generations. "No one had to explain notes or rhythm or feeling to him. All the things that was happening to him outside, they had to get there to be measured – there inside him where the music was."<sup>1302</sup> As a musician, he created from his own experiences. Yet Bechet makes it clear that what was happening to him "on the outside" was rooted in the land and land practice: "The part of him that was where he was now, in the South, a slave—that part was the melody, the part of him that was different from his ancestors." This was a song built in the hard material conditions of plantation production, "it was coming right up from the fields, setting itself into their feet and working right up, right up into their stomachs, their spirit." It was a melody that one "had to live, every day, working, waiting for rest and joy... Day after day, like there was no end to it."<sup>1303</sup> Omar

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*the Swamp, Danced at Congo Square, Invented Jazz, and Died for Love* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019).

<sup>1300</sup> John K. Bardes, "The Notorious Bras Coupé: A Slave Rebellion Replayed in Memory, History, and Anxiety," *American Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2020): 1–23.

<sup>1301</sup> Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 21.

<sup>1302</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1960), 6. "Measurement," in my mind, brings forward a very different kind of, in the violence of abstraction found in slave auctions. As on French trader noted in a New Orleans slave auction in 1838, "The slaves are seated on benches arranged like an amphitheater... The deal is never concluded until the slave has been completely looked over, from head to foot." P. George J. Joyaux, ed., "Forest's Voyage Aux États-Unis de l'Amérique En 1831," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* XXXIX (1904): 465; Kimberly S. Hanger, *A Medley of Cultures: Louisiana History at the Cabildo* (Louisiana Museum Foundation, 1996), 24.

<sup>1303</sup> Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 7, 21.

also created music in the swamps with a “whole lot of slaves there, some free, some runaway—they was all chanting and moaning and beating on drums around this woman who had a big cast-iron pot she was boiling this potion in... Then this potion exploded and it was a sign to them, and they set to clapping and shouting.”<sup>1304</sup>

Maroon ecologies and plantation production both live in the space of Omar’s life, standing in dialectic contrast: the former as an alternative world, beleaguered but brimming with potential in the thick of a dangerous swamp, the latter as an endless labor which nonetheless produced a healing song coming up from the Earth. It was this eco-song which Bechet poetically describes the “the long song, and the good musicianers, they all heard it behind them.” What made a good musician was not their virtuosity: it was the ability to summon this historically constructed alternative space, both derived within, and against, the death-cult of plantation production. It was the song of the counter-plantation.

#### **5.4.7 Internal Markets and Congo Square: Sounding Polyculture**

Perhaps one of the conceptions of jazz ensemble Weather Report’s 1978 album *Black Market* was the historical pantheon of Black Atlantic markets.<sup>1305</sup> The album’s title track begins with remixed Spanish-creole speaking voices of drummer Alex Acuña’s family so that “there’s the sound of many people talking, like a market.” From this space of heavily distorted and ambient vocals, the song’s funk-clave based bass line enters. Congo Square, like the musical space in *Black Market*, demonstrates the connection between self-sufficiency, Black-organized markets, and

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<sup>1304</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 9-11.

<sup>1305</sup> Weather Report, *Black Market* (Columbia, 1976).

musical and linguistic polycultures.<sup>1306</sup> What the band tries to capture, the sonic space of the Black market, was developed over centuries of Afro-Caribbean independent production. *Black Market's* emphasis on the “market” as a site of new relations, new languages, and generative of new forms of collective pleasure seems to square with the reading of Congo Square proposed below.

In the history of jazz, Congo Square holds a special place as a center of speculative theorizing. As Jerah Johnson notes, “No other single spot has been more often mentioned in scholarly speculations about the origins of jazz or about the relationship of pre-jazz New Orleans music to jazz itself.”<sup>1307</sup> Scholars on Congo Square have stressed its importance as a “safety valve” for keeping slaves contented;<sup>1308</sup> its importance as a site of African retention and survival;<sup>1309</sup> its dances which reflected sophisticated intra-African and Catholic creolization;<sup>1310</sup> and as a space which paradoxically produced whiteness by creating “a physical playground for imagined blackness that...gave free persons an opportunity to enjoy a curated and contained blackness.”<sup>1311</sup> But considerably less focus has been placed on one of Congo Square’s principal *raison d’être*: its fashioning a market for the internal economy of the surplus produced in enslaved gardens. As early as 1719, Jean-François Dumont of Quebec explained from his observations in Louisiana that “Most of the slaves clear grounds and cultivate on their own account,” and that those “who live

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<sup>1306</sup> Curt Bianchi, “Black Market | The Weather Report Annotated Discography,” 2017, <https://www.weatherreportdiscography.org/black-market/>.

<sup>1307</sup> Jerah Johnson, “New Orleans’s Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 32, no. 2 (1991): 119.

<sup>1308</sup> Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Freddi Williams Evans, *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans* (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011).

<sup>1309</sup> Freddi Williams Evans, *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans* (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011).

<sup>1310</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), 163.

<sup>1311</sup> Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery’s Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 117.

near or in the capital generally...sell in the city...fruits that are in season.”<sup>1312</sup> These activities became all but legally prescribed in the 1724 Code Noir, which specified Sundays as a non-laboring day and by which “parsimonious masters encouraged bondspersons to grow crops for their own sustenance for sale in Congo Square’s weekend markets.”<sup>1313</sup> This legislation was distinct from those in the United States South in that it allowed for unsupervised days off.<sup>1314</sup>

The economic role of Congo Square may have long overshadowed its recreational component, as it was not documented as a dancing ground until 1808. Before that time, first-hand accounts describe African dancing on the levee at the riverfront.<sup>1315</sup> But rather than assign either garden markets or dance-music causal primacy, it appears that these activities developed together and strengthened one another. Pointing to the prevalence of Black vendors and the coincidental creation of a fort in the vicinity of the dance grounds manned with Black troops, Emily Clark writes that, “It is easy to imagine a scenario at the end of the eighteenth century in which a confluence of relatively sympathetic black guards and a few intrepid free black business owners supplying refreshments helped turn the open space in front of Fort Fernando into the city’s regular dancing ground for those of African descent.”<sup>1316</sup> Yet Clark underemphasizes the extent of market activity. As Johnson notes, “Congo Plain’s long association with a market function out of which the dancing grew...vendors and their friends wiled away the day between their occasional

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<sup>1312</sup> Although published later, Jean-François visited the Louisiana in 1719. Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Mémoires historiques sur la Louisiane contenant ce qui y est arrive de plus memorable depuis l’année 1687, jusqu’à present...*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1753), translated as “History of Louisiana” in Benjamin F. French, ed., *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, 5 vols. (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), V, 120.

<sup>1313</sup> Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery’s Metropolis*, 118.

<sup>1314</sup> As Jerah Johnson notes, “What made French Louisiana different was that slaves there came early to be recognized as having the right to use their free time virtually as they saw fit, with little or no supervision. Such a conception, much less such a practice, never prevailed anywhere in the rest of the South.” (124)

<sup>1315</sup> Emily Clark, “The Women across from Congo Square (1772-1840),” in *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Shannon Frystak and Mary Farmer-Kaiser, vol. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 1–14.

<sup>1316</sup> *Ibid.*

sales.”<sup>1317</sup> The word occasional here is also suspect, as these markets were so filled with produce that architect Benjamin Latrobe opined in 1820 that the city would starve without their foodstuffs.<sup>1318</sup>

Enslaved people made epic commitments to reach these market destinations: Mary Reynolds recalled that enslaved people on the Kilpatrick plantation “had to work the patches at night and dig the ‘taters and goobers at night,” and that if they wanted to sell in town, “they had to go at night, ‘cause they couldn’t ever spare a hand from the fields.”<sup>1319</sup> Slaves gathered from many miles to join together in dance, music, gossip, and the selling and bartering of foodstuffs. Thus, to consider Congo Square’s “vibrant, sophisticated synthesis”<sup>1320</sup> of culture and art, we must take equally seriously its foundation in gardening, and the organizations of labor that produced them in the various polycultures by overworked gardeners. If, as Dana Epstein describes, “Only in Place Congo in New Orleans was the African tradition able to continue in the open,” then we should expand what “African” meant beyond song and dance to include discussion of markets and the provision grounds.<sup>1321</sup>

Sidney Mintz has argued that markets in Jamaica not only created a space for economic exchange but were deeply cultural sites where elements of West African economic systems reappeared in the Americas. In particular, Mintz focuses on the central roles of women in these exchanges. “There is ample reason to suppose that the [internal] market system in Jamaica had important African antecedents,” explains Mintz:

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<sup>1317</sup> Johnson, “New Orleans’s Congo Square,” 141.

<sup>1318</sup> Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans: Diary & Sketches, 1818-1820* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 47.

<sup>1319</sup> Narrative of Mary Reynolds, Interview conducted ca. 1937, Dallas, Texas Federal Writers’ Project, WPA, *The Making of African American Identity: Vol. I, 1500-1865*, National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox.

<sup>1320</sup> Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 163.

<sup>1321</sup> Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 84-85.

The vast majority of Jamaican slaves came from West Africa, where markets were highly developed, and where women were predominantly the marketers—as they are in Jamaica today....The slaves were permitted to maintain or rework the African traditions of marketing...although they were severely punished for attempting to perpetuate certain other features of their African cultures.<sup>1322</sup>

Market women pointed to a distinct Afro-Atlantic political economy with gender relations distinct from those of the European settler project. As Zella Palmer notes, “Historically, women in West and Central Africa have always dominated the culinary arts, agriculture and the market. Africa’s matriarchal society placed women at the center of trade and politics.”<sup>1323</sup> Indeed, by the 15th century, European traders who frequented West African coastal cities documented the roles of elite African women as food producers and sellers.<sup>1324</sup> As in the Caribbean, both enslaved and free Black women were prominent in Congo Square, directing economy activity. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century, three free women of color purchased the houses and land in Congo Square’s perimeter as a way of benefiting from the economic and cultural exchanges and protect the neighborhood from encroachment.<sup>1325</sup>

Women took advantage of their important roles in market life to advance revolutionary causes against the order of patriarchal slavery. The bridge between plantation and urban markets were a class of women merchants known as higglers or pedlars. “No character is so dangerous in this Country as that of a Pedlar,” reported a group of Jamaica’s north coast planters in 1792, and the opined that “perhaps there was never a rebellion among the Slaves in the West India Islands

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<sup>1322</sup> Sidney W. Mintz, “The Jamaican Internal Marketing Pattern: Some Notes and Hypotheses,” *Social and Economic Studies* 4, no. 1 (1955): 96.

<sup>1323</sup> Zella Palmer, “Belle New Orleans: The History of Creole Cuisinieres,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies (Online)* 11, no. 6 (2018): 186

<sup>1324</sup> Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>1325</sup> Emily Clark, “The Women across from Congo Square (1772-1840),” in *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Shannon Frystak and Mary Farmer-Kaiser, vol. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 1–14.

which was not either entirely, or in part carried on through this Class of People.”<sup>1326</sup> As Julius Scott notes, maroon revolutionaries such as Mackandal “made brilliant use of a network of itinerant traders to predict and control events at long distances.”<sup>1327</sup> This dangerous class of semi-free women merchants could not have existed without the internal gardening system, nor could the gardening system would not have existed as a viable alternative to plantation capitalism without their enterprise, ingenuity, and logistical brilliance. Writing in 1774, the Jamaican plantocrat Edward Long calculated that twenty percent of Jamaica’s hard currency was circulating in the slaves’ internal economy.<sup>1328</sup>

The documented role of Pedlars (also known as higglers) in supporting clandestine organizing points to a larger phenomenon associated with Black markets: patrons traded not only wares but also political and musical information. As Berlin and Morgan note:

Market day became the occasion for slaves – sometimes joined by free blacks and slaveholding whites – to review their own standing and plan ways to improve their lot, generally to the disadvantage of the planter class. The process of redefining their own interests, which began in gardens and provision grounds, crystallized in market day. Even when slaves left the market with no more in their pockets than when they arrived, they carried ideas of incalculable worth.<sup>1329</sup>

Despite the ongoing brutality of masters, Louisiana’s internal economies that Latrobe noted were so crucial for New Orleans’s survival, expanded and sustained new cultural forms until the end of the Civil War. To create such spaces, plantation dissidents had to be prepared to collectively

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<sup>1326</sup> “Minutes of the proceedings of the Committee of Secrecy and Safety in the Parish of St. James’s, Jamaica,” 1792, quoted in Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018), 28.

<sup>1327</sup> Scott, *The Common Wind*, 29.

<sup>1328</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), I: 537.

<sup>1329</sup> Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, “Introduction: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas,” in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 23.

struggle against plantation owners for their right to produce on their own terms.<sup>1330</sup> They had to build alliances across ethnicity and language. They would also have to adapt African and Afro-Caribbean botanical knowledge to the soil of Louisiana, incorporating and transforming knowledges into a plantation polyculture. Such knowledge was likely complemented by the arrival of the Saint-Domingue refugees and illegally captured freedpeople from liberated Haiti by smugglers.<sup>1331</sup> As discussed earlier, Haiti developed the world's first "multi-fundia" nation, where small farms and regional markets became so prolific as to assume the nation's dominant mode of production. These forms of production and exchange were reproduced in Louisiana, and markets such as Congo Square were crucial manifestations of this alternative civilization.

### 5.5 Musical Transfiguration: Brass Bands as Escape Agriculture

*Where are they  
The yam pyramids which challenged the sun  
In busy barns  
Where are they  
The pumpkins which caressed earthbreast  
Like mammary burdens  
Where are they  
The pods which sweetened harvest air  
With the clatter of dispersing seeds?  
Where are they? Where are thy?*

- Osundare, "Harvestcall"

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<sup>1330</sup> See McDonald, 'Independent Economic Production', pp.279-92; and McDonald, *Material Culture*, pp.54-6, 63-8.

<sup>1331</sup> In 1803, the French prefect Pierre Clément de Lausat complained of "criminally greedy traders [who] were bringing in Negroes from Saint-Domingue. With each day the evil worsened." Pierre Clement de Laussat, *Memoirs of My Life*, 2nd ed. (1831; LSU Press, 2003), 18; quoted in David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., "Saint-Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 213.

Sunny Henry hated working on in the cane fields. He grew up on the Magnolia plantation of two or three hundred. His school was on the plantation, as was the Baptist church he attended. They did not care for the name Magnolia, and instead knew it as the “Governor Warmoth plantation.” In this labor camp, the ex-Governor may as well have had the power of a head of state. Warmoth, a Reconstruction politician who claimed to fight for Black equality but resisted calls for land redistribution, didn’t seem to mind too much that the young men like Henry did not continue their school past the seventh grade. For that matter, he did not seem to mind the backbreaking work for low pay in the fields, “sun-up until sun-down.”<sup>1332</sup> The work was so intense that during grinding season that one of the few outlets of Black culture, dances, came to a halt.<sup>1333</sup>

But where Magnolia plantation lacked in health care, education, and meaningful economic mobility, it excelled in one area: brass band education. Twice a week, Warmoth hired an accomplished Creole of Color musician, James Humphrey, to teach a predominantly youth band of sixteen members how to play. The scenes described by his pupils are strikingly picturesque against the grim backdrop of these work camps. Attired in swallowtail coat, Humphrey would be met by adoring students, eager to accompany him to practice or, sometimes, his quarters—he might have to spend the night if things went late. Humphrey taught bands all across the sugar plantation belt, and by the time Henry started learning how to play at fifteen years old (the same age when his schooling ended), Humphrey had developed a system. “The first thing he would do, that battery—that’s the first thing he would get straight first—that’s the bass and the trombone and the drum.” Next, Humphrey would teach trumpets, and then would include clarinets and the rest of

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<sup>1332</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, January 8, 1959, HJA.

<sup>1333</sup> Karl Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Plaquemines* (New Orleans: Basin Street Press, 1997).

the band. Often he would write out specific exercises and songs, on the fly, for his ensembles based on their musical needs or just what the moment called for. “I gone tell you,” explained Henry, “the way he taught the boys, I think it was the right way.”<sup>1334</sup>

History would agree with Henry’s assessment. Amongst New Orleans’s sizable population of transplanted plantation players, it is more difficult to find an instrumentalist who was not taught by Humphrey than find his students. They were not only great players with a distinct sensibility around time and tone, but they were also, crucially, able to read notated music, and thus able to join the elite Black parade bands of New Orleans. At times, Humphrey might be contracted to teach bands on five different plantations at the same time, each with sixteen or more musicians. Trumpet player Chris Kelly, trombonist William Bébé Ridgley, and Kid Ory are among those who benefited from education with the man they affectionately called “the Professor.” Humphrey not only taught musicians, but accompanied them on marches through the plantation districts: “We used to go from place to place,” explained Henry, such as “Woodland [plantation], and used to go to St. Sophie, and go to Deer Range, and other places.” Some of these plantations were only accessible by boat, and bands would ride a ferry to make these trips—repurposing the geography that made sugar possible to create festive, cross-border events on the other side of the river.<sup>1335</sup>

The families that lived on these plantations went back generations, many to antebellum slavery. Would the audience and artists at the site of one concert, the Wood Lawn plantation, have remembered that after the Civil War, the lands were farmed by freedpeople who subdivided the former sugar plantation for their own purposes? Only thirty years earlier, in January 1865, a community of Freedmen requested the Freedman’s Bureau “the opportunity of working the Place

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<sup>1334</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, January 8, 1959, HJA.

<sup>1335</sup> Karl Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Plaquemines* (New Orleans: Basin Street Press, 1997).

among ourselves”, and their request was granted. A review by a treasury inspector some months later was able to “certify, that taking into consideration their limited means in stock and supplies...they are well advanced with their work,” but he still disapproved of the crops they grew: he recommended they grow cotton seed.<sup>1336</sup> During this period, reports abound of Louisianan freedpeople living off the land on their own terms, despite planter obstinacy: In Port Hudson, one officer reported that “in certain sections of the state they [freedpeople] have been told that all plantations were to be divided amongst them” and proceeded to make it so.<sup>1337</sup> One officer noted that freedmen were “unwilling to do anything except cultivate and harvest their own plots.”<sup>1338</sup> One planter in Bayou Black complained “Much trouble has resulted from negroes being allowed to keep horses and hogs,” making them less in need of plantation wages.<sup>1339</sup> One general, considerably more sympathetic to planters than freedmen, complained that “There are at least thirty-five hundred negroes” who were on plantations but were “unemployed,” and still others who “may be classed as vagrants, as they live in the swamps, and in the shanties in the vicinity of Algiers and Gretna.” He complained of frequent thefts of plantation tools and animals, and that his guard had “[on] some instances...met with armed resistance from them.” He committed to “breaking up” these colonies of squatters.<sup>1340</sup>

In the plantation districts where brass bands became the primary vehicle of agency for some Black men and women, a generation of prior freedpeople initiated a temporary transformation of

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<sup>1336</sup> G. P. Davis to Capt. H. Stiles, 21 Jan. 1865; in Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Lower South*, series 1, vol. 2, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 573.

<sup>1337</sup> Capt Alex D. Bailie to Tho<sup>s</sup> W Conway Esq., 17 Aug. 1865; in Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Land & Labor, 1865*, series 3, vol. 1, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 706.

<sup>1338</sup> Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1, 689.

<sup>1339</sup> A. McCollam to B. F. Flanders, 15 Nov. 1864; Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 1, vol. 2, 556.

<sup>1340</sup> W<sup>m</sup> E Dougherty to Lieut. D. G. Fenno, 7 Nov. 1865; Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1, 578.

social relations that had felt like a revolution. Formerly enslaved people refused to grow what they called “slave crops,” such as cotton and sugar. According to one military observer, they hated these crops because they “had enriched the masters, but had not fed them.”<sup>1341</sup> Freedwoman Julia Woodrich of La Fouché Crossing, remembered that “After we was sat free we stayed in a shack in de pasture... We lived off of berries and fish, crawfish and ever’thin’ like that, for a long time after us was free.”<sup>1342</sup> While Woodrich lived off the land, on several plantations, freedpeople took the opportunity to expand their gardening lots to unprecedented proportions. One Louisiana Freedman Bureau’s agent—an agency tasked with supervising the transition from slavery to freedom—noted: “A crop had been planted by the people on the place, in which all were to share.”<sup>1343</sup> The opinion of Freedman’s Bureau agents varied widely; one denounced these new commons as “contrary to the laws of Nature and Civilization as I know them.”<sup>1344</sup> Another cheered the initiative of freedpeople. “Nothing, not even the bestowal of suffrage, will so material aid destroying the effects of Slavery: in the creation of a self-reliant independent yeomanry out of former slaves.”<sup>1345</sup> Martin R. Delany, who had argued in 1852 that the African-descended should endeavor to create a Black state outside of the United States, became a major advocate in the freedman’s bureau and changed his tune: “Get up a community and get all the lands you can—if you cannot get any singly,”<sup>1346</sup>

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<sup>1341</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 51-118; Foner quotes Elizabeth W. Pearson, ed., *Letters From Port Royal Written at the Time of the Civil War* (Boston, 1906), 181. The final inline quote is from a Union officer who claimed familiarity with the freedpeople’s point of view.

<sup>1342</sup> “Julia Woodrich,” in Lynette Ater Tanner, ed., *Chained to the Land: Voices from Cotton & Cane Plantations* (Salem, NC: Blair, 2014), Location 2919 (Kindle Version).

<sup>1343</sup> Captain Richard J Hinton to Captain T.W. Clarke, 31 July 1865; Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1, 627.

<sup>1344</sup> Lieut. A.J. Willard in Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 689.

<sup>1345</sup> Captain Richard J Hinton to Captain T.W. Clarke, 31 July 1865; Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1, 632.

<sup>1346</sup> *Ibid.*, for Delany’s argument for emigration, see Martin Robison Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia: Humanities Press, 1852).

while the *Free Man's Press* of Austin wrote: "A good way is to club together and buy a piece of land and divide it up into lots."<sup>1347</sup> As I demonstrate in Chapters 1 and 5, respectively, radical labor activists in New Orleans and rural Alabama saw collective land ownership as the core promise of emancipation. From Western North Carolina to Virginia to Louisiana, documented Black communes proliferated, and innumerable thousands more emerged when freedpeople refused to grow the slave crop and instead built regenerative ecosystems.<sup>1348</sup>

These were not intuitive occurrences, but carefully planned and negotiated takeovers. Plantations had been work camps of horrific suffering and subaltern resistance. Suddenly, almost overnight, they became sites of some of the most radical experiments in collective democracy and production in United States history.<sup>1349</sup> In the middle of tremendous uncertainty, freedpeople

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<sup>1347</sup> *The Free Man's Press*, Austin, Texas, August 1, 1868.

<sup>1348</sup> Danielle Dulken, "A Black Kingdom in Postbellum Appalachia," *Scalawag*, September 9, 2019, <https://scalawagmagazine.org/2019/09/black-appalachia-kingdom/>, accessed October 25, 2020; Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>1349</sup> A comprehensive list of literature on labor and land in post-emancipation South includes Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964); Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Edward Magdol, *A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen's Community* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977); Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); Gerald David Jaynes, *Branches without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862–1882* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). For more on freedpeople's labor mobilizations, see Foner, *Reconstruction*; Ira Berlin et al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, *Freedpeople in the Tobacco South: Virginia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862–1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Susan Eva O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Regosin, *Freedom's Promise: Ex-slave Families and Citizenship in the Age of Emancipation* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002); Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); Nancy Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861–1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); John David Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice: Black Voices from Reconstruction, 1865-*

resisted both the hostility and machinations of former planters and contradictory military leadership to claim the crops as their own. As historian Daniel Mandell notes, “African Americans throughout the South who had remained on plantations claimed the freedom from dependency as well as slavery, planting food crops and sometimes a little cotton, some as households and some communally. They created governing councils, churches, and schools, and in various ways sought to control their land.”<sup>1350</sup> These portended to a significance beyond individualistic gain. Andrew Zimmerman argues that when “freedpeople occupied and cultivated lands taken from slaveholders during the American Civil War” this “was not simply an outcome of Union victories.” These were deliberate activities, rooted in a vision of the commons developed over decades and even centuries. “The Union victory depended on the creation of [these] new commons.” Not only were they revolutionary, these projects were experimental and unfolding—they chartered paths unknown and depended on the mutual trust and new forms of decision making for all involved. “These economic activities,” suggests Zimmerman, “did not just grasp at a preexisting conception of freedom, but actually defined, experimented with, and created freedom.”<sup>1351</sup>

To be fair, capitalist-oriented collective leasing was not uncommon amongst some freedpeople, but such activity did not reflect the majority of lessees.<sup>1352</sup> Even when surplus crops were sold in markets, such as by Sarah Williams who brought three hogs, twenty bushels of corn,

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1877 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014); Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015); Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

<sup>1350</sup> Daniel R. Mandell, *The Lost Tradition of Economic Equality in America, 1600–1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 235.

<sup>1351</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, “Africa and the American Civil War: The Geopolitics of Freedom and the Production of Commons,” in *The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War*, ed. Jörg Nagler, Don Harrison Doyle, and Marcus Gräser (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 128.

<sup>1352</sup> For instance, the children of William Johnson, a well-known Black barber who had been free before the world, leased plantations from white landowners in Natchez county and contracted freedpeople to work the land.

eighty pounds of cotton in seed, and one dozen chickens to sell in New Orleans in 1864, revenues from sales were often circulated collectively.<sup>1353</sup> This collectivist mechanism led Captain Hilton to theorize that “if you locate forty families in a colony, they can aid in support of school...At Huntsville they commenced to build a new church.”<sup>1354</sup>

Perhaps most striking, these patterns recurred in almost every post-emancipation population in sugar economies throughout the Caribbean. In 1851, free Black Guyanese sugar plantation laborers pooled their resources and established independent villages “under democratic organization and communal principles.” The village movement eventually incorporated over half of Guyana’s postemancipation freedpeople population.<sup>1355</sup> Similar cooperative endeavors abounded in the post emancipation periods in Jamaica, Cuba, and most systemically, Haiti. One English visitor noted that laborers on one Haitian landowners’ plantation that former slaves “appropriate to themselves almost the whole of the provisions which the land furnishes, sending on down a few of the rarer vegetables, beans, peas, and artichokes to their master.”<sup>1356</sup> Such sights were widespread, and Haiti was fundamentally unable to resurrect plantation production. “The Haitian Revolution gave rise to a free system of decentralized, small-scale agriculture that allowed for unprecedented demographic growth,” notes Johnhenry Gonzalez, and for the rural majority, “the collapse of sugar exports and the destruction of the plantation infrastructure represented

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<sup>1353</sup> Jotham W. Horton to Hon. B.F. Flanders, 16 Nov. 1864, and W.H. Wilder to Cozzens, 1 Jan. 1864, Vol.72, p.21, Reports of the Inspectors of Plantations, 3rd Agency, RG 366; quoted in Paul K. Eiss, “A Share in the Land: Freedpeople and the Government of Labour in Southern Louisiana, 1862-65.” *Slavery & Abolition* 19, no. 1 (1998): 81-82.

<sup>1354</sup> Captain Richard J Hinton to Captain T.W. Clarke, 31 July 1865; Steven Hahn et al., eds., *Freedom*, series 3, vol. 1, 632.

<sup>1355</sup> “The Economic Impact of Slave Emancipation on British Guiana, 1832-1852,” *The Economic History Review* 2, no. 25 (November 1972): 588–608; Edward Magdol, *A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen’s Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 175.

<sup>1356</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 74-75.

success.”<sup>1357</sup> Some sixty years later, as sugar production collapsed in Southern Louisiana, “rural freedpeople saw whole new worlds open up before them.”<sup>1358</sup>

The unique conditions of sugar plantations partly explains the success of collective organizing strategies amongst Louisiana freedpeople. Unlike sharecropping arrangements in the cotton-picking districts, on sugar plantations hundreds of freedpeople lived in direct proximity to each other. They built institutions, mutual aid societies, and held mass meetings with relative ease. For centuries, dense patterns of collective work created unique challenges and opportunities for collective culture and resistance to flourish, and these very conditions of work, too, played a large role in cooperative mobilizations. As Rebecca Scott noted, even after emancipation, those who continued to work for others growing sugar had a means of resistance that was not shared elsewhere. “The continuity of gang wage labor gave sugar workers a leverage and a mechanism for self-defense that sharecroppers in the cotton districts could rarely aspire to. The same labor segmentation that fences black workers into specific job and not others created spaces in which solidarity could be constructed and enforced by workers themselves.”<sup>1359</sup> Strikes continued in the sugar region until 1887, twelve years after equivalent resistance was brutally suppressed in Mississippi and Alabama.<sup>1360</sup>

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<sup>1357</sup> Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 3-4. See also Laurent Dubois and Richard Lee Turits, *Freedom Roots: Histories from the Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Picador Paper, 2013), 106; David Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context: Ethnicity, Economy and Revolt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), 176-79.

<sup>1358</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 37.

<sup>1359</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 83

<sup>1360</sup> There are important examples of organizing amongst non-sugar Black farmhand and rural workers throughout the 1880s. The Colored Farmers’ Alliance, which had its origin in Texas, was founded on December, 11, 1886. But Louisiana’s sugar districts were unique in the length of their militancy and the complicated tactical decisions planters had to make in order to preserve crops, especially when strike commenced right at harvest season—which they usually did. Jeffrey Gould, “The Strike of 1887: Louisiana Sugar War,” *Southern Exposure* 12 (November 1984): 45–55; US Senate Report No. 704, “Alabama in 1874, 1875 and 1876,” 149, 150, 155, 156, 168, 173; NYT, June 5, 1876; Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South* (Baton

These same conditions made communal music making particularly powerful. While music transformed in light of the Civil War and Reconstruction—subjects addressed in detail in Chapter 5—postemancipation music had in common with its pre-abolition predecessors a means of coordinating a counter-plantation movement. Music accompanied strikes, celebrations, and the ongoing production of foodstuffs. According to jazz musicians who grew up cutting cane, such as William “Bébé” Ridgley, their “songs could’ve mixed” into the songs of early jazz which, “wouldn’t be the same thing, but some of the words, some of the stuff like that” might have made their way into jazz repertoire. Indeed, one of the songs often sung in the cane fields was “When the Saints go Marching In.”<sup>1361</sup> Music was needed to get through the day, and sometimes, even to survive: Kid Ory remembered it was “hot as hell” working in the fields in the summer, and youngsters like himself and Louis James filled up water in buckets at the river and brought them to cane cutters, constantly.<sup>1362</sup> Punch Miller, another cane cutter who became a musician, remembered that when he and others cut cane, “almost everyone would be singing.” One of the songs he remembered was: “I want to leave this place and find a better home.”<sup>1363</sup> Sonic enactments of marronage through a collective body of songs developed in the cane fields and field culture, and prefigured how music would serve was a means of imaging and enacting a new world.

As new works songs proliferated, a rural brass band culture was already widespread by the 1870s. In Thibodaux, a town in the heart Lafourche Parish otherwise known as Louisiana’s “sugar

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Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 320; US Senate, *Mississippi in 1875. Report of the Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington: Government Print Office, 1876); General R. M. Humphrey, “History of the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union” in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present, Vol. 3, The Black Worker during the Era of the Knights of Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 287-91.

<sup>1361</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, January 8, 1959, HJA; William “Bébé” Ridgley, Interview, June 2, 1959.

<sup>1362</sup> Kid Ory, Autobiography; see also McCusker, *Creole Trombone*, Chapter 1 and 2.

<sup>1363</sup> Miller, “Interview Digest, August 20, 1959,” 3; Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27.

bowl” and located 47 miles as the crow flies from New Orleans, a local Democratic newspaper complained that “the air was rent by the jarring sounds of a colored brass band” at a Republican mass meeting.<sup>1364</sup> These fusions of grassroots democracy, labor activism, and brass band performance – what I term brassroots democracy – are discussed at length in Chapter 5, and the sugar parishes were centers of this movement. Halls on plantations or plantation towns became sites for brass band performance and linked urban and rural outposts of Black life. “Excursion from New Orleans to Thibodaux by colored lodge,” announced one newspaper, “procession paraded through the principle [*sic*] streets of the town - preceded by a fine band of music in full uniform from New Orleans, also by the colored band of Thibodaux - a night a grand ball was held at Waverly Hall.”<sup>1365</sup>

The collapsing of divisions between urban New Orleans and the rural sugar parishes reflected a larger process; as Behrend notes, “The flow of information and people from plantation to city and back again facilitated the spread of new ideas about freedom, politics, and community.”<sup>1366</sup> For instance, Junius Bailey, born a slave in Assumption Parish in 1857, was five years old when Union occupation of Louisiana commenced; he was able to go to public schools after the war, trained as a schoolteacher, attended Leyland University, ran for sheriff in Lafourche Parish in 1884, and became a member of a Black Masonic lodge in Thibodaux. “He seems to have moved around very widely, acquiring training in New Orleans, and taking up teaching positions

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<sup>1364</sup> *Thibodaux Sentinel*, Sept. 16, 1876; Karl Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Ascension* (New Orleans: Basin Street Press, 1997), 187-88.

<sup>1365</sup> June 14, 1879; quoted in Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Ascension*, 74.

<sup>1366</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 115.

in a variety of places.”<sup>1367</sup> James Humphrey’s own rural music education initiative was part of a large process of Black organizing in the sugar parishes.

Humphrey and Bailey were not only linked by their cross-plantation schedule. Rural-urban musical exchanges aestheticized and facilitated the consolidation of this new political consciousness. One of the most concrete ways this can be evinced is that bands helped fundraise for plantation schools. In 1882, a local newspaper reports that “Entertainments by teachers and patrons of Corp. Colored School. The LaFourche Band furnished the music on said occasion free of charge. Profit - \$52.00.”<sup>1368</sup> Similarly, in 1885, for the “Teachers Institute program,” “an audience of more than 500 people assembled in the hall” to hear “music by the colored band that volunteered its services. Mr. Shieb spoke upon the subject of education after the band had played several excellent pieces Prof. Puckette addressed the audience on the subject of spelling.”<sup>1369</sup> James Humphrey also performed for charities, SPACs, and orphanages.<sup>1370</sup>

Plantation brass bands were also deeply tied to mutual aid associations that existed amongst plantation workers; Sunny Henry explained in an interview how these rural Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs essentially funded the bands and also were the guarantors of musical excellence. The only way into a band was by joining “The fraternity lodges, that's the onliest way they'd be in it.” He explained that they when “you're sick they give you a little benefit” and “they gave meetings sometimes twice a month.” Indeed, New Orleans historians have highlighted how SAPCs provided

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<sup>1367</sup> Rebecca Scott, “‘Stubborn and Disposed to Stand Their Ground’: Black Militia, Sugar Workers and the Dynamics of Collective Action in the Louisiana Sugar Bowl, 1863–87,” *Slavery & Abolition* 20, no. 1 (April 1999): 13.

<sup>1368</sup> *Thibodaux Sentinel*, Dec. 31, 1881; quoted in Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Ascension*, 87.

<sup>1369</sup> *Thibodaux Sentinel*, June 13, 1885 quoted in Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Ascension*, 91.

<sup>1370</sup> See figure XX above; see also Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Plaquemines*, 13; and Koenig, “Humphrey: Part I,” 28.

health insurance, funerals, and were spaces for political decision making. Sharing bands was a way to acknowledge the networks that bound remote workers to one another, as the Sunday parades to other plantations were organized by lodges that communicated with one another.<sup>1371</sup>

Perhaps it is not necessary to state that the ambitious projects of collective agriculture in the United States South did not materialize into long-term gains in landownership by Black sugar workers. As Julie Saville has noted, Reconstruction politics provided a “narrow channel for emancipated workers’ aspirations to gain recognition of their interests in the crop apart from wages.”<sup>1372</sup> In Chapter 1, I visited the subject of Black and Creole of Color communalism and the maneuvering of Republican centrists with pro-plantation sympathies, especially the man who opens this section, Governor Warmoth. Black leaders, invoking biblical metaphor, threatened Republican leadership. For instance, in 1877, former governor P.B.S. Pinchback relayed to President Hayes that Black agrarian leaders were dissatisfied with their party’s unfair distribution of federal “loaves and fishes,” a biblical reference to the commons.<sup>1373</sup> If the question of the loaves and fishes was not resolved, they resolved to start a colony of “Louisiana Negroes in Liberia.”<sup>1374</sup>

Massive violence was needed to recreate the system of plantation agriculture and resubordinate Black workers; when a Black labor leader in Natchitoches named Raymond Blunt was agitating his fellow workers to resist “white aristocratic miscreants” with labor strikes, the pro-planter *People’s Vindicator* denounced him and called for “someone [to] inaugurate a new

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<sup>1371</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, January 8, 1959, October 21, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1372</sup> Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Wage Labor to Free Labor in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 197.

<sup>1373</sup> Pinchback to Hayes, January 29, 1877, Hayes Papers; quoted in Philip Davis Uzee, “Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900.” (PhD Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1950).

<sup>1374</sup> Philip Davis Uzee, “Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900.” (PhD Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1950).

system of agriculture by planting [Raymond] Blunt.”<sup>1375</sup> Planters were adamant about denying Black farmers means to their subsistence: one planter noted that freedpeople “will starve and go naked before they will work for a white man if they get a patch of ground to live on and get from under,”<sup>1376</sup> and white landowners who sold or leased their land to Black farmers were scorned and threatened.<sup>1377</sup> Soon, most Black sugar workers were back working for their old bosses; in 1867, for instance, the previously-discussed Woodlawn plantation was back under the management of its pre-War owner, Duncan S. Cage, and it produced 280 hogsheads of sugar that year, reaching a high of 523 hogsheads in 1880.<sup>1378</sup>

In Thibodaux, colored bands are auspiciously silent in local press after 1887. This sudden gap corresponds with the largest labor strike during Louisiana’s Reconstruction and Redemption periods, and a defining massacre that brought sugar-parish labor activism to an abrupt halt. More than 10,000 “Black, mulatto, and white” sugar workers, with the organizational support from the innovative and interracial Knights of Labor (KOL), effectively shut down both the town of Thibodaux and the surrounding sugar parishes.<sup>1379</sup> None other than the forementioned organizer Junius Bailey was a major organizer of the movement, meaning that Thibodaux’s Black masons and affiliated musicians were at least aware of it, and more likely in support of it.<sup>1380</sup> Between

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<sup>1375</sup> Natchitoches *People’s Vindicator*, April 21, 1877; quoted in William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 19.

<sup>1376</sup> *Southern Cultivator*, XXV (Athens, GA), 69; quoted in Alan Conway, *The Reconstruction of Georgia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 108.

<sup>1377</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 43.

<sup>1378</sup> Louis Bouchereau, *Statement of the Sugar and Rice Crops Made in Louisiana in 1868-69* (New Orleans: Pelican Book and Job Printing Office, 1869), 60; Alcée Bouchereau, *Statement of the Sugar and Rice Crops Made in Louisiana in 1877-78* (New Orleans: Pelican Book and Job Printing Office, 1878); John Burkhardt Rehder, “Sugar Plantation Settlements of Southern Louisiana: A Cultural Geography” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1971), 337. A hogshead is a 250-litre barrel.

<sup>1379</sup> Rebecca Scott, “‘Stubborn and Disposed to Stand Their Ground’: Black Militia, Sugar Workers and the Dynamics of Collective Action in the Louisiana Sugar Bowl, 1863–87,” *Slavery & Abolition* 20, no. 1 (April 1, 1999): 103–26; Gould, “The Strike of 1887: Louisiana Sugar War.”

<sup>1380</sup> Scott, “Stubborn and Disposed to Stand Their Ground,” 103–26.

1883 and 1886, the Knights, whose ideology was cooperative and anti-monopolist, had organized several thousand black field hands and along with white craftsmen and railroad workers in the towns along the bayous. Bands and music were important tools of the movement; in Labor Day in Boston, the Knights employed the colored Boston Brass Band, and prior strikes, such as the 1874 sugar strike in nearby Houma, strikers had marched “peacefully...with fife and drum.”<sup>1381</sup> While primarily a fight over wages, strikes also brought together massive amounts of sugar workers from distant plantations to organize a common program, and at each one a call was put out to organize “sub-associations” to collectively rent and work lands.<sup>1382</sup>

The epic struggles between agrarian democracy and the South’s feudal variant of capitalism were not peripheral to the lives of jazz’s main musical innovators. These were the major movements and struggles of the day that defined the very contours of life, even for those who did not grow up on the plantations. The Creole of Color bandleader John Robichaux—who was born in the final few days of the Civil War: January 16, 1866—was a bass drummer in the trendsetting Excelsior Brass Band from 1892 to 1903. Robichaux was an influential bandleader himself, employing musicians such as Lorenzo Tio Sr., Manuel Perez, and Dee Dee Chandler, a Haitian-New Orleanian Creole of Color credited for helping develop the first polyrhythmic drum set. For

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<sup>1381</sup> *The Labor Leader* (Boston), September 3, 1887; *The Freeman*, September 10, 1887; Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor’s Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1996), 312; *Thibodaux Sentinel*, Jan. 17, 24, 1874; John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana’s Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 162.

<sup>1382</sup> Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 162. During 1880 strikes in Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. James parishes, Black labor leader Andrew Fox made “the wildest declarations,” specifically “a most incendiary speech” at a mass meeting, declaring that the federal government “would confiscate lands and distribute them among freedmen.” See Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. 3, *The Black Worker during the Era of the Knights of Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 52–65; *Thibodaux Sentinel*, Apr. 3, 10, 24, 1880; the final quotation is from Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 178.

a long time, his band was considered New Orleans's best—making them a ripe target for challenges from Buddy Bolden and a new blues-based music.

Before Robichaux's play-offs with Bolden, however, and even before his move to New Orleans, Robichaux lived a fulfilling life as a prominent bandleader in Thibodaux. This was a city that produced, in addition to Robichaux, New Orleans jazz contributors Ed Paines (cornet), drummers Albert and Clay Jiles (drums), Louis James (clarinet), Joe Gabriel (guitar and trumpet) and others. Musicians in Thibodaux were busy, and like their New Orleans peers were often employed developing music in the service of communal mobilizations: for fire companies, for mutual aid societies such as Masonic lodges, and even for plantations during carnival season.<sup>1383</sup>

When the KOL called the strike on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1887, the critical harvest season was approaching, and with the Knights enjoying bi-racial support, they felt that their call for wages of \$1.25 a day, the elimination of scrip (in-kind payment at company stores), and full payment every fortnight would bring the LSPA to the bargaining table.<sup>1384</sup> Black workers were successful in preventing plantations from being worked by white labor, and shot at scabs on John Phrar's plantation in St. Mary Parish.<sup>1385</sup> As planters evicted recalcitrant Black workers from their plantation homes, a stream of refugees poured into Thibodeaux, who held defiant and re-moralizing meetings all over town, from the masonic lodge to coffee houses.<sup>1386</sup> When near-frost threatened to eliminate all their cane, spooked planters and white paramilitaries began attacking peaceful strikers, and opened fire inside a Thibodeaux coffee shop frequented by African

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<sup>1383</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstorm, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 13.

<sup>1384</sup> Rick Halpern, "Solving the 'Labour Problem': Race, Work and the State in the Sugar Industries of Louisiana and Natal, 1870-1910," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 22-23;

<sup>1385</sup> Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 186.

<sup>1386</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

Americans, killing one and wounding another. Finally, on November 23, violence in a cornfield one hundred yards from the South end of town evolved into a full-scale pogrom, as white militias “hunted up the Leaders, & every one that was found or any suspicious character was shot.” By the end of it, anywhere from thirty to hundreds of strikers were dead, and, according to one planter, had “settle[d] the question of who is to rule[,] the n----r or the White man...for the next 50 years.”<sup>1387</sup>

No small part of this rule was the reinstating of planter bans on public Black music that was so linked to antebellum planters’ effective management of sugar production. Robichaux and many other musicians soon left for New Orleans.<sup>1388</sup> Robichaux completed his marriage to his fiancée, named, coincidentally, Louisa Thibodaux, in 1888, and moved to New Orleans shortly after. For these musicians, the violent repression of the strikers marked the end of an era in the town and was an impetus to move to what they perceived to be a less reactionary and more tolerant New Orleans.<sup>1389</sup>

As thousands moved to New Orleans, hundreds of thousands of others continued living in the sugar district and resisted plantation labor by absenteeism.<sup>1390</sup> Denied land of their own, and massacred when they attempted to strike, Black workers still wielded a potent weapon: they could refuse to come to work. Black workers often preferred migration and poverty to the “stable” life

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<sup>1387</sup> M. Pugh to E. F. Pugh, Nov. 25, 1887, Mary W. Pugh Papers, Louisiana State University, quoted in *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 187.

<sup>1388</sup> Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans*, 87.

<sup>1389</sup> Dan Vernhettes and Bo Lindstorm, *Jazz Puzzles: Volume 1* (Saint Etienne, France: Lori Ofsset Titoulet, 2012), 14.

<sup>1390</sup> On the first wave of migration in the 1880s and 90s, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 337-38; Burton William Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 25; Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans*, 135; Sherrie Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen” (New Orleans: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 2004), 215-217.

in the gruesome high-tech labor camps that were postbellum sugar plantations. As early as February 1866, the West Baton Rouge *Sugar Planter* called attention to the plantations lying idle from lack of hands. “The fact, long ere this, must have become patent to every reflecting mind,” the editor wrote, “that a substitute for negro labor must soon be procured.”<sup>1391</sup> Writing in 1871, Robert Somers wrote, “The great law of demand and supply in the matter of labour operates here under curious circumstances, the supply neither knowing what it is worth nor what it wants, and the demand, having no other shift, forced to tray all kinds of dodges.”<sup>1392</sup> One observer in April, 1869, noted that the majority refused to make contracts for the year; instead of working they congregated “in and around the cities and towns, where they scarcely ever pretend to engage in regular labor; they talk politics and lead profligate and corrupt lives and subsist in the most wretched manner.”<sup>1393</sup> In 1874 the New Orleans *Picayune* reported that “Large sections of the State are overrun by lawless bands of negroes, who visit plantations, stop all work, threatened the lives of the peaceful and contended laborers, and fill the county with terror.”<sup>1394</sup> As planter Donaldson Caffery exclaimed about this phenomenon, “Damn the negroes! As long as we have to use them there's nothing to be made in this infernal sugar business!”<sup>1395</sup> During the “Kansas Fever” exodus, when thousands of families within Black rural communities attempted to move to Kansas to recreate their visions of the commons, planters and their allies, armed with shotguns, prevented

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<sup>1391</sup> West Baton Rouge *Sugar Planter*, February 10, 1866.

<sup>1392</sup> Robert Somers, *The Southern States Since the War, 1870-1* (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1871), 222.

<sup>1393</sup> Louis Boucherea and Alcée Bouchereau, *Statement of Sugar and Rice Crops made in Louisiana*, (New Orleans, 1868-1917), *1868-69*, vii; quoted in Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 237.

<sup>1394</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, 1874, quoted in Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 237

<sup>1395</sup> Donelson Caffery and Family Papers, Letterbooks, volume 4, 'Donelson Caffery to Son' (Baton Rouge, LA, n.d.), LLMVC; quoted in Rick Halpern, “Solving the ‘Labour Problem’: Race, Work and the State in the Sugar Industries of Louisiana and Natal, 1870-1910,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 20.

blacks from boarding steamboats along the Mississippi.<sup>1396</sup> As Halpern notes, discourses about the “labor problem” were really about white elites who were “struggling to install a new racial order - one that would lock African Americans into a subordinate, landless agricultural proletariat in rural Louisiana.”<sup>1397</sup> Planters tried to weaken Black labor by contracting two thousand Chinese laborers in 1867 – 1873, but they proved equally rebellious, and planters discontinued the program. Many of them had worked on Cuba’s sugar plantations prior to their arrival in Louisiana; their musical instruments, including gongs, woodblocks, and cymbals, became widely incorporated by African American musicians into the drum set, as the *Suona* became integrated into Afro-Cuban carnival processions in Santiago de Cuba. This fascinating instance of Afro-Asian culture exchange exceeds the scope of this chapter, but it reflects how the social worlds of the plantation were prolific as laboratories for musical exchange.<sup>1398</sup>

Planters then tried a different strategy: they began hiring bands to play for and, in some cases, offer musical training to rural laborers. These ended up becoming important tools to stabilize workforces and entice migrant workers during cutting season. Kid Ory, who grew up on the

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<sup>1396</sup> Morgan D. Peoples, “‘Kansas Fever’ in North Louisiana,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 11, no. 2 (1970): 121–35; Halpern, “Solving the ‘Labour Problem’,” 22.

<sup>1397</sup> Rick Halpern, “Solving the ‘Labour Problem’: Race, Work and the State in the Sugar Industries of Louisiana and Natal, 1870-1910,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 21.

<sup>1398</sup> The literature on Chinese coolie labor in Louisiana is rich, as is the literature on Chinese influences on the American drum set, although, to my knowledge, these literatures have not cited each other. See Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); Lucy M. Cohen, *Chinese in the Post-Civil War South: A People Without a History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 143; Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 137.

For an analysis of the Chinese influences of the drum set, see royal hartigan, “The American Drum Set: Black Musicians and Chinese Opera along the Mississippi River,” in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 288; Matthew R. Berger, “A Cultural History of the Drum Set: Proliferation from New Orleans to Cuba” (Master’s Theses, Prescott College, 2014), 32; Theodore Dennis Brown, “A History and Analysis of Jazz Drumming to 1942 (Volumes I and II)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), 48. On the influence of the *Suona* in Santiago de Cuba, see Rolando Pérez Fernández and Santiago Rodríguez González, “La Corneta China (*Suona*) En Cuba: Una Contribución Cultural Asiática Trascendente,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 139–60.

Woodland plantation, remembered that bands such as that of Henry Peyton, Charlie Galloway, and Edward Clem would come from New Orleans during and after the harvest season was over, both to bring migrant laborers in for the cane cutting season and to encourage workers to sign new, year-long contracts in order to meet labor demand for the next season, over drink and festivities.<sup>1399</sup> In fact, one band drew Ory across the state: he intended to move to Donaldsville to work at a lumber mill partially because he “thought he might get a chance to hear Claiborne Williams’s band.”<sup>1400</sup> (He was duped, the band never arrived and Ory was stuck in a predatory contract.)

Eventually, plantation owners financed the purchasing of musical instruments, and hired musical instructors to teach them to freedpeople. According to James Humphrey’s grandson, Percy, “The plantation owners wanted to keep the people interested and wanted them to learn something other than farming.”<sup>1401</sup> Despite some individual cases, Black and Creole of Color working class communities were not at large “duped” by these institutions: the bands they formed continued the tradition of communal self-determination in sound and offered a viable alternative to land reform to create self-identity and sometimes organize cultural resistance. In addition, both Karl Koenig and Antoinette Handy have documented co-ed brass bands in the sugar parishes. Women musicians in parades or second-lines was unheard of in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century New Orleans, but the Black countryside was more progressive than New Orleans in terms of brass band participation, reflecting its intensely communal character and the historic importance of women in the marketing complex and provision grounds.<sup>1402</sup>

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<sup>1399</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 31.

<sup>1400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1401</sup> Percy Humphrey, Interview, Nov. 4, 1965, quoted in Karl Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Plaquemines* (Unpublished, 1997), 4.

<sup>1402</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Jazz History Remix: Black Women from ‘Enter’ to ‘Center,’” in *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation*, ed. Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 256-269; Karl Koenig, “Women Pianists in Early New Orleans Jazz,” in *The Jazz*

### 5.5.1 James Humphrey and his Music-Powered Gardens

The Republican Governor-turned-planter Warmouth took the business of culture seriously: Warmouth's ledger records that Humphrey was paid \$5.55 for a session—the equivalent of \$172.50 in today's dollars.<sup>1403</sup> Although he never directly commented on the existence of the several bands he financed on his plantation, plantation records show he bought band uniforms and instruments for his workforce and sought out Humphrey to make this idea a reality.<sup>1404</sup> The two may have met in New Orleans's cultural circles—according to Humphrey's grandson, the professor “used to practice a number of hours during the day and was one of the best solo cornetists in the city in his day.” One of his regular jobs was leading the parades with the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization that for Union Army veterans during the Civil War. (Warmouth was a Union Army veteran). It was a gig that took him to, on occasional, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, and other cities.<sup>1405</sup>

Although not mentioned in the literature, Humphrey was likely a Creole of Color. He also played in the Bloom Philharmonic Orchestra which included many of the city's Creole of Color musicians and was conducted by Louis Tio and which specialized in French repertoire.<sup>1406</sup> His students remember him speaking French, his grandfather was Alexandre Humphrey of the sugar

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*Lectures* (Running Springs, CA: Basin Street Press, 1996), 18; Olivia Broslawsky, “Marching Forth: A Study of the Impact of Gender on the Professionalization of Marching Band Students in New Orleans” (Master's Thesis, Tulane University, 2017), 24.

<sup>1403</sup> Jane Julian, “Magnolia's Music,” *The Mississippi Rag* 1, no. 9 (July 1974): 8.

<sup>1404</sup> Karl Koenig, “The Plantation Belt and Musicians Part 1: Professor James B. Humphrey,” *The Second Line* XXXIII (Fall 1981), 25.

<sup>1405</sup> Karl Koenig, “Professor James B. Humphrey - Part II,” *The Second Line* XXXIV (Winter 1982): 24. Willie Humphrey calls the organization the “Grand Army Organization.” I have found no such organization, and given the high-profile nature of the performances, it is my strong suspicion that Willie Humphrey was referring to the famous fraternal society for veterans.

<sup>1406</sup> Alphonse Picou in Peter R. Haby, “Interview,” *Footnote* II (July 1980): 8.; Koenig, “The Plantation Belt and Musicians Part 1,” 31.

town of Hahnville, and he was one of entering classes at Straight University, an African American college created after the Civil War in 1869 and which Daniel Desdunes also attended.<sup>1407</sup> Like the antipoverty music programs of Desdunes and other Creoles of Color described in Chapter 1, he created a music program at Bulb Orphanage in Plaquemines Parish, an institution that apparently included several female pupils whom he taught with his daughter, Jamesetta, who was an accomplished musician who played the upright bass.<sup>1408</sup>

In 1897, Humphrey began working at Magnolia and many other plantations, spending weeks on the road.<sup>1409</sup> As one of his students, clarinetist Willie Parker from St. Sophie plantation recalled, Humphrey received additional pay for individual lessons to musicians (which occurred outside of regular band practice).

Yes, indeed, [Humphrey would] come down there. He'd come to us maybe Sunday, he'd stay with us two days, then he'd go to Deer Range, stay two days, then he'd go Magnolia and stay two days—where Sunny Henry come from, and he taught all them bands. See, at that time they had bands at Magnolia, Pointe [a] la Hache, Deer Range, St. Sophie, Ironton, Bellaire, Oakville, Jesuit Bend, all of them places had a band, you see. And old Humphrey had all that work.<sup>1410</sup>

Humphrey trained a generation of innovative New Orleans jazz musicians, including Chris Kelly, Sam Morgan, Sunny Henry, Harrison Barnes, Jimmy “Kid” Clayton, and John Casimir, who each brought traditions of work songs and the historical memory of plantation resistance into the early genomes of jazz. Gene Miller notes that “His students at Magnolia and elsewhere became some of

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<sup>1407</sup> *Ibid*; Todd L. Savitt, “Straight University Medical Department: The Short Life of a Black Medical School in Reconstruction New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 41, no. 2 (2000): 175–201; John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 126.

<sup>1408</sup> Gene Miller, “The Carpetbagger and the Professor,” *New Orleans Music* 4, no. 6 (June 1994), 10. Humphrey’s other daughter, Lillian, was also a studied bassist and performed with the Bloom philharmonic.

<sup>1409</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1410</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

the best jazz musicians in New Orleans; many of them eventually led their own bands and made recordings.”<sup>1411</sup> The Professor had a big role in that process, and gave his own students some of their first gigs in New Orleans; Humphrey’s grandson remembers that “Jim Humphrey used to bring his country boy bands down [to New Orleans] to play big Mardi Gras parades,” which were so cold that “sometimes the valves would freeze on the horns.”<sup>1412</sup> As a professional music instructor myself, I can relay that performing outdoor gigs in difficult climactic conditions with younger musicians requires an immense reserve of mutual trust and encouragement.

But while “The Professor” shared musical knowledge and professional opportunities, he also experienced personal growth in his collaborations. Most often, would-be musicians did not have cash to pay, and instead exchanged crops grown in their gardens. His grandson Willie Humphrey recalled that “My grandpa used to bring us pecans, sweet potatoes, sugar cane and all from the country. He also made a garden and from the figs in it he made enough to pay the taxes.”<sup>1413</sup> The story reflects that Black workers in the sugar parishes were still cultivating gardens and provision grounds, perhaps the same land their families worked since slavery.<sup>1414</sup> But equally important, Humphrey’s garden shows that he was a student himself, learning crop preparation techniques with the plantation workers whose sound he helped develop. His grandson remembered that “[Humphrey] had a garden for food and I think teaching music was a labor of love.”<sup>1415</sup> These forms of Black rural agency point to an underlying synergy between these two spaces of autonomous expression and self-development, a synergy which concretely “bore fruit.” The

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<sup>1411</sup> Gene Miller, “The Carpetbagger and the Professor,” 9.

<sup>1412</sup> Willie Humphrey Sr. & Jr., Interview, March 15, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1414</sup> Jeffery Gould describes ongoing garden production during the transition to wage labor, “The Strike of 1887: Louisiana Sugar War,” 45–55.

<sup>1415</sup> Karl Koenig, “Professor James B. Humphrey - Part II,” *The Second Line* XXXIV (Winter 1982): 16.

interaction of these autonomous economies, of music and gardening, laid one foundation for the rural-urban alliance outlined above.

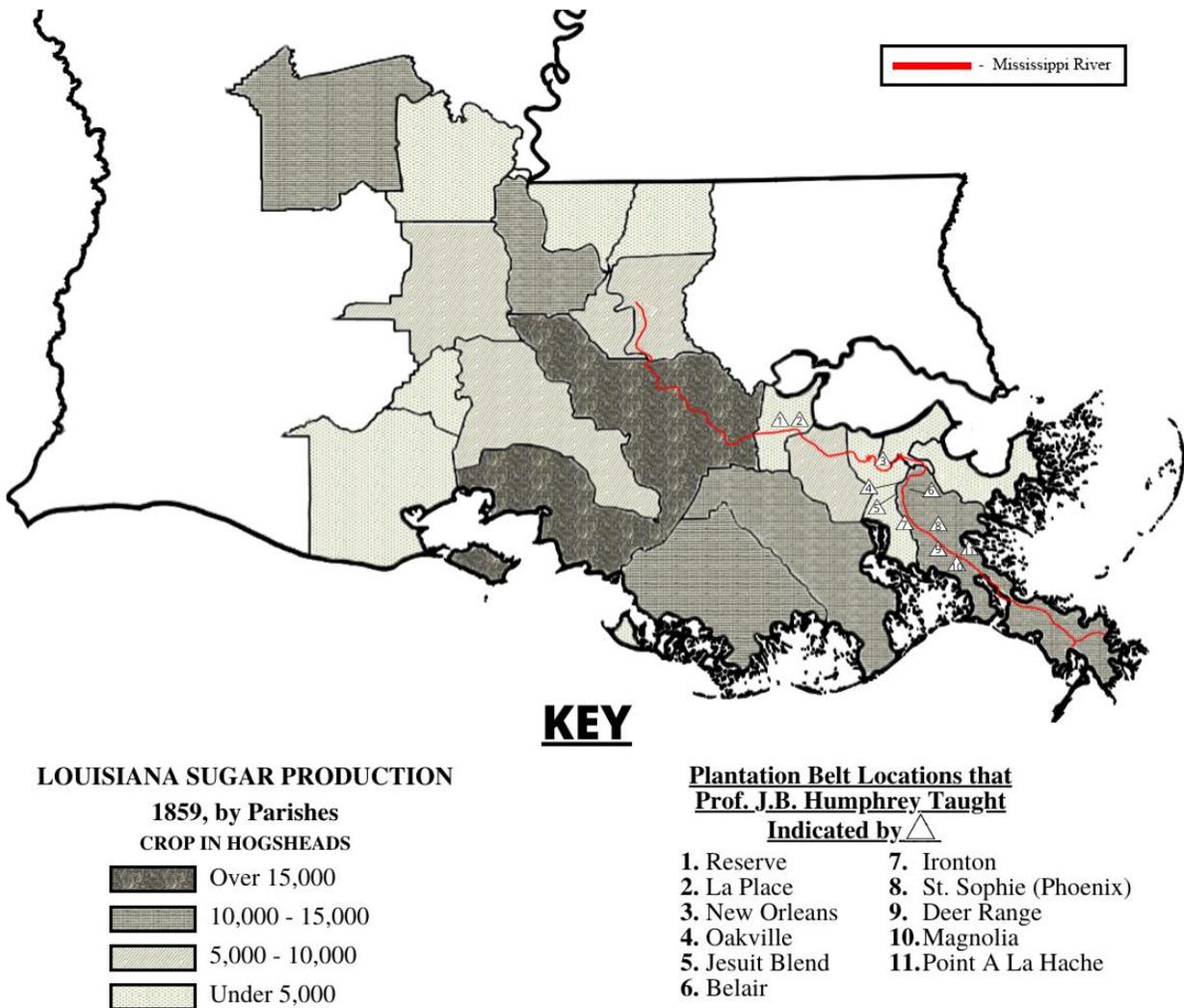


Figure 5: Map of the Sugar Plantation Belt and the sites of Humphrey’s brass band education programs. Graphic designed by myself and based off of data from Koenig, “The Plantation Belt and Brass Band Musicians,” 26-27.

Indeed, many musicians retained the foodways of the gardening complex that was so important part of Black struggles for sovereignty and economic independence. In both rural Louisiana and in New Orleans, children were often tasked with collecting provisions to supplement family diets and finances. New Orleans bassist Pops Foster remembered the back of “the District”

(which is how he referred to Storyville) as home to particularly abundant flora and fauna that could be harvested at ease. “When we were kids,” he remembered, “we used to back there and pick palms to sell for Easter Sunday. We’d also go there to catch crayfish and pick blackberries.”<sup>1416</sup> Black women migrating to New Orleans, sometimes fleeing violence and sometimes as single mothers, created backyard gardens to supplement meager wages, a practice they shared with working-class women in Atlanta and likely most Southern cities.<sup>1417</sup>

Foster was born on Harry McCall’s plantation. Harry was the son of Confederate Veteran and prominent sugar planter, Richard McCall.<sup>1418</sup> Foster describes a massive community with over a thousand workers, all growing independent agriculture as well as their cane cutting. Yet he describes an idyllic scene when discussing their own livestock and fruit trees:

There were three or four hundred shacks where the field hands lived about a mile from the house. They all kept chickens, hogs, and cows, and the horses and mules were kept out there...Around the plantation there were all kinds of trees. There were a lot of sycamores, a few big magnolia trees with beautiful blossoms in the summertime, and some bay trees. Around the big house there was a fence, and inside there were all kinds of fruit and nut trees. One big tree was called a muskeydyne was like a big cherry tree. They had bitter-orange trees, big black fig trees, and pecan trees.

In contrast to other interviewees, Foster explains no singing was done on the plantation: “You didn’t see anything but sugarcane and corn...the field hands didn’t play any music, not even guitars and sing blues.”<sup>1419</sup>

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<sup>1416</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard*, ed. Tom Stoddard and Ross Russell (Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 64.

<sup>1417</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 64.

<sup>1418</sup> *Daily Picayune*, May 14, 1913.

<sup>1419</sup> Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster*, location 259 (Kindle Version).

As youth, the future musicians of the sugar parishes found ways to make music despite the semi-feudal relations of plantation life. In lieu of extreme exploitation, many had to grow not only their own foodstuffs but fashion their own musical instruments. Louis James describes his first instrument as “his heel,” which he would “rub on the floor to produce a bass sound” with comb and tissue paper.<sup>1420</sup> Around the same time, and across the state, Sam and Isaiah Morgan created their own instruments out of repurposed metal tubes. “The boys sang and blew through the pipes with the drummer keeping time on the lard can and it was all really remarkable[,] the harmony they could get out of that junk,” remembered Florence Dymond, the owner of the Belair Plantation, who apparently found these Black workers’ ingenuity so remarkable that he commented upon it in his diary.<sup>1421</sup> Self-sufficient instrumental creation techniques were part of a centuries long inheritance; as Salim Washington has poetically noted, “Africans in the West invented the hambone and the shuffle stomp of the ring shout when drumming was outlawed in the American South; transformed the pan, or steel drum, a product of the West's waste and pollution in Trinidad, into an instrument that can evoke beauty.”<sup>1422</sup>

### 5.5.2 Music as a Way Off the Plantation

Nonetheless, regimented musical training and brass musical instruments made a difference in the possibilities of expression and professionalization, and Black workers sought them out

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<sup>1420</sup> Louis James, interview, May 25, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1421</sup> Florence Dymond, “Memoirs,” undated manuscript, Dymond Collection, Collection 453, folder 28, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, quoted in Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “New Orleans Jazz Styles of the 1920: Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band,” xxii.

<sup>1422</sup> Salim Washington, “The Avenging Angel of Creation/Destruction: Black Music and the Afro-Technological in the Science Fiction of Henry Dumas and Samuel R. Delany,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 2 (2008): 235.

whenever possible. Later in life, these skills allowed canecutters to enter New Orleans's prestigious bands. The first funeral that Henry played was in New Orleans with the Excelsior Band as funeral parades did not happen in the sugar parishes, according to Henry. "I didn't have a uniform...I say [to bandleader George Moret] 'I haven't got no uniform.'...[H]e says, 'Can you read?' I told him, 'Yeah.' He says, 'Well, I don't want the uniform, I want the man.'" Henry recalled the difficulty of his first march – "I couldn't hardly walk [march in time]," but veteran Vic Gaspard reassured him: "Now, listen, you take it easy, 'cause this is your first time...It's difficult for you to, you know, catch the step." Musical literacy on the plantations enabled Henry to join urban musicians and the distinct traditions of New Orleans. Also in this band was Lorenzo Tio Jr. and William Bébé Ridgley, the latter another plantation migrant.

These bands were invaluable alternatives to life on the fields. The Woodland Plantation—a sprawling 1,882-acre sugar cane farm twenty-five miles upriver from New Orleans in the St. John the Baptist Parish district called LaPlace—represented industrial agrarianism par excellence.<sup>1423</sup> Of life on the plantation, Ory said there was always work to be done and that everyone was "pressed into service when not in school." The kids worked alongside the adults in the fields and the mill, and Ory was scarred from the long hours of labor. In an interview he explained that he "hated it."<sup>1424</sup> These families often lived isolated, in the middle of cane fields, and sometimes, in the case of the Orys, directly across the road from industrial sugar mill. This titanic entity which operated at full steam during the "grinding season" in late summer and early fall would have been a defining archetype for any child or adult. The mill first ground, and then

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<sup>1423</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 14.

<sup>1424</sup> *Ibid.*

cooked, thousands of cane stalks which had been freshly and expertly cut in the fields under a hot Louisiana sun.<sup>1425</sup>

This heavily industry nearby did not make life easier for residents. Mark Twain described Henry Clay Warmoth's Plaquemines Parish sugar factory, which he visited during this time period, as “a wilderness of tubs and tanks and vats and filters, pumps, pipes and machinery.”<sup>1426</sup> As Shugg notes, “On an increasing scale, plantations fell into the hands of a new, capitalistic sugar aristocracy, organized in corporations and financed by banks. At least half the planters after 1870 were either Northern men or were supported by Northern money.”<sup>1427</sup> People living nearby “would have smelled little else,” and the “roar of boiling caldrons of crystallizing cane juice, the hammering shut of barrels, and the clang and boom of uncoupling railroad cars would have filled [Kid] Ory’s ears.”<sup>1428</sup> The sensorial experience of his childhood helps illustrate C.L.R. James’s point that rural sugar workers in the Black belt were, in fact, an industrial proletariat. What made them distinct from their urban contemporaries is that they were divided into labor camps called plantations.<sup>1429</sup>

Workers lived in close proximity, in relations not visibly removed from slavery. “Down the dusty country lanes were the Negroes’ quarters with rows of identical cabins,” wrote Calliouet in her ethnography of LaPlace. “The yards out front with constant pounding of barefooted playing children looked like cement. It was living at the poverty level. Many worked on the plantations.

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<sup>1425</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 17.

<sup>1426</sup> Samuel L. Clemens, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York, 1917), 281.

<sup>1427</sup> Roger Wallace Shugg, “Survival of the Plantation System in Louisiana,” *The Journal of Southern History* 3, no. 3 (1937): 311–25.

<sup>1428</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 17.

<sup>1429</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, Book, Whole (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

The children would go crawfishing and pick blackberries to sell to village people.”<sup>1430</sup> Alongside the repurposed slave quarters, pears, figs, and plums were grown in orchards.<sup>1431</sup> Despite this, in St. John the Baptist Parish, a distinctly Afro-Atlantic culture was built over the generations that emphasized interdependence with nature and with traces of Haitian inheritance. In Lubin Laurent’s 1923 history of St. John the Baptist Parish, he wrote that “The old Negroes still relate stories of the slave insurrection of 1811 as they heard it from their grandfathers,” including of the brutal punishment in which “heads were cut off and struck at the end of high poles...in the banks of the Mississippi River all the way up to St. John the Baptist Parish where the revolution started.”<sup>1432</sup> The German Coast uprising started in LaPlace—where Kid Ory grew up.

A unique medicinal tradition took root, too. Asthma was cured by taking a lock of an afflicted child’s hair and planting it in a young tree, which had to stay alive and grow tall to relieve the patient’s condition; warts were cured by rubbing a potato on the wart and then burying in it; pumpkin seed tea was used to cure bladder infections; tonics to “refresh the blood” were made from okra; flaxseed treated pneumonia.<sup>1433</sup> Some of these are also practiced in contemporary Haiti, such as the use of water boiled with umbilical chord to treat sick children.<sup>1434</sup> And this was the same parish where Alice Zeno grew up singing a song “from the Haitian Revolution.”<sup>1435</sup>

Plantation brass bands become extensions of this network of autonomous activity. As a space with Black leaders and players, it was a uniquely independent, akin to the work done on

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<sup>1430</sup> Elida Millet Calliouet, *Lions on the River: A Potpourri* (Tuscon, AZ, 1989), 28.

<sup>1431</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone*, 21.

<sup>1432</sup> Lubin Laurent, “A History of St. John the Baptist Parish,” *L’Observateur*, 1923.

<sup>1433</sup> Marcia G. Gaudet, *Tales from the Levee: The Folklore of St. John the Baptist Parish* (Lafayette, Louisiana: Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1984), 85.

<sup>1434</sup> Bryant C. Freeman, *Third-World Folk Beliefs and Practices: Haitian Medical Anthropology* (Lawrence and Port-au-Prince: Institute of Haitian Studies, University of Kansas / La Presse Evangélique, 1998), 145-146; Molly Ladd-Taylor, “‘Grannies’ and ‘Spinsters’: Midwife Education under the Sheppard-Towner Act,” *Journal of Social History* 22, no. 2 (1988): 255–75.

<sup>1435</sup> Alice Zeno, interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

provision grounds during slavery and abandoned plantations following emancipation. Their link to Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs meant that they provided spaces where networks of community-minded New Orleans Black and Creole of Color musicians might share music and knowledge in exchange for skills. In sum, brass bands were transformed by Black sugar workers as a kind of compensatory commons to the land they had been denied. This was not the only example of such a surrogation. Amongst Mexican peasants during this same period, “musical specialization compensated for restricted access to the means of subsistence, in this instance because of the ruling faction’s preferential access to *ejidal* [communal] land.”<sup>1436</sup> Music reproduced a commons that could activate both geographic and social mobility, creating opportunities for plantation workers to contribute to an emerging creolized culture that would be come to be called jazz. Musicians did not only go to play in New Orleans but were supported by a dynamic plantation dance hall scene, which was frequented not only by musicians in the sugar districts but also musicians from New Orleans including a young Louis Armstrong. These brass bands became vehicles to reproduce the mobility of internal markets, the collective phenomenologies of communal gardening, and the subsistence-generation abilities to gardens in their link to Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs. The plantation brass bands were perhaps the most important vehicles for reproducing the phenomenology of the provision grounds and the Black Atlantic commons into the cultural currents of early jazz.<sup>1437</sup>

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<sup>1436</sup> Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 191. *Cuerpos filarmonciós*, discussed in chapter 3, were taken extremely seriously as sites of communal autonomy. See Ariadna Acevedo-Rodrigo, “Playing the Tune of Citizenship: Indian Brass Bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico, 1876–1911,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27, no. 2 (2008): 255–72.

<sup>1437</sup> Karl Koenig, “Mandeville: Dew Drop Dance Hall,” *The Second Line* XXXVIII (Winter 1986): 2–11; Karl Koenig, “Buddy Petit on the North Side of Lake Pontchartrain,” *The Second Line* XXXVIII, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 34–51; Chamberlain, “Searching for ‘The Gulf Coast Circuit’: Mobility and Cultural Diffusion in the Age of Jim Crow, 1900–1930”; Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “New Orleans Jazz Styles of the 1920: Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band,” in *Sam Morgan’s Jazz Band: Complete Recorded Works in Transcription*, ed. John Joyce Jr., Bruce Boyd Raeburn, and Anthony M. Cummings (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 2012), xv–xxxiv.

## 5.6 Conclusion: Ecomusic and Hearing the Commons

Decades later in Ory's life, nearing the end of a colorful career in jazz and living in Los Angeles during the Great Depression, reverberations of Louisiana's counter-plantation sensibilities continued to echo. New Orleans clarinetist Barney Bigard, having just quit Duke Ellington's band in Los Angeles, decided he "loved the climate" and made LA his permanent home. He proceeded to start a band: "I hired me a trumpet player called Red Mack and a great bassist called Charles Mingus...I really like the way Charles Mingus played."<sup>1438</sup> In Bigard's retelling, he then ran into "a ghost from the past": Kid Ory. "The depression had hit Ory hard he looked a whole lot different. He told me he had been out of the music business for a long while and hadn't played a job in years." Apparently, Bigard fixed that, and soon Kid Ory would join his band, playing with Mingus.<sup>1439</sup> According to Bigard, Ory had been working as a cook and a janitor. What really caught Bigard's eye, however, was Ory's chicken farm. "He was like an uncle to me during those months," remembered Bigard, as they went crawfishing, and went to his brother John's house, with whom Kid Ory "was in some kind of partnership." "John had this huge backyard where they were raising chickens and a few Turkeys." Bigard was actually quite disparaging of the enterprise: "I don't know who was dumber: Ory or the turkeys...If one of these Turkeys caught a cold here he would come with the big cylindrical thing and shove Vick's Nasal Spray up their nostrils."<sup>1440</sup> Perhaps his disdain was rooted a fight he had with Ory over a major royalty

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<sup>1438</sup> Barney Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke: The Autobiography of a Jazz Clarinetist*, ed. Barry Martyn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 81-82.

<sup>1439</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 121.

<sup>1440</sup> Barney Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke*, 83.

settlement Bigard helped him obtain, a favor for which he was never thanked. Or perhaps the split between urban and rural perspectives was too deep to overcome.

Other New Orleans transplants found in Ory and his agricultural projects another kind of figure: someone who could provide meaningful security, social assistance, and community they badly needed. As clarinetist another New Orleans transplant, Joe Darensbourg, recalled:

I was ready to go back to Seattle but Ory asked me to stay. You could hardly get a room or an apartment in Los Angeles at that time due to the war, so Ory said he had a spare room in his house. I moved in with him. He had a small house on 33rd Street and Central which is now a very rough part of Los Angeles. He had quit playing for a long time, having worked with all kinds of different bands – everybody in fact. Ory more or less was always some kind of leader, mostly had his own groups. Then him and his brother went to work on the Santa Fe railroad; first thing was doing janitor work and then Kid started cooking. He was a real good cook. They had a little chicken farm at one time, raised chickens to make money...

I had like a small apartment up above the house. There was a big garage and we used it to raise chickens to eat and to sell. Ory had a little brooder there to hatch the eggs and we got a helluva kick out of seeing those chicks grow. We'd sell the little chicks around Easter, and the rest we ate or gave away.<sup>1441</sup>

In another story, Darensbourg describes running through vegetable patches near Ory's home. "It was always so hot out there. There was nothing but farms where they raised corn, potatoes and pumpkins and, in fact, we used to go through some farmer's fence to get to this creek where we caught the crawfish. Sometimes Mrs. Ory used to go with us."<sup>1442</sup>

Darensbourg also enjoyed the plant growth in Ory's own garden patch. A 1940 article by journalist Dave Stuart ends with this note: "Today Edward 'Kid' Ory lives comfortably with his wife in their neat green and white house just off 'The Avenue.' You can catch Ed any morning

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<sup>1441</sup> Joe Darensbourg, *Telling It Like It Is*, ed. Peter Vacher (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 69-9.

<sup>1442</sup> Darensbourg, *Telling It Like It Is*, 70.

fussing around his flower garden watering or transplanting a batch of flowers. He'll spin you a few funny tales about the old days."<sup>1443</sup> A fascinating detail. What stories did Ory tell from "the old days?" Ory surely told stories about his work with Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong. But did he also share stories about the flowers he was transplanting? Or his chicken farm? Perhaps some of the old days he invoked were the orchards he watered in LaPlace. Ory's ethno-botanical legacy crossed the spectrum of his life, sustaining him even in the depths of the Great Depression in a city thousands of miles west of New Orleans and Woodlawn plantation. But it was connected to community: community for Darenbourg, for the chickens they "gave away" to those who needed it. A mutual aid network can be heard in the gaps of what was told (or edited by the autobiographers), like the echoes of a solo edited out of a session because it was "out of tune."

Today, in the age of the Anthropocene, this dialectic between ecological music and ecocidal production could not be a more important legacy to recover. Donna Haraway notes the importance of the slave garden in conceptualizing a world beyond modern carbon capitalism:

Scholars have long understood that the slave plantation system was the model and motor for the carbon-greedy machine-based factory system that is often cited as an inflection point for the Anthropocene. Nurtured in even the harshest circumstances, slave gardens not only provided crucial human food, but also refuges for biodiverse plants, animals, fungi, and soils. Slave gardens are an underexplored world, especially compared to imperial botanical gardens, for the travels and propagations of myriad critters.<sup>1444</sup>

Early jazz also grew up "in the harshest of circumstances," and captured a parallel diversity of styles, cultures, and heterogenous sound ideals. Both spaces threatened Euro-American ideological hegemony, constituting, essentially, a hidden transcript in which both Black agency and an

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<sup>1443</sup> Dave Stuart, "Kid Ory," *Jazz Information* 2, no. 9 (1940): 8.

<sup>1444</sup> Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (May 1, 2015): 159–65, FN 5.

alternative social order was performed “offstage.” The practice constituted a slow and yet consistent development of a counter-ideology to the plantation logic, which directly challenged European world-systems in the following registers: 1) the view of time, not as a site of commodification, but as a resource to be interacted with communally as site of shared phenomenology, as a source of healing instead of killing; 2) the generation of a “solidarity economy” in the division of labor and surplus, in which autonomy was practiced but principles of collectivity reigned in both production and distribution, 3) related to #2 but distinct in the treatment of nature and the other, which viewed ecosystems, creatures, and other humans as part of a dynamic whole and not atomized component parts of a larger capitalist infrastructure—in other words, an embryonic ecosocialism. Each of these elements were inflected with pan-African technologies, cultures, and epistemologies, but they developed their critical intervention in opposition to the plantation system—growing up “in its cracks.” For Civil Rights activist Colia Clark, a SNCC activist who was Medgar Evers’s field secretary at the time of his assassination, music and the forms of commoning practiced by Black folk in the plantation belt can be understood as a fusion of a spiritual-religious ecological consciousness and a belief in communal self-determination—what she calls ecosocialism:

Music is the spirit of a people. Music is the thing that gets you up in the morning. Of course, Africans have a song for everything. [sung] *I woke up this morning with my mind. Stay on freedom, Hallalelu.* It’s the thing that gets you up in the morning but it’s the thing that puts you to bed at night. It’s the thing that, in troubled hours, just comes and tells you: if you stay on the battlefield, stay on the battlefield, its gonna be alright, that there will be a victory. That it’s coming, and its music for your dark hours. As when my friend Medgar [Evers] was killed 51 years ago. For me, it was just the darkest hour. But the music tells you that [sung] *the darkest hour is just before day. Sun’s gonna come and wash the darkness away.* You know, it’s the music that keeps us going. And now we got the

eco-music: *Eco, tell it on the mountain. Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain. Ecosocialism is born.*<sup>1445</sup>

When we zoom out to the larger Caribbean and think through the examples of commune and commons in Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and Guyana, this interpretation becomes more convincing. Of course, it would be quite inappropriate to suggest that what was occurring in South Carolina or Louisiana was a carbon copy of Caribbean counterparts. But there is a danger in anti-essentialism that strives for specificity at the cost of important connections that contextualize a larger whole. What might we lose when we ignore these Atlantic sites of struggle as important counterpoints to the age of Reconstruction in the U.S. South? And given the enormous literature thinking through African cultural retentions and recreations in the new world, might we not situate Black collective agricultural dreams as an expression an African or Afro-Atlantic ecological paradigm? As Carolyn Cooper argues, “The shared history of African slavery in the Americas consolidates within the psyche of African peoples in the hemisphere, cultural continuities, ancestral memories of sabotage and maroonage, and systemic resistance to servitude.”<sup>1446</sup> Perhaps gardens and collective music are two sides of a shared systemic resistance? Consider the “the communitarian ecological paradigm” in African philosophy, which Christelle Terreblanche argues undergirds the South African communal conceptualization known as “Ubuntu.” A variant of “an Africa-wide ethical paradigm,” Ubuntu presents “an ethics of interrelationships, situated in a communitarian social fabric of caring and sharing. Ubuntu may equal, and even exceed, socialist notions of a ‘radical egalitarianism.’” In addition to its intra-human aspects, Terreblanche suggests that it embodies an

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<sup>1445</sup> Colia Clark, Interview with Author, also in “Black Red and Green Revolutionary Eco-Music Tour,” Barnard Vermont, February, 2014, 15:06-16:14, <https://vimeo.com/91707067>

<sup>1446</sup> Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and The “Vulgar” Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 48.

“ecological ethics” that have inspired “green socialist imaginaries,” both historically and those to come. “As a living ethics, Ubuntu demands an activism of solidarity and decolonization.”<sup>1447</sup>

Ory was not the only musician to resurrect the ecological and the commons later in life. Buddy Bolden is famed for his performative playing at the pavilion at Lincoln Park in uptown New Orleans in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when he would stick his horn over the fence from nearby Johnson Park and play, a clarion call meant to throw John Robichaux off-balance and draw audiences to his side of the fence. Bolden referred to the practice as “callin’ my children home.” Where was the imagined home he was calling his children home to? One of the songs that Ory heard Bolden play was “I thought I heard Mr. Lincoln say.”

I thought I heer’d Abe Lincoln shout,  
Rebels close down them plantations and let all them niggers out.  
I’m positively sure I heer’d Mr. Lincoln shout.  
I thought I heer’d Mr Lincoln say,  
Rebels close down them plantations and let all them niggers out.  
You gonna lose this war, git on your knees and pray,  
That’s the words I heer’d Mr. Lincoln say.<sup>1448</sup>

Of course, plantations were not shut down—they were resurrected and Black workers continued to live on them. That this song could be so central to so many in New Orleans, a song which remembered and commented on the lost promise of land reform, drives the point home: early jazz and its brass bands performances were fueled by the dream of the commons. This was “home”—just as was Robichaux’s brass band performance in Thibodaux a generation prior. The counter-plantation’s commons, a project that so profoundly challenged plantation relations and informed the first mass popular culture, skipped like a pebble across the waters of the Black Atlantic world.

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<sup>1447</sup> Christelle Terreblanche, “Ubuntu and the Struggle for an African Eco-Socialist Alternative,” in *The Climate Crisis*, ed. Vishwas Satgar, South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives (Wits University Press, 2018), 168.

<sup>1448</sup> Danny Barker, “Memory of King Bolden,” *Evergreen Review*, March 1965, 67-75; quoted in Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005), 109-110.

## 6.0 Black Reconstruction and Brassroots Democracy

### 6.1 Introduction: Tracing the Communitarian Sources of the New Orleans Brass Band

*De talles' tree in Paradise  
De Christians call de tree of life  
And I hope dat trump might blow me home  
To de new Jerusalem  
Blow your trumpet, Gabriel  
Blow louder, louder;  
And I hope dat trump might blow me home  
To de new Jerusalem*

- Blow Your Trumpet, Gabriel<sup>1449</sup>

Jubilee, the long-prophesied day of freedom, was above all a *sonic* event. It may have been the greatest and most concentrated outpouring of aural joy in the history of the United States. Everywhere, scenes of emancipation saw not only the world turned upside down but also sounds of serendipity: in 1862, as Union troops arrived in Thibodaux, all walks of Louisiana heard the union army's "strains of fifes and the beating of drums," while slaves, all but formally emancipated, uttered the refrain "Oh de Lawd's name be praised!—We knowed you'd come!"<sup>1450</sup> In South Carolina on April 4, 1865, Col. Woodford "was received with prolonged shouts and deafening cheers," and a four thousand strong parade with banners and chants such as "We know

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<sup>1449</sup> William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Simpson & Co., 1867), 3.

<sup>1450</sup> Diary of Homer B. Sprague, 13<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, April 14, 1863, vol. 2, 79-80, Papers of Homer B Sprague, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; quoted in Donald S. Frazier, *Fire in the Cane Field* (State House Press, 2010), 195; see also John DeSantis, *The Thibodaux Massacre: Racial Violence and the 1887 Sugar Cane Labor Strike* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 39.

no masters but ourselves” reverberated far and wide.<sup>1451</sup> In Wilmington of that year, George Arnold, hospital steward in the 4th U.S. Colored Infantry, fondly remembered these freedom parades, exclaiming that people danced “[w]ith banners floating! With their splendid brass bands and drum corps, discoursing the National airs and marches.”<sup>1452</sup> This was all the more incredible in a city where the curfew for both enslaved and free people of color had been 9 PM. One man, nearly ninety-three years old, had been said to be “too weak to leave his house since the previous July,” but hearing the music of the Union troops “had revived him, and he felt so happy that he came out; and there he stood, with his long white locks and his wrinkled cheeks, saying, ‘Welcome, welcome!’”<sup>1453</sup>

These eruptions of sonic jubilee could be both spontaneous and highly choreographed. One white clergyman commented: “The whole city seems to be alive with ‘Africans’ of all sorts and sizes and sexes and ages. They sing and shout; and preach and pray; and drink and swear; and fiddle and dance; and laugh and yell—‘Ye-ah, ye-ah’ de bottom rail on de top at las’!”<sup>1454</sup> Frank Moore, a Civil War journalist who specialized in song collection, wrote how in Wilmington, “The men danced in jubilation, the women screamed and went into hysterics, then and there, on the sidewalks. And their sable brethren in arms marched past, proud and erect, signing their ‘John Brown’ hymn, where it was never sung before.”<sup>1455</sup> Surely, as Solomon Northrup recalls in *Twelve*

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<sup>1451</sup> “Department of the South: Affairs in Charleston: The Jubilee Among the Freedmen: How the Slaves Celebrated Their Emancipation: Military Changes,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1865.

<sup>1452</sup> Arnold, “Through the Carolinas,” 29 March 1865, in *Christian Recorder*, 15 April 1865.

<sup>1453</sup> John W. Pratt, “Letter from North Carolina,” 28 February 1865, in *Christian Recorder*, 18 March 1865; quoted in Thanayi Michelle Jackson, “‘Devoted to the Interests of His Race’: Black Officeholders and the Political Culture of Freedom in Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865–1877” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2016), 23.

<sup>1454</sup> Lingurn Skidmore Burkhead, “History of the Difficulties of the Pastorate of the Front Street Methodist Church, Wilmington, N.C., for the Year 1865,” *Historical Papers of Trinity College* 8 (1909), 64; quoted in Thanayi Michelle Jackson, “‘Devoted to the Interests of His Race’: Black Officeholders and the Political Culture of Freedom in Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865–1877” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2016), 23.

<sup>1455</sup> Frank Moore, *The Civil War in Song and Story, 1860-1865* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1889), 187

*Years a Slave*, music and mobility were crucial parts of antebellum Black life.<sup>1456</sup> But not like this. For the first time in North American history, Black people across the country--freemen from Boston and former slaves from Colleton Country--could freely make music together. It was certainly the first time formerly enslaved people could make public sound—any sound, even revolutionary sound—without fear of reprisal. Prohibitions on Black drums, trumpets, and anti-planter lyrics evaporated along with the social order that had kept them enslaved.<sup>1457</sup>

Sonic-social performances were ongoing facts of life during the Civil War and Reconstruction. These musical performances were arguably as important as the political and legislative dimensions of freedom, since, as John Williamson celebrates, freedpeople led a revolution both political and cultural. They rejected what “had been imposed upon them as slaves. They assumed new forms of dress, kept dogs and guns, hunted, and they travelled about without passes. Many refused to yield the sidewalks to the white gentry, omitted the slave-period obeisances, and rode horses or mules or in carriages in the presences of white pedestrians. They conversed in public.”<sup>1458</sup> One freedwomen remarked in 1864, “Some will look upon these times as if nothing but politics, mass meetings, drums and fifes and gilt muskets were all the go.”<sup>1459</sup>

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<sup>1456</sup> Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841* (Auburn, NY: Applewood Books, 1853). For examples of enslaved peoples dancing in both planter-sanctioned and clandestine contexts, see Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), Chapter 2.

<sup>1457</sup> For a study of the Stono Rebellion which banned drums, see Mark M. Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion,” *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 3 (2001): 513–34. British Caribbean bans on drums and brass are discussed in Colin A. Palmer, “Africa in the Making of the Caribbean: The Formative Years,” in *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society*, ed. Brian L. Moore et al. (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 40–56.

<sup>1458</sup> Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 47.

<sup>1459</sup> *Christian Recorder*, 30 January 1864; quoted in Kathleen Clark, “Celebrating Freedom: Emancipation Day Celebrations and African American Memory in the Early Reconstruction South,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 108.

While a growing body of literature has cast light on these African American commemorations,<sup>1460</sup> this present chapter explores a less-tendered aspect of these displays of historic memory and cultural revolution: its music. Specifically, I argue that the marriage of democratic revolution in the South and the musical genre of brass band performance resulted in a new social – aural space of participatory decision making. I call this simultaneous expansion of the public sphere and the musical sphere “brassroots democracy.” I trace the communal processes of music making through the Civil War, through Reconstruction, to New Orleans jazz bands, in order to argue that the condition of possibility of New Orleans bass band tradition was this venerable link between celebration, decolonization, and the development of a sonic commons.

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<sup>1460</sup> On African American commemorative celebrations, see Clark, “Celebrating Freedom,” 107–32; Mark A. Johnson, “‘The Best Notes Made the Most Votes’: Race, Politics, and Spectacle in the South, 1877–1932” (PhD Dissertation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, University of Alabama, 2016); David Blight, *Frederick Douglass’ Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Blight, “W. E. B. Du Bois and the Struggle for American Historical Memory,” in Geneviève Fabre and Robert O’Meally, eds., *History and Memory in African-American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Blight, “‘What Will Peace among the Whites Bring?’: Reunion and Race in the Struggle over the Memory of the Civil War in American Culture,” *Massachusetts Review* 34 (Autumn 1993): 303–410; Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First: Emancipation Day in the Black Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); Elsa Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” in *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, ed. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” *Journal of Urban History* 21 (March 1995): 396–446; Mitchell Alan Kachun, “‘The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us’: African-American Commemorations in the North and West, and the Construction of a Usable Past, 1808–1915” (Ph.D. dissertation., Cornell University, 1997); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Leonard I. Sweet, “The Fourth of July and Black Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion within the Context of the Black Experience,” *Journal of Negro History* 61 (1976): 266–75; Shane White, “‘It Was a Proud Day’: African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834,” *Journal of American History* (June 1994): 13–50; William H. Wiggins, “‘Lift Every Voice’: A Study of Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations,” in Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed, eds., *Discovering Afro-America* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975); Mitchell Alan Kachun, “The Shaping of a Public Biography: Richard Allen and the African Methodist Episcopal Church,” in James L. Conyers Jr., ed., *Black Lives: Essays in African American Biography* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999; and Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Free Ante bellum Communities* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

### 6.1.1 Intervention and Contribution

When Black musicians played new instruments that were inaccessible during slavery, they became intimately associated with the “Black and Blue.” Brass instruments, fife, and drums took on new meanings in Black musical culture, and they contributed to a new public sphere where freedpeople debated ideas and politics, where they shared stories of joy and horror. This new music was so important to the feeling of freedom that songs were written about the sonic contours of this liberation. “Blow your trumpet, Gabriel, blow louder, louder; And I hope dat trump[et] might blow me home to de New Jerusalem,” were the lyrics to one popular song, sung during slavery, but which now took on a new meaning.<sup>1461</sup> Even imagining freedom had been an aural and musical experience. The freed slave James Calhart James remembered singing on a plantation on Fort Sumter, “Oh were shall we go when de gret day comes, An’ de blowing of de trumpets and de bangins of de drums. When General Sherman comes, No more rice and cotton fields, We will hear no more crying. Old master will be sighing.”<sup>1462</sup> This genre of sounds—blowing of trumpets, banging of drums, the singing of freedpeople, the sighing of masters—fused with the physical act of marching. New dances were invented, too: When Yankees arrived at John Lewis's Louisiana plantation, one freedman remembered they “git all warmed up and dance lak we never did dance

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<sup>1461</sup> “Blow Your Trumpet, Gabriel,” in William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Simpson & Co., 1867), 3; Narrative of James Calhart James as recorded in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938, Maryland Narratives, Volume 8* (Federal Writers’ Project, United States Work Projects Administration; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Digital ID: mesn 080/037034), 35-36 [cited December 8, 2019], <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>. This song is discussed in Steven Cornelius, *Music of the Civil War Era* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2004).

<sup>1462</sup> Narrative of James Calhart James as recorded in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938, Maryland Narratives, Volume 8* (Federal Writers’ Project, United States Work Projects Administration; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Digital ID: mesn 080/037034), 35-36 [cited December 8, 2019], <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>. This song is discussed in Steven Cornelius, *Music of the Civil War Era* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2004).

befo’! I speck we invent some new steps dat night!”<sup>1463</sup> These “choreosonic” practices catalyzed hope, confidence, and visions of a new society. As Ashon T. Crawley writes about Black Pentecostal performance traditions, they resounded “a certain vibration toward liberation.”<sup>1464</sup> The tumultuous decade of Reconstruction, from 1867-1877, further developed this tradition of large-scale, public projections of African American freedom dreams and continued to utilize the brass band to announce and safeguard the emergence of the formerly enslaved into public life.

Even during epochs of terror, culture martialled solidarity in spite of the massive structural violence of poverty and the physical violence of police and paramilitary brutality.<sup>1465</sup> Brass bands and their linked social aid and pleasure organizations helped enact movements to desegregate public space in the postwar South, often leading to violent confrontations initiated by white ex-confederates. The episodes I bring forward amplify Fred Moten’s probing question on the dialectic of Black music and white violence: “How would you recognize the antiphonal accompaniment to gratuitous violence—the sound that can be heard as if in response to that violence, the sound that must be heard as that to which such violence responds?”<sup>1466</sup> Indeed, sound was not only necessary to celebrate a new social order, but to sustain it against the onslaught of armed repression. The emergence of a major grassroots democracy movement in both rural Louisiana and New Orleans required sound to established solidarity and synchronicity. From the face offs with white supremacists in in the streets of New Orleans in 1866, to the ongoing mass meetings in the rural

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<sup>1463</sup> Charley Williams in James Mellon, ed., *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 19988), 43.

<sup>1464</sup> Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>1465</sup> Adam Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). A book about the blues tradition -- . R. A Lawson, *Jim Crow Counterculture*. Lawrence, *Black Culture and Black Conciousness*. Karen Soderoplolis,

<sup>1466</sup> Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 755.

parishes, Black sound transformed sites of terror and violence into “safe spaces,” or at least, safer spaces, for political dialogue, organizing, and community building.<sup>1467</sup> Black celebrants marched “with drum and fife, banners, sabers, and tinsel regalia,” drawing comment, and caution, from white observers.<sup>1468</sup> Of course, armed Black militias were essential for protecting the lives of both Black activists and their white allies; but music was equally important for communicating and assembling, two essential aspects of social movement organizing. And music was perceived almost as threatening to the reorganized Confederate forces as the sight of Black men bearing arms—they detested these “[l]iberty-loving freedmen...[who] looked terribly patriotic as they formed the line.”<sup>1469</sup>

Following an exploration of the erstwhile link between brass bands and the Black military experience, this chapter devotes itself to tracing the brass band traditions that inaugurated and sustained Black Reconstruction, and within this research I will show how the forces behind Redemption were committed to the silencing of Black bands.<sup>1470</sup> Rather than telling the familiar story of Reconstruction’s rise and repression, however, I hope to foreground the political mobilization of Black freedpeople that gave Radical Reconstruction its revolutionary social content, and to demonstrate their continuities with latter formations.

One way to conceptualize the political work done by grassroots activists and communities writ large is Hardt and Negri’s notion of assembly. Writing in the age of Occupy Wall Street and

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<sup>1467</sup> As Farah Jasmine Griffin notes, “Safe spaces are both material and discursive. Narrative safe spaces are often resistant to traditional narrative form. They appear in song, food, elements of oral culture, the silences around ritual, and in dream sequences.” Farah Jasmine Griffin, *“Who Set You Flowin? ”: The African-American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9. Karen Soderopolis also discusses the stage as a sa

<sup>1468</sup> *Richmond Dispatch*, 2 January 1868; quoted in Clark, “Celebrating Freedom,” 117.

<sup>1469</sup> *Charleston Daily Courier*, 6 July 1867.

<sup>1470</sup> White militias were often composed of poor whites in alliance with planters on people of color that fueled the counter-revolution against Reconstruction. See Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007).

the Arab Spring, they consider assembly as a “lens through which to recognize new democratic political possibilities.” Rather than highlighting particular models or a concrete program,

[A]ssemblies should be understood as symptoms of a growing political desire for new democratic modes of participation and decision-making. But the demands and practices of these social movements continually overflow the traditional framework of political rights. Their actions certainly do declare their right to assemble—their right to the streets, the squares, and the city as a whole—but they fill these rights with new social content.<sup>1471</sup>

The notion of assembly is useful for our purposes because Black assemblies on former plantations exceeded the limitations of bourgeois democratic institutions, transforming not only the meanings of rights, but also traditional definitions of political consciousness. “The freedom of assembly also marks an alternative mode of the production of subjectivity, characterizing both what we do and who we are.”<sup>1472</sup> New subjects and new subjectivities were negotiated both in processes of collective decision making as well as communal music performance. In these reciprocal expressions, what becomes apparent is that people resisted not only because of who they were—their social conditions, their lack of justice—but also who they wished to become, and this futural ontology was projected and performed in the music. This process of collective learning is at the core of a grassroots social movement, an observation made by countless scholars and activists, including George Lipsitz and Robin D.G. Kelley.<sup>1473</sup> But music made it real through

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<sup>1471</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 294.

<sup>1472</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>1473</sup> George Lipsitz develops these ideas powerfully in George Lipsitz, *A Life In The Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); it appears in much of Robin D.G. Kelley’s work, and especially in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002). Fred Ho, an important community organizer and Asian-American activist who also was an influential jazz musician in the 1980s through the 2010s, placed an emphasis on the collective learning in social movements. See Ben Barson, “The Poetic Justice of Fred Ho: Tracing the Influence of The Black Arts Movement Poets,” in *Black Power Afterlives: The Enduring Significance of the Black Panther Party*, ed. Diane C. Fujino and Matef Harmachis (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020), 183-204.

reinventing and modifying ancient traditions of sonic congregation to model participatory democracy in real time, to fashion the type of social relations they wished to see in the world.<sup>1474</sup>

For our present discussion, I focus specifically on the signifying power of public brass. This is partly because histories of New Orleans's brass band traditions are conspicuously silent about both Radical Reconstruction and the Civil War roots of Black brass performance. Often the discourse of "cheapness" and accessibility is used to explain the importance of brass instruments to African American musicians. "Brass instruments were prominent in early jazz because they were cheap, durable, and ubiquitous," writes brass historian Howard Weiner, although he also notes that "Increased production and distribution came about because of the preeminence of military bands....sales accelerated at the time of the Civil War."<sup>1475</sup> Historian Sally McKee makes a similar point in attributing brass instruments' popularity among Creoles of Color when she writes that "military music owed its popularity, in part, to its relative ease of playing. Men who played portable instruments, like clarinets or trumpets, joined volunteer militias or military bands that outside of working hours marched...in public parks, fields, and streets...No city was more receptive to these innovations than New Orleans."<sup>1476</sup>

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<sup>1474</sup> To this association of sound and political mobilization, an obvious corollary institution is the Black church. Black religion underwent a profound restructuring following emancipation; along with schools, churches were sites of communally organizing institution building; services were antiphonal and blended matters social and spiritual, and new forms of musical worship took on added performative dimensions. While the church is not far from our mind in our discussion of brassroots democracy—especially considering how New Orleans innovators like Buddy Bolden were celebrated specifically because they appropriated musical concepts from the Baptist church. I take this up in Chapter 6. Brothers writes that trumpeters such as Joe Oliver and Buddy Bolden were able to win over rural-urban Black migrants in New Orleans because of their appropriation of musical devices associated with the Black Baptist church, including the specific syncopated, high note riff on a single note, the "stubborn repetition that instantly indicates spiritual engagement." Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 43-44.

<sup>1475</sup> Howard T. Weiner, ed., *Early Twentieth-Century Brass Idioms: Art, Jazz, and Other Popular Traditions* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2008), xiv.

<sup>1476</sup> Sally McKee, *The Exile's Song: Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 62-63.

But to attribute this rise solely to supply-side economics or low skill level for entry is to ignore the meanings Black people associated with these sounds. The blare of trumpets and glare of marching drums inspired dreams of freedom because of their association with the war against the slave power.<sup>1477</sup> The mass education of these instruments amongst former slaves during the Civil War unleashed a completely new dynamic. It was through this brassroots democracy that New Orleanians were able to turn “segregation into congregation.”<sup>1478</sup> Through sonic gathering, New Orleanians of color reclaimed streets as sites of mutual aid and dramatic polyphonic-polycultural collaboration. Even after Reconstruction’s demise, brass bands continued to wear military uniforms; they continued to march in coordinated, community-centered spectacles; they continued to perform at Civil War commemorations and at a variety of political activities such as Labor Day and Black Fire Company Day parades. As brass band scholar Helen Regis surmises, “[P]arades transform urban space, creating an alternative social order...by ‘taking it to the streets’ in those very neighborhoods ordinarily dominated by the quotidian order of inner-city poverty and spatial apartheid.”<sup>1479</sup> Dozens of Black men (and occasionally women) marching and performing songs from the Civil War during Reconstruction was a modern-day manifestation of an older cultural technology, and this symbolism was not lost on their political enemies.<sup>1480</sup>

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<sup>1477</sup> It is true, of course, that in New Orleans, brass bands had deep pre-Civil War roots amongst free communities of color, as discussed in Chapter 3. As Mary Ellison argues, the free Creole of color musicians who served in the War of 1812 marked “the start of the New Orleans brass band tradition. Jordan B. Noble, a New Orleans Creole of Color who won a reputation as a superb drummer for the Seventh Regiment of Infantry, drummed the Americans into line at the Battle of New Orleans... As soon as the War of 1812 ended, black brass bands became commonplace.” Mary Ellison, “African-American Music and Muskets in Civil War New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 35, no. 3 (1994): 285–319.

<sup>1478</sup> Helen A. Regis, “Second Lines, Minstrelsy, and the Contested Landscapes of New Orleans Afro-Creole Festivals,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 4 (1999): 472.

<sup>1479</sup> *Ibid.* see In the Midst of perpetual fetes. David Walker – early national period. Introduction will have theory that can help me a little bit. *Decline of Popular Politics*, Michael McEgrr. He said this stuff disappeared.

<sup>1480</sup> When the Confederate Veterans chose New Orleans to celebrate their version of the Civil War in 1903, they expressly prohibited Black brass bands, leading to a large-scale confrontation with organized labor in the Crescent City. See Mark A. Johnson, “‘Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets’: Black Musicians and the United

Why this is ignored in histories of brass band in New Orleans is odd, because of all the sites in the Reconstructing South, New Orleans brass bands' regalia, discipline, and spectacles played decisive roles in the battle for public space. With the exception of historian and economist Clyde Woods, no one has considered how these histories rhyme. Yet some literature alludes to the Reconstruction pre-echoes of these postwar periods. Lipsitz, Heble, and Fischlin argue that "the tools that...had been deployed by musicians in New Orleans for over a century, tools that involved communication, organization, coordination, culture, and interpretation as mediated through improvisation practices...cannot be disassociated from the communitarian sources that make music possible."<sup>1481</sup> This chapter is an attempt to spell out exactly what some of these "communitarian sources" were.

Brass band scholarship is not the only literature that has failed to address the brassroots in Reconstruction's grassroots. Much of the scholarship on nineteenth-century politics, focused as it is on parties and institutions, either ignores Black politics or subsumes the enfranchisement of African Americans into a history of the Republican Party. Not only do these approaches fail to account for "one of the largest expansions of the electorate" in American history, they also completely ignore the cultural revolution that made successful mobilization possible.<sup>1482</sup> "Beyond

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Confederate Veterans Reunion in New Orleans, 1903," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 56, no. 3 (2015): 315–43.

<sup>1481</sup> Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 91, 86, 88.

<sup>1482</sup> Literature within this paradigm includes Richard L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Joel H. Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838–1893* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Byron E. Shafer and Anthony J. Badger, eds., *Contesting Democracy: Substance and Structure in American Political History, 1775–2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Charles W. Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic: The Republican Party and the Southern Question, 1869–1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

the political history of freedpeople after emancipation,” writes Behrend, “the subject of democracy formation at the grassroots level has received little attention... Reconstruction has not had its story told that centers Black social movements.”<sup>1483</sup> This is unfortunate, because, as Behrend and others have noted, the politics of the formerly enslaved were quite radical. Where Black communities constituted a majority, such as Concordia, Louisiana, which had the highest percentage (93%) of Black people per capita in the nation, constituents fought for free public schools, an aggressive progressive tax system aimed at redirecting the surplus of the landed elite, federal protection for voters, and state investment in economic development.<sup>1484</sup> As I have shown in Chapter 4, land reform and an agrarian, ecological society, perhaps even something akin to ecosocialism, was actively campaigned for.

More than their policies, however, my objective in this chapter is to capture *how* communities made decisions, and what their assemblies felt and sounded like. I am inspired in this regard by Justin Behrend’s scholarship, which demonstrates how freedpeople “contribute[d] openly to debates on public policy and social values,” which foregrounded how “the major task of democratization was not necessarily the extension of suffrage rights but the creation of a democratic ethos.”<sup>1485</sup> Such an ethos was, I argue, another expression of the counter-plantation’s radical expansion of democracy and radical rejection of bourgeois capitalist models. Brass band traditions were central to what Hardt and Negri call “cooperative social production and reproduction” which expressed the “plural ontologies” of Black communities.<sup>1486</sup> Collective

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<sup>1483</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>1484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1485</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 4.

<sup>1486</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, 228, 107.

improvisation and, to an equal extent, sonic heterogeneity modelled this complex antiphony.<sup>1487</sup> The array of unpublished and secondary sources I highlight reveals how practices of grassroots activism—such as community-centered education, collective decision making, and organized self-defense—were linked to the ongoing production of brass band music and the various forms of affective labor it performed. Brassroots performances created safe spaces, summoned joy and motivation, rallied assemblies for self-defense or political celebrations, and aestheticized the social relations of Black communities. For these reasons, I argue that these forms must be understood as a necessary corollary to grassroots movements that aimed to generate more democratic possibilities. They were both part of creating and consolidating a Black body politic and challenging the attempt of the “white republic” to institute post-slavery apartheid.<sup>1488</sup> Even after Reconstruction was overthrown, brass bands continued to summon these visions and expand the public, generating utopian resonances to the present day.

This chapter thus tackles the following in succession. Part 1 continues to document and theorize the sonic aspects of jubilee, and traces the freedom significations of brass during the Civil War. Part 2 traces the Black brass bands developed during the Civil War, which served not only as particular spaces of musical education but as markers of a world turned upside down, as Black musicians transformed public space in Southern cities that had only recently been sites of slave auctions and compulsory labor. Part 3 focuses on the aural aspects of the assembly: speeches, sermons, and serenades that created both safe spaces and safe passage to meeting houses and polling places. This includes Republican party attempts to utilize Black music as part of their own

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<sup>1487</sup> For a similar argument, see Elsa Barkley Brown, “Polyrhythms and Improvization: Lessons for Women’s History,” *History Workshop*, no. 31 (1991): 85–90.

<sup>1488</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

coronation rituals, but perhaps more importantly, further considers how rank and file Black voters, activists, and musicians informed the aesthetic and cultural character of Republican rule during Reconstruction. Part 4 and 5 analyze the post-Reconstruction legacies of this genealogy, focusing on how Black musicians redeployed the lessons of brassroots democracy during reconstruction to utilize brass band performances in a variety of social confrontations: in honoring Black volunteer fire companies, during labor strikes on the docks, and in a particularly charged confrontation with a Confederate Veterans' reunion. These interrelated moments reveal how the ongoing practice of brassroots democracy informed Black interventions into the public sphere, from their political mobilization during Reconstruction to the emergence of jazz.

## 6.2 Sonic Jubilee: the Aural Making of a New World

*We are stolen, and sold to Georgia, will you go along with me?  
We are stolen and sold to Georgia,  
Go sound the jubilee.*

- "The Song of the Coffle Gang"<sup>1489</sup>

Many freedpeople remembered their initial moment of freedom aurally, as did James K. Greene, who served in Alabama's constitutional convention and legislature: "I for one was entirely ignorant; I knew nothing more than to obey my master; and there were thousands of us in the same attitude," he wrote, but this changed when "the tocsin of freedom sounded and knocked at the door

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<sup>1489</sup> "The Song of the Coffle Gang," with "Words by the slaves." This anti-slavery song was produced in several pieces of abolitionist literature. See Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 177-78.

and we walked out like free men and met the exigencies as they grew up, and shouldered the responsibilities.”<sup>1490</sup>

Nowhere was this aurality more concentrated and consummated than in the initial moments of celebration. By consulting archives—soldiers’ diaries, slave testimonies, and both sympathetic and antagonistic newspapers—we can begin to get a sense of what meanings were attached to these celebrations. Timothy Thomas Fortune, the influential editor of the *New York Age*, was eight when freedom came to his village of Marianna, Florida, when he was still enslaved. He recalled later:

The soldiers had dress parade twice a day and all the urchins of the village were on hand to watch it. They thought it was the grandest thing ever. They were transported by the drumbeating and the bugle blowing. The bugle call for afternoon drill and parade was heard for miles around and was the first and sweetest music the freed people had ever heard. Have they ever heard any sweeter since? I doubt it.<sup>1491</sup>

From thenceforth, the sound of brass was forever etched into Turner’s ears, and millions of others, as the sound of a divine freedom. In these narratives, “drumbeating and bugle blowing” emerge as a kind of “sound image” reinforcing the sublime moment of liberation and an almost excessive communal reintegration.<sup>1492</sup> Of course, it was not excessive at all—these were the birth pangs of interracial democracy, the (re)constructed memories of liberation whose originary moment continually emerges from the “sweetest music” ever heard, for “miles around.” The epic

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<sup>1490</sup> James K. Greene, quoted in Eric Foner, “‘The Tocsin of Freedom’: The Black Leadership of Radical Reconstruction,” in *Slavery, Resistance, Freedom*, ed. G. S. Boritt, Scott Hancock, and Ira Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 131. A tocsin was a synonym for bell, and had antislavery connotations during the antebellum and Civil War era. *The Tocsin of Liberty*, an 1840s newspaper from the short-lived antislavery Liberty Party, included contributed by William Lloyd Garrison.

<sup>1491</sup> T. Thomas Turner, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 30, 1927; quoted in Dorothy Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 11.

<sup>1492</sup> For a discussion of “sound images” in slave narratives, see John Edgar Wideman, “Charles Chesnutt and the WPA Narratives: The Oral and Literate Roots of African-American Literature,” in *The Slave’s Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 72.

range and profound poetics of these freedom sonics did not only signify the end slavery; their ability to project over geography and topography projected the envisioned social order.

It is not a stretch to say that the new musical genres invented through these performances became the foundation of brassroots democracy during Reconstruction. Fred Moten reminds us that “celebration is the essence of black thought, the animation of black operations, which are, in the first instance, our undercommon, underground, submarine sociality.”<sup>1493</sup> Music was overwhelmingly the preferred outlet of this Black thought. Songs like “No more driver’s lash for me, no more, no more” were, for many, the first time that Black men and women could directly articulate an oppositional consciousness in the company of former masters: the hidden transcript was laid on the table. In Louisiana, the conservative *Louisiana Democrat* complained of newly desegregated schools where “such delightful symphonies as ‘hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree’ ‘John Brown’s body lies a moldering in the grave,’ and other approved Black Republican melodies, [are] chanted in full chorus by the little darkies fresh from the sugar house and the cotton gin.”<sup>1494</sup> Even being able to congregate was, itself, a right that had not been observed during slavery, and Wilbert Jenkins notes that this “new fruit of liberty” was above all enjoyed by “freedman from the rural areas, where gathering in large groups without the presence of whites had been proscribed by the conspiracy-conscious white community.”<sup>1495</sup> They walked—sometimes as much as fifteen miles—to congregate.<sup>1496</sup>

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<sup>1493</sup> Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 742.

<sup>1494</sup> *Louisiana Democrat*, quoted in James Edward Bond, *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Reconstruction and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 92.

<sup>1495</sup> Jenkins, *Seizing the New Day*, 38.

<sup>1496</sup> *The Loyal Georgian*, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1867; quoted in Sterling, *The Trouble They Seen*, 100.

The ongoing celebrations that marked the months and years after emancipation should not confuse the dire material reality that freedpeople faced. Destitute, undernourished, and travelling long distances to liberated areas, slaves risked their lives and well-being to reach freedom. Writing about the Union army occupation of Wilmington, North Carolina, William Dobak notes that, “As occurred everywhere in the South, the arrival of a Union Army attracted thousands of black residents from the surrounding country. In February, the Subsistence Department issued rations to 7,521 black adults and 1,079 children at six sites along the North Carolina coast.”<sup>1497</sup> As refugees traversed in life-threatening conditions, many described gradually hearing and feeling the immersion of a music cacophonously jubilant and literally without end. As these eight and a half thousand refugees crossed low-lying, gently rolling land; or as they crossed rivers, creeks, and lakes with considerable swamp and marshland adjoining them; the first sounds that became gradually perceptible would have been the beating of drums, the blaring of trumpets, then collective singing, all illuminating the path for Gabriel’s new flock.

Not only did new songs become enunciated, but old ones were transformed. Sidney Bechet’s father recalls that the spiritual “Go Down Moses” was reinvented in meaning and energy in the parades following emancipation:

It was years they'd been singing that [“Go Down Moses.”]. And suddenly there was a different way of singing it. You could feel a new way of happiness in the lines. All that waiting, all that time when that song was far-off music, suffering music; and all at once it was there, it had arrived. It was joy music now. It was Free Day ... Emancipation. And New Orleans just bust wide open. A real time was had. They heard the music, and the music told them about it. They heard that music from bands marching up and down the streets and they knew what music it was...That music, it wasn't spirituals or blues or ragtime, but everything all at once, each one putting something over on the other...Some of those people didn't even

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<sup>1497</sup> William A. Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Army, Center of Military History, 2011), 407.

know what Emancipation was; they just know there was a hell of a parade going on, a whole lot of laughing and singing, a whole lot of music being happier than the music had ever been before.<sup>1498</sup>

A great emotional shift was underway, and it was inevitable that a great aesthetic shift would result. An emerging hybridity of musical forms converged with plantation migrants, and brass bands became the focal point of these new styles. Black soldiers, freedpeople, free people of color, and white musicians from other parts of the country made music together during these festivities. While New Orleans was home to long-standing patterns of Afro-Atlantic creolization, the music that came out of this particular movement was nothing if not dynamic: spirituals, ragtime, blues, all at once. This diversity of styles was a necessity to cohere the cross-class and multilingual social revolution that erupted across Black America. In addition to creating a new culture that conjoined rural and urban freedpeople, as well as between freedpeople and pre-Civil War free people, these songs projected a new optimism, enacting an emergent social order and defending it through organized displays of enthusiasm, solidarity, and social commentary.

The parades in Charleston, South Carolina were emblematic of this trend. A *New York Times* correspondent relayed the intense labor that went into the public celebrations of freedom. In fact, even the planning of a celebratory march was cause for celebration.

On Sunday preceding the day of the celebration it was announced to a large colored congregation, assembled at Zion Church, that arrangements were in progress to give them an opportunity of manifesting their delight at the new freedom they were enjoying. This announcement, made by Col. Woodford, was received with prolonged shouts and deafening cheers, and all present showed by the eager manner in which they entered into the proposition that the affair so far as they were concerned, should not be a failure. And

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<sup>1498</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1960), 47-48. Quoted in Mary Ellison, "African-American Music and Muskets in Civil War New Orleans," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 35, no. 3 (1994): 304.

everyone who witnessed the proceedings of Tuesday will join in saying that they were not a failure.<sup>1499</sup>

Meeting at the citadel square on the Tuesday for the celebration at two o'clock, the correspondent writes that some four thousand had gathered. Apparently, the entire society of freedpeople were mobilized, with battalions organized by profession. Leading the procession, we are told, was "an organization of about fifty butchers," proudly displaying knives and a porker. Hog killings were "great occasion[s]" for enslaved peoples, according to Arthur F. Raper, where "as many of 75 hogs might be killed in a single day," and meat was distributed to the community: "the position of the hog-sticker was an honored one."<sup>1500</sup> While these symbols of Black communal resource management stood at the front of the parade, anchoring the parade was a brass band: "The music discoursed by the band was very creditable, and added much to the general effect of the whole proceedings," the *Times* reported opines. Directly behind the band was "a company of school boys, the leading boy carrying a banner with the device [slogan], 'We know no masters but ourselves.'" And the coup de grâce was:

[A] car drawn by a mule, and [which] contained an auctioneer, who was standing over two women seated on a block, with their children standing about them. A boy was also in the cart, whose office was to ring a bell with all the energy he possessed. The car bore an announcement: "A number of negroes for sale;" and as it moved along the auctioneer would appeal to the crowd for a bid, making use of the phrases which are usually heard in a negro auction-room. For instance, the bystanders were repeatably informed that such a one was an excellent cook, or an expert seamstress, or a valuable field-hand, and that some one of the number had run the price up to an extravagant amount—in Confederate money, of course. Attached to the cart was a long rope, tied to which was a number of men and women. Next was a hearse, bearing a coffin, and having the inscriptions: "Slavery is dead;" "Who owns him?" "No one;" "Sumter dug his grave on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, 1861." The hearse was

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<sup>1499</sup> "Department of the South: Affairs in Charleston: The Jubilee Among the Freedmen: How the Slaves Celebrated Their Emancipation: Military Changes," *New York Times*, April 4, 1865.

<sup>1500</sup> Arthur F. Raper, *Tenants of the Almighty* (New York: MacMillan, 1943).

followed by mourners was followed by mourners dressed in deep black. Fifty sailors with their officers, a company of wood sawyers, a band of newspaper carriers, and several clubs and associations, brought up the rear of the procession.<sup>1501</sup>

Aurality is present at each leg of this celebration: in the “creditable” music “discoursed” by the band, in the bell rung with “all the energy he [a young boy] possessed”, in the mock auction in which bystanders were “informed” of what it sounded like to be sold. These traumatic experiences were brought to the fore in order to announce both their absurdity and their termination. Within this striking spectacle is the performance of an entire social order: its occupations, its ideologies, its devastating social commentary on the perverse absurdity of human commodification, and of course, its music.

The Black and white crowd assembled was economically and experientially diverse—free people of color before the war with recently freedpeople—and so the making of the event and the social commentary it articulated was an important marker of unity. It was an occasion, indeed, a necessity, for a great, collective testimonial on slavery and its demise. Its organization and these enactments were early examples of postemancipation Black solidarity across a common cause; class distinctions, at least temporarily, eroded as these celebrations articulated the opening salvos of a post-slave identity that looked toward a new era. “The free black middle class may have taken responsibility for organizing the celebrations and commemorations, but freed slaves turned out in large numbers at all the events and were enthusiastic participants,” writes Jenkins.<sup>1502</sup> These

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<sup>1501</sup> “Department of the South: Affairs in Charleston: The Jubilee Among the Freedmen: How the Slaves Celebrated Their Emancipation: Military Changes,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1865.

<sup>1502</sup> Jenkins, *Seizing the New Day*, 38.

celebrations can be considered the opening salvo of the intraclass political alliances that would sustain Reconstruction.<sup>1503</sup>

The power of these assemblies were not lost on the white elite, and our *Times* correspondent on the scene reports that the public display of sound, education, and collective labor was deeply offensive to the city's disgraced planter elite: "A knot of young ladies standing on a balcony...declared the whole affair was '[s]hameful,' 'disgraceful.'"<sup>1504</sup> Unfortunately for these young ladies, the celebrations were not scheduled to end anytime soon. On April 14, just a few days later, another massive parade and celebration took place at Fort Sumter, where thousands of celebrants were present. Robert Smalls, a Black war hero who managed to steal a Confederate steamer and deliver it to Union forces, used the same steamer to transport three thousand Black freedpeople to stand in the presence of influential race leaders such as Martin Delaney and Robert Vesey (the son of Denmark Vesey), as well as prominent abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison.<sup>1505</sup>

In the month that followed Wilmington's Union occupation, freedom parades comprising both Black soldiers and local Black citizens became a regular occurrence.<sup>1506</sup> Across the South, these lasted well into, and after, Reconstruction. Music announced a new era, a meeting of worlds, and projected the end of the antebellum order. The accuracy of these millennial projections was

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<sup>1503</sup> On Reconstruction alliances, see Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

<sup>1504</sup> "Department of the South: Affairs in Charleston: The Jubilee Among the Freedmen: How the Slaves Celebrated Their Emancipation: Military Changes," *New York Times*, April 4, 1865.

<sup>1505</sup> Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Seizing the New Day: African Americans in Post-Civil War Charleston* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 38.

<sup>1506</sup> This division had withstood much of the fighting and suffered the heaviest casualties. See and William A. Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Army, Center of Military History, 2011), 407-408; and in Thanayi Michelle Jackson, "'Devoted to the Interests of His Race': Black Officeholders and the Political Culture of Freedom in Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865-1877" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2016), 23.

not, in these moments, relevant: what mattered is that power had shifted hands, and how Black communities were determined to use it to build new communities through honoring their history, their culture, and their new music.

### 6.3 Black Brass Recruits: Military Musicians

*O black and unknown bards of long ago,  
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?  
How, in your darkness, did you come to know  
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?  
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?  
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,  
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise  
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?*

- James Weldon Johnson<sup>1507</sup>

The aural aspects of jubilee often contrasted with white representations of the same moment. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a white Unitarian abolitionist who had helped fund and organize support for John Brown's failed raid on Harper's Ferry, found an outlet for his Black liberation politics when he became the colonel of the all-African American 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina Volunteers.<sup>1508</sup> He recalls with particular clarity the march into Beaufort, North Carolina. He waxed poetically about this day in his memoir *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (1869), where he describes the thrill of seeing "twenty broad double-ranks of men," with "every polished musket having a black face behind it." This "regiment of freed slaves marching on into the future,—it was

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<sup>1507</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 55.

<sup>1508</sup> Edward Renehan, *The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995), 270.

something to remember.” Higginson emphasizes the exacting discipline that his Black regiment was expected to maintain, focusing specifically on their eyes. His soldiers were drilled to “Look straight to the front” at all times, for their audience of white officers and Beaufort residents possessed “eyes [that] would readily spy out every defect.” This ocular obsession is reproduced throughout his narrative and similar writings by other white officers.<sup>1509</sup>

While it was the *sight* of “a thousand men, everyone as black as coal” which spoke to Higginson’s heart, it was not the optics of freedom that inspired his Black soldiers so much as the sound. When the band of the Eighth Marine joined the 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina Volunteers at the entrance of town, the African American Sargent Rivers ecstatically remembered, “And when dat band wheel in before us, and march,—my God! I quit dis world together.” The music performed in these captured cities was a portal to an emancipated future, and it had different genres and performance spaces, even in the same march. After the Beaufort festivities, Higginson relays that “[W]e marched back to camp (three miles), the men signing the ‘John Brown Song,’ and all manner of things,—as happy creatures as one can well conceive.”<sup>1510</sup>

The “John Brown song” in particular made frequent appearances among Black marchers. Lt. Palemon Smalley describes the 99<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry during the 1864 Red River expedition in Louisiana: “As we passed through the village on our way, our colored soldiers...took a special delight in singing ‘John Brown’ and it was a fine sight to see them go swinging along and hear their...melodious voices singing a song that meant more to them than to all others.”<sup>1511</sup>

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<sup>1509</sup> Another white officer who celebrates the optics of Black regiments is George E. Sutherland in “The Negro and the Great War,” in *War Papers*, by Wisconsin Commandery, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Burdick, Armtage, and Allen, 1891), 170–88.

<sup>1510</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Company, 1870), 58-60.

<sup>1511</sup> Pallemmon J. Smalley, “Dad’s Memoirs,” typescript, quoted in Keith Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers During the Civil War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002), 175.

Another Commander quipped that Black soldiers in Louisiana “sing more than they pray.”<sup>1512</sup> This section traces the processes by which the music and sounds, some old and others new, reinvented the meaning of the Civil War and contributed to a musical vocabulary around Black liberation. Black creativity had to negotiate with military brass, while also serving the needs of Black soldiers. As we will see, music became a distinct form of communication and consciousness-raising among freedpeople, appearing everywhere from nighttime dances to the pitched battles for equal pay.

The military quickly perceived the usefulness of encouraging Black music. The songs that adorned the liberation of Southern cities directly aided the ongoing war effort by galvanizing new recruits of color.<sup>1513</sup> In the aftermath of the Charleston jubilee march, three hundred freedpeople enlisted, while in Wilmington, North Carolina, one hundred and twenty men were recruited from the enslaved refugees.<sup>1514</sup> Here, as Keith Wilson argues persuasively, “Bandsmen were not mere entertainers...Military bands were at the forefront of recruiting campaigns. They led Union troops into most major engagements and their triumphant martial music accompanied soldiers as they marched through conquered Southern cities.”<sup>1515</sup> Recruitment was an anxiety of generals and military planners, and Black reluctance to join the military was a considerable problem, even

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<sup>1512</sup> Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 154.

<sup>1513</sup> While the Battle of Wilmington signaled the Confederate’s demise—Wilmington was the last remaining port of the Confederate states on the Atlantic Coast, and its capture solidified the Union blockade and allowed General Sherman to reinforce his troops by sea—it was unknown then that Robert E. Lee would surrender two months later. The Battle of Wilmington concluded February 12, 1865, and the Civil War concluded on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Confederate troops to the Union’s Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

<sup>1514</sup> Department of the South: Affairs in Charleston: The Jubilee Among the Freedmen: How the Slaves Celebrated Their Emancipation: Military Changes,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1865; Maj A. S. Boernstein to Capt A. N. Buckman, 24 Feb 1865 (B-42-DNC-1865), and Endorsement, Capt W. L. Palmer, 15 Mar 1865, on Surgeon D. W. Hand to Maj J. A. Campbell, 7 Mar 1865 (H-65-DNC-1865), both in Entry 3290, Dept of North Carolina and Army of the Ohio, LR, pt. 1, Geographical Divs and Depts, RG 393, NA; William A. Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Army, Center of Military History, 2011), 407

<sup>1515</sup> Keith Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture: A Study of Black Military Bands in the Union Army During the Civil War,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (July 1990): 31.

though, once drafted, “the large majority quickly adjusted to military life.”<sup>1516</sup> Black and white bandsmen communicated the possibilities of authentic liberation through the use of sound, volume, tone, choreographed marching, and socialized new recruits through these sonic rituals. Sometimes recruitment was spelled out in lyrics, as in an “enlistment” song that was popular: “I’ve listed and I mean to fight / Yes, my lord / Till every foe is put to flight / Yes, my lord.”<sup>1517</sup> Black military bands—the new music—were used to recruit Black soldiers as much as it was to celebrate, and its deployment constituted a core tactic of Union recruiters. The following section will explore the musical history of the Civil War military bands.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Civil War military experience for Black soldiers. Their primary motivation, to overthrow slavery and reunite families separated by the trade in flesh, was clear enough: as one Black soldier relayed, he fought so that “the Rebels would be whipped so bad that Gabriel’s trumpet would not resurrect them.”<sup>1518</sup> But army service did not only represent the opportunity to take up arms against the “slave power,” as many freedpeople called the Southern states and their hegemonic planter classes. Joining the Union Army allowed slaves to leave the severely circumscribed worlds of plantation slavery, where power resided in near-absolute forms within individuals and opportunities for non-clandestine collective organizing amongst a broader community was practically nil.<sup>1519</sup> The Civil War gave slaves an opportunity to

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<sup>1516</sup> Williamson, *After Slavery*, 20.

<sup>1517</sup> Mary Ellison, “African-American Music and Muskets in Civil War New Orleans,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 35, no. 3 (1994): 308; Henry A. Kmen, *Music in New Orleans: The Formative Years, 1791-1841* (Baton Rouge, 1966), 226; Cuney-Hare, *Negro Musicians*, 266;

<sup>1518</sup> Testimony of Isaac Hughes, quoted in Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 19.

<sup>1519</sup> For an expansive view of the slave community, see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, rev. and enlarged ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). Critics of the notion of a mono-lithic slave community include Peter Kolchin, “Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community: A Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 579–601; Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in*

create connections and relationships beyond the local, and the following pages traces some of the first examples of a new music dreamt up and enacted by a group of erstwhile strangers.<sup>1520</sup> These refugees from across the South, some of whom may have been on neighboring plantations, and others who could not have had more diverging life experiences, had to conceive of a way to make each other heard.

The scale of this cultural shift can be gleaned from the pages of *The Liberator*, which published a letter from an anonymous Black “Sargent.” Born free, he commented on how the regiments were spaces of cultural transformation for freedpeople who realized

...the disadvantage of being depending upon others to do their writing and reading...they are now applying themselves assiduously with spelling book...the withering, blighting, cursed system of slavery has robbed [them] of the golden moment of youth and the maturer hours of manhood. Many of these [freedpeople] are destined to make their marks...[upon return] to their homes.<sup>1521</sup>

Here, as in Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative*, literacy functions as a force of liberation. Scholars as diverse as James Olney and Ronald Radano have emphasized the materiality of the pen in Douglass’s autobiographical writing, which serves as “as a marker of slavery’s psychic and bodily effects,” measuring “the vast chasm between...[a] literate present and a sound-filled, preliterate past.”<sup>1522</sup> My goal here is not so much to highlight the acquisition of literacy, but rather to emphasize the intercultural aspects of the Black Civil War regiment that this quote points to.

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*the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For recent studies on how slaves utilized extended networks, see Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Susan Eva O’Donovan, “Universities of Social and Political Change: Slaves in Jail in Antebellum America” in *Buried Lives: Incarcerated in Early America*, ed. Michele Lise Tarter and Richard Bell (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 124–46.

<sup>1520</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 14.

<sup>1521</sup> “From a Sargent in the 55<sup>th</sup> Mass.,” July 26, 1864, in Edwin S. Redkey, ed., *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>1522</sup> Ronald Radano, “Denoting Difference: The Writing of the Slave Spirituals,” *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 3 (1996): 506–44; James Olney,

Building off of the earlier examples, an alternative tradition existed amongst Black intellectuals, one which understood aurality not as a “preliterate past” of Black consciousness, but as an alternative kind of literacy that could contribute to a modern Black subject and a decisive tool for liberation.

Justin Behrend reminds us that, “In ways that we have yet to fully recognize, the war politicized life for slaves and free blacks.”<sup>1523</sup> While Ira Berlin and others have emphasized the importance of the equal pay struggle<sup>1524</sup>—a subject which will be discussed at length below—most historians of the freedpeople in the Civil War have undertheorized the politicization that happened within the ranks of the military: not just from the implications of bearing arms and wielding power against the “slave power,” but also in how freedpeople built community, and decision-making mechanisms, amongst a community of refugees. Even among historians who highlight Black agency in the war period, they fail to acknowledge the role of music in mediating and sustained a collective political voice.<sup>1525</sup> The link to song and singing, as we will see, was not ancillary to these new models and social critiques. Brassroots music channeled these collective rituals, and modeled participatory democracy in the making, serving as powerful examples of what freedpeople of mixed education and cultural experiences could accomplish together. It fused multiple forms of literacy, creating a loquacious political culture that was linked to Black religion, communal solidarity, and the goals of emancipation in the Reconstructing South. Its emphasis on consensus, mutual learning, and intercultural exchange created a dynamic cypher by which

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<sup>1523</sup> Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 14.

<sup>1524</sup> Ira Berlin et al., “Fighting on Two Fronts: The Struggle for Equal Pay,” *Prologue* 14 (Fall 1982): 129–39;

<sup>1525</sup> Overviews of African American troops during the Civil War which omit music include Joseph T. Glatthaar, “Black Glory: The African-American Role in Union Victory,” in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 133–62; see also Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862–1865*, (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1999).

revolutionary ideas and histories of trauma could be shared simultaneously in the forms of spirituals, marching band songs, and nighttime dances. By focusing on the musical history of the Black military experience, we grasp a privileged view into the development of the particular marriage of music and bottom-up political mobilization central to brassroots democracy.

By the war's end, 179,000 black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy.<sup>1526</sup> Among these, in each Colored Troop division, which were raised in an improvised manner across occupied territories in the South, companies usually conscripted two musicians alongside each unit of 64 to 82 privates.<sup>1527</sup> Black musicians were specifically sought out for their musical capabilities. This had at least two explanations. One was European and white Americans' long-standing notions of the natural musicality of the African descended. The second was an impressive historical record of Black musicians' significant contributions to European military music. Sought out by commanders, Black troops played important roles in British drum crops as early as the seventeenth century; Julius Scott notes that "blacks in British bands brought with them new sounds which the bands eagerly incorporated as part of the ongoing process of cultural borrowing which had always characterized British military music."<sup>1528</sup> In the 1760s, the Guadeloupe-stationed British 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot was "renowned for the high standards of its crops of drums," and was almost entirely composed of Black troops, including runaway slaves from Boston.<sup>1529</sup> Black musicians were so desired that the British Sargent-Major George Low Smith lamented in 1840 that his

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<sup>1526</sup> "Black Soldiers in the U.S. Military During the Civil War," National Archives, August 15, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war>. Accessed September 23, 2020.

<sup>1527</sup> William A. Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Army, Center of Military History, 2011), 11.

<sup>1528</sup> Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2018), 35.

<sup>1529</sup> John Norris, *Marching to the Drums: A History of Military Drums and Drummers* (Dublin: The History Press, 2012), 100.

detachment had only “three black men in the regiment: viz Trumpeter Murray, Roderick the cymbal player and McKinley the big drummer.”<sup>1530</sup> These Black instrumentalists not only added musical content to the group but also provided links for disaffected European soldiers to a Black urban maroon underground, common in Caribbean port cities, where deserters, runaway slaves, and dissidents of all nations comingled.<sup>1531</sup>

Black musicianship was coveted in United States musical bands as well. A Union Army officer claimed that because of “his natural love for music and quick ear for time and tune, the colored soldier caught the rhythm of military movements with great readiness.”<sup>1532</sup> The United States Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas, considered freed slaves a very “musical people” who would readily “learn to march and accurately perform their manoeuvres [*sic*].”<sup>1533</sup> For many, the stereotypes that characterized Black musicality were drawn from the same well as primitivist racism, with Surgeon Seth Rogers’s words serving as a visceral reminder:

Imitation and musical concert are the avenues to the minds of these [Black] children. Of course the habit of such dependence will change by education, but such is the beginning. After centuries of slavery, which utterly shuts the avenues of thought, we should hardly expect rapid development of activity in the superior regions of thought.<sup>1534</sup>

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<sup>1530</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>1531</sup> Julius Scott describes “Samuel Reed, an Irish ‘labourer’ of about twenty-five who had played the clarinet and other instruments” who deserted with Black military soldiers. “Just days after Reed’s disappearance, Joseph Lees, a drummer, left the barracks to join him.” *The Common Wind*, 35.

<sup>1532</sup> George E. Sutherland, “The Negro and the Great War,” in *War Papers*, by Wisconsin Commandery, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Burdick, Armtage, and Allen, 1891), 180.

<sup>1533</sup> T. Rogers, “War-Time Letters,” 20 February 1863, 55; quoted in Keith Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture: A Study of Black Military Bands in the Union Army During the Civil War,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (July 1990): 32.

<sup>1534</sup> S. Rogers, ‘War-Time Letters Seth Rogers M.D. Surgeon of the First South Carolina. Afterwards the Thirty-Third USCT 1862-1863’, 20 February 1863, p. 44, typescript. Military Order of the Loyal Legion United States, Massachusetts Commandery Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, quoted in Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture: A Study of Black Military Bands in the Union Army During the Civil War,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (July 1990): 32.

Rogers's comments point to the prevalent racism amongst Union army brass and white receptions of Black music more broadly. Whether owing to racism or appreciation, whether based in a desire for Black musical techniques or because of its importance to recruit Black soldiers to the Union cause, Black music became an essential part of the of military effort in the United States South.

It is striking to contrast the understanding of Black military musicianship by white officers, so often filtered through a racial lens, with the African Americans who partook in military bands themselves. The latter certainly ascribed an immense importance to these mobile institutions, and in their varied accounts, Black soldiers credit them for personal growth, for collective enjoyment, and for facilitating a connection with the divine. When visiting his brother in Memphis, Tennessee, Maj. Daniel Densmore of the 68th United States Colored Infantry caught the opportunity to see the band of another Black regiment, the 7th United States Colored Heavy Artillery, perform in Court Square. He commended the group and appreciated the cultural politics it played in the heart of the slave power. "All negroes played in Court Square, a place of resort for the aristocracy, and some of the fine ladies looked quite vexed at what they considered the insult. But the band played well and showed the difference between the negroes as soldiers and as slaves a year ago."<sup>1535</sup> As in Charleston, Black band performances remapped the Southern city, leading to Black empowerment and planter anguish in nearly equal measure. Densmore also wrote on the that Black soldiers in his regiment who, not having the resources to procure their own instruments, pooled their army pay to buy musical instruments of their own.<sup>1536</sup> The "magicians" organized dance bands which performed at night, a source of "great merriment" for troops stationed on dreaded

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<sup>1535</sup> D. Densmore to friends at home, 6 September 1864, Benjamin Densmore Family Papers; quoted in Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 147-48.

<sup>1536</sup> D. Densmore to friends at home 25 December 1864, Benjamin Densmore Family Papers; Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 171.

fatigue duty.<sup>1537</sup> When music was not had, it was a cause of great concern and comment by Black soldiers: Captain Emilio of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment complained on the River Road campaign that they were sustained “with only the tinkle, tinkle of pans and cups striking they bayonets for music.” The 54<sup>th</sup> reveals that music was made in a variety of manners, and even when musical instruments could not be had, cooking gear and weapons could be turned into percussion ensembles.<sup>1538</sup>

Being a musician did not imply greater safety. They suffered the same dangers as other soldiers, both in battle and due to antiblack discrimination within the military itself. The Black drummer George W. Reed, who served on a gunboat with a mixed crew, remembered a raid on the North Carolina shoreline: “We landed our men again, and repulsed a band of rebels handsomely, and captured three prisoners...[but] I regret to say that we had the misfortunate to lose Samuel Turner (colored) in our retreat. He was instantly killed, and his body remains in the rebel hands. He being the fifer, I miss him very much as a friend and companion, and he was beloved by all on board.”<sup>1539</sup> Reed demonstrates the importance of the fifer, and the special meanings musicians had in regimental life. He also reveals that musicians saw significant combat. When Lucy Bailey, an African American resident of Detroit and wife of the drum major for the 100<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry, John Bailey, protested in a letter to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, it was in protest of the same issues affecting all Black soldiers: “I have taken the liberty to write you a few lines which I am compelled to do. I am colored it is true but I have feelings as well as [a] white person and why is it the colored soldiers letters can't pass backward and forwards as well as the white ones?” She proceeded to ask what was the fate of her musician husband, who had gone

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<sup>1537</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1538</sup> Trudeau, *Like Men of War*, 321.

<sup>1539</sup> George W. Reed in Edwin S. Redkey, ed., *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 273.

missing.<sup>1540</sup> As Caryn Cossé Bell notes, “Though African American soldiers...distinguished themselves in a number of major engagements, they continued to bear a larger share of garrison and fatigue duty than their white counterparts.” As a result, Black troops were almost twice as likely to contract disease as white soldiers.<sup>1541</sup>

Regimental musicians were not the only harbingers of music. Singing was commonplace amongst self-liberated slaves who joined Union forces, and they sang in a variety of arenas, from solitary working to the spectacular festivities at night. The white abolitionist Colonel of the 2nd Regiment of the Louisiana Native Guards, Nathan W. Daniels, remembered in his diary that “Some of my soldiers are working at my Headqrs [sic] as carpenters and their music is good, one in particular now singing an opera air reveals a richness of tone in his voice that would make him noted in the world of cultivation and refinement.” Daniels suggests this music reflected their triumph over slavery: “The Bonds of a half dozen centuries could not smother their inherent capacity.”<sup>1542</sup> While work songs were common, the nighttime appears to have been the apex of Black multivocal creativity. Historian Keith P. Wilson highlights how wartime campfires became spaces where “black troops often put their social comment into song.”<sup>1543</sup> Col. Samuel Armstrong observed freedmen who “sang at night around their camp fires,” and other officers described how these songs shared beauty, pathos, as well as distinct commentary on current events.<sup>1544</sup> In his *Life*

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<sup>1540</sup> Ira Berlin, ed., *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 665-666.

<sup>1541</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell, “‘Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens’: The Poetry of Pierre-Aristide Desdunes, Civil War Soldier, Romantic Literary Artist, and Civil Rights Activist,” in *Rappelez-Vous Concitoyens: La Poésie de Pierre Aristide Desdunes*, by Pierre-Aristide Desdunes (Shreveport, LA: Les Éditions Tintamarre, Centenary College of Louisiana, 2011), 9-10.

<sup>1542</sup> “Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1863,” in Nathan W. Daniels, *Thank God My Regiment an African One: The Civil War Diary of Colonel Nathan W. Daniels*, ed. Clare P. Weaver (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998),

<sup>1543</sup> Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 154.

<sup>1544</sup> *Ibid.*

in a *Black Army Regiment*, Col. Higginson vividly describes a dynamic nighttime Black culture.

Upon entering a Black soldier's "hut", he stumbles upon a space:

...crammed with men, singing at the top of their voices, in one of their quaint, monotonous, endless, negro-Methodist chants, with obscure syllables recurring constantly, and slight variations interwoven, all accompanied with a regular drumming of the feet and clapping of the hands, like castanets. Then the excitement spreads: inside and outside the enclosure men begin to quiver and dance, others join, a circle forms, winding monotonously round some one in the centre; some 'heel and toe' tumultuously...the ceaseless drumming and clapping, in perfect cadence, goes steadily on...songs often strayed into wholly new versions, which sometimes became popular, and entirely banished the others.<sup>1545</sup>

There topics could be religious or topical, dealing with, among other things, injustices suffered in the army itself.<sup>1546</sup> Lest one object that these songs belonged to a domain outside of marching traditions, Higginson clarifies that there was considerable overlap between the worlds. The spiritual "Go in the Wilderness" became "[t]heir best marching song, and one which was invaluable to lift their feet along."<sup>1547</sup> James Weldon Johnson noted the link of the spirituals to liberation-suffused valences of brass instruments when he wrote of "Go Down Moses": "Mark its bars, / How like a mighty trumpet-call they stir the blood. / Such are the notes that men have sung / Going to valorous deeds; such tones there were / That helped make history when Time was young."<sup>1548</sup>

Johnson is able to link Black brass with this collective songwriting because the overwhelmingly communal character of Black singing was transferred into Black band

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<sup>1545</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 17.

<sup>1546</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-222.

<sup>1547</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>1548</sup> James Weldon Johnson, "O Black and Unknown Bards," in James Weldon Johnson, *Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 55. Originally published in 1908 in *The Century*. See Brent Hayes Edwards, *Epistrophies: Jazz and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 67.

performance. Tracing these moments of collective song are thus crucial for our purposes. At these campfires during the Civil War, Black soldiers who had once toiled on disparate plantations or within far-away cities created a unique musical space which forged a collective consciousness. Colonel George Thomas described how one night, “a little distance from a camp fire,” he heard “one deep rich voice,” whose refrain was taken up by another “two or three,” then “taken up by half a dozen,” until finally, “you are lifted as by a Creation chorus, for now they are fifty voices, and with such wonderful, deep, rich melody, as only the Negro can produce, they join together.”<sup>1549</sup> This was a constant work of negotiation, a procedural mechanism for creating sound agreeable to all, and it seems to have been widespread among the Black regiments. Colonel Henry Goddard Thomas, when he contrasted the reception of news between Black and white soldiers, revealed this creative formula and its link to political discussion:

Any striking event or piece of news was usually eagerly discussed by the white troops...Not so with the blacks; important news...was usually followed by long silence. They sat about in groups, “studying,” as they called it. They waited, like the Quakers, for the spirit to move; when the spirit moved, one of their singers would uplift a mighty voice, like a bard of old, in a wild sort of chant. If he did not strike a sympathetic chord in his hearers, if they did not find in his utterance the exponent of their idea, he would sing it again and again, altering sometimes the words, more often the music. If his changes met general acceptance, one voice after another would chime in; a rough harmony of three parts would add itself; other groups would join his, and the song would become the song of the command.<sup>1550</sup>

The song selection was nothing less than defining the groups’ musical and political voice. Did the analysis ring true, did the aesthetic story map the feelings of the group; did it move the spirit?

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<sup>1549</sup> George E. Sutherland, “The Negro and the Great War,” in *War Papers*, by Wisconsin Commandery, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Burdick, Armtage, and Allen, 1891), 183.

<sup>1550</sup> Henry G. Thomas, “The Colored Troops at Petersburg,” *Century Magazine* 12 (September 1887): 777–79.

These sonic decisions mapped social relations and modeled participatory democracy. Rather than approach democracy from a Western bourgeois model, which seeks to win and defeat the opposition through majoritarian rule, here the ethos was to “convince not defeat.”<sup>1551</sup> Such a conception resonates eloquently with a democracy of sound and shared political consciousness: if the collective spirit does not move, then the song cannot move forward. These practices of consensus-building through trial and error, and call and response, would have immense implications for the democratic character of Radical Reconstruction, and also portended to the function of music in the several decades between the Civil War and Jim Crow.

Spirituals were clearly commonplace in the self-organized spaces of Black soldiers, creating comfort and comradeship, finding recognition of their past pain as a “fellow sufferers.” But they were also, sanguine to our current discussion, spaces of improvised political commentary. What emerges from these accounts is a dialectical containing different types of aurality: one effective (through political and topical discussion) and another affective (the moving of the spirit). There was a good deal of improvisation in these creolized spaces where erstwhile strangers created a new culture, as reflected in Captain Scroggs’s diary when he mentioned that the members of a popular Black regimental band, the “Ebony Tooters,” would “discourse enchanting music, *especially when not attempting to play any particular tune.*”<sup>1552</sup> As many contemporary musicians relate, often endings are the most awkward and most difficult to coordinate aspect of a collective improvisation, and for this reason they can be the most sublime and even the most humorous

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<sup>1551</sup> “Convince not defeat” is a phrase of the modern-day Zapatista movement, based in the highland Mayan Communities in Chiapas, Mexico. In these communities, the autonomous government requires consensus to make any decision. It is a question of the “constant creation and re-creation of the collective heart,” or the “passage from ko-ontutik to ko’ontik.” See Dylan Eldredge Fitzwater, *Autonomy Is in Our Hearts: Zapatista Autonomous Government through the Lens of the Tsotsil Language* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2019), 74-75.

<sup>1552</sup> Scroggs, Diary, 2 January 1865, quoted Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 154. Emphasis mine.

moments of an extended performance.<sup>1553</sup> Col. Higginson related that songs improvised in their nighttime quarters might last an indeterminate time, and then, “Suddenly there comes a sort of *snap*, and the spell breaks, amid general singing and laughter. And this not rarely and occasionally, but night after night.” Not everyone participated, of course: “in other parts of camp the soberest prayers and exhortation are proceeding sedately.”<sup>1554</sup> But at least a significant cadre of nighttime experimentalists were planting the seeds for a postwar improvisatory musical culture.

Improvisation was a potent tool for group solidarity because it could provide “real-time” political analysis, such as in the improvised songs of drummer boys, who, according to Col. Higginson, would “often sing a song” as companies marched: “[T]hey constantly improvised simple verses, with the same odd mingling,—the little facts of to-day's march being interwoven with the depths of theological gloom.”<sup>1555</sup> Higginson’s regiment, divided into ten companies, would have marches wherein each would be “signing a different [song]...the drummer boys would make up songs as they went along, mixing lines of their own hymns with descriptions of what they were doing, and all shouting out the chorus very loud.”<sup>1556</sup> In 1972, folklorist David Evan observed a Black fife and drum band in Mississippi, which may shed light on these combinations of vocals and drumming. Definitely different in some respects—Evan writes that they are led by a dancer, which seems to have been unlikely during the Civil War, although large Black brass bands did have drum majors—he writes that “The fife player rocks and sways and sometimes sings a line or

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<sup>1553</sup> See, for instance, John Zorn in Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 77.

<sup>1554</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 18.

<sup>1555</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Company, 1870), 133.

<sup>1556</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Drummer Boys in a Black Regiment,” *The Youth’s Companion* 61 (September 27, 1888): 465. Dena J. Epstein considers these to be of the same form as slaves’ plantation and boat-related work songs. See Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 180-81.

two. He may be joined by moaning or whooping of one of the drummers.” He also observed “considerable syncopation and polyrhythm into the drumming.”<sup>1557</sup>

According to Higginson’s account, drummers walked a fine line between military discipline and the musical expectations of Black soldiers. Perhaps it was their social power, or their spontaneity, both so foreign to military discipline, that made the Unitarian colonel resent these drummer boys: he describes them as constantly “laughing and utterly unmanageable,” and asserts they were “not my favorites by any means, for they were a roguish set of scamps, and gave me more trouble than all the grown men in the regiment.”<sup>1558</sup> Yet, Higginson was attuned to the music of his regiment. He was a vigorous transcriber, and in 1867 he published the spirituals sung by his troops in *Atlantic Monthly*. This collection “represented a watershed in literature, music, and sociology, as the first substantial published collection of black spiritual songs.”<sup>1559</sup> This was a period when, according to Higginson biographer Howard Meyer, “no one knew what folk music was,” and Higginson’s careful transcription of these songs has been credited by Eileen Southern and others as an important contribution to an emerging field of Black music studies.<sup>1560</sup> John M. Picker argues that “even noticing black spiritual songs, let alone transcribing them” was a “radical venture.”<sup>1561</sup>

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<sup>1557</sup> David Evan, “Black Fife and Drum Music in Mississippi,” in *Afro-American Folk Art and Crafts*, ed. William R. Ferris (University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 163–70.

<sup>1558</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 135, 179.

<sup>1559</sup> John M. Picker, “The Union of Music and Text in Whitman’s Drum-Taps and Higginson’s Army Life in a Black Regiment,” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 12, no. 4 (1995): 237.

<sup>1560</sup> Howard Meyer, *Colonel of the Black Regiment: The Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co Inc, 1967), 231. Ellen Southern and Charles Hamm both comment on the importance of Higginson’s transcriptions for the development of Black music studies. See Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), 136, and Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 173.

<sup>1561</sup> Picker, “The Union of Music and Text in Whitman’s Drum-Taps and Higginson’s Army Life in a Black Regiment,” 237.

Yet the power relations embedded in Higginson's command of hundreds of Black men were reproduced in his methodology, and undermines any easy claim of progressivity. He described his process as akin to "gather[ing] on their own soil these strange plants," and would examine the music "like some captured bird or insect."<sup>1562</sup> Henry Cox as described Higginson's "ambivalence" in this regard as "partly a legacy of ethnology's origins in natural science, a provenance that helps explain the tendency of ethnologists to frame their explanations of difference in biological as well as cultural terms."<sup>1563</sup> And power was imbued in every part of the interaction. This proto-Lomax figure explained he was delighted for his access to "a kindred world of unwritten songs,"<sup>1564</sup> but his being granted access to these songs was not "sharing between colleagues" but rather "surrender from subordinate to commander."<sup>1565</sup> Indeed, his delight may have turned to frustration as he realized, with each passing company and their respective drummer boy, that songs were constantly dissolving and reforming to reflect the conditions within which they were made and the present-day concerns of their audiences. Higginson's access was thus not absolute; Black improvisation exceeded the limits of Western knowledge/power and this "ambiguity represents a predominant source of anxiety" in his work.<sup>1566</sup> But for the Black singers, these improvisations represented community, creativity, and a possible future. These were spaces where Black men could communicate amongst themselves through an auralty resistant to white authority and authorship.

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<sup>1562</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 187-188.

<sup>1563</sup> David G. Cox, "'Half Bacchanalian, Half Devout': White Intellectuals, Black Folk Culture, and the 'Negro Problem,'" *American Nineteenth Century History* 16, no. 3 (September 2015): 246.

<sup>1564</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 41.

<sup>1565</sup> John M. Picker, "'Red War Is My Song': Whitman, Higginson, and Civil War Music," in *Walt Whitman and Modern Music: War, Desire, and the Trials of Nationhood*, ed. Lawrence Kramer (New York: Routledge, 2018), 15.

<sup>1566</sup> Picker, "The Union of Music and Text in Whitman's Drum-Taps and Higginson's *Army Life in a Black Regiment*," 238.

This point must be underscored, because during the final years of the war, the politics of Black military music making overlapped with Black soldiers' mobilization for equal rights within the Union Army itself. Indeed, the Union Army may have contributed to Black liberation, but as many scholars have shown, it did so reluctantly, and only after a considerable struggle both within and without military ranks. During the early years of the war, it was not at all clear if slavery was to be ended with Union occupation, and freed slaves were not accepted to Union ranks.<sup>1567</sup> As President Lincoln and General Sherman's policy changed and Black regiments filled with freed slaves became increasingly common, institutionalized racism lingered. As Berlin surmises, "Black men coveted the liberator's role, but soldiering remained a complex, ambiguous experience...Once enlisted, ex-slaves who yearned to confront their former masters on terms of equality found themselves enmeshed in another white-dominated hierarchy which, like the one they had escaped, assumed their inferiority."<sup>1568</sup>

This racism was resisted in several ways, and one the principal political struggles was the campaign to achieve pay parity with whites. This struggle was brought to the fore dramatically when, on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1864, a Union Army firing squad executed the Black soldier William Walker. An escaped slave who enlisted and rose to the rank of Sergeant, Walker's crime was his refusal to fight until Black soldiers were given "the rights and benefits that had been guaranteed them"—one of the rights being pay parity with whites. Throughout much of the Civil War, Black troops were paid \$7 a week to white soldiers' \$13.<sup>1569</sup> His protestation was considered a mutiny,

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<sup>1567</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois has a lengthy discussion of the struggle to incorporate freedpeople in the Union Army, especially in Louisiana, in *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1935), Chapters 1-4.

<sup>1568</sup> Ira Berlin, *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>1569</sup> George E. Sutherland, "The Negro and the Great War," in *War Papers*, by Wisconsin Commandery, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Burdick, Armtage, and Allen, 1891), 179.

he was court-martialed, and sentenced to death. Many other African American soldiers protested, too, but not with a refusal of service but rather a refusal to accept their low wages: they denied payment until the matter was addressed. They wrote letters and organized within army ranks and in society more broadly; they would not accept “a laborer’s pay,” but that of a soldier.<sup>1570</sup> The campfire music changed, too. Higginson complains that one song which would become abruptly become silent as he walked by: “Ten dollars a month/Three of that for clothing!/Going to Washington/To fight for Lincoln’s daughter.” He was not moved by this spirit, apparently, and wrote of this song: “Their nonsense is as inscrutable as children’s.”<sup>1571</sup>

This agitation bore fruit, and Congress passed an equal-pay law in July of 1864, paying all white and Black privates \$16 a week, a significant increase from Black soldiers’ earlier pay of \$7. Within Black companies, it called for immense and quite public celebration. The first pay day (October 1864) under the new law took a festive air. “Two days have changed the face of things,” wrote an officer with the 54th Massachusetts Regiment after the news broke. “The fiddle and other music long neglected enlivens the tents day and night. Songs burst out everywhere; dancing is incessant, boisterous shouts are heard, mimicry, burlesque, and carnival; pompous salutations are heard on all sides.”<sup>1572</sup>

Sargent John Shorter, also with the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment and stationed in Folly Island, South Carolina, explained in an October letter to a friend that the new salary “came at last,

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<sup>1570</sup> Otto Friedrich, “We Will Not Do Duty Any Longer For Seven Dollars per Month,” *American Heritage* 39, no. 1 (64-73): February 1988; Harold C. Westwood, “The Cause and Consequence of a Union Black Soldier’s Mutiny and Execution” *Civil War History*, no. 31 (1985): 222–36; Herman Belz, “Law, Politics, and Race in the Struggle for Equal Pay During the Civil War,” *Civil War History* 22 (September 1976): 197–213; Edwin S. Redkey, *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Chapter 7.

<sup>1571</sup> Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 221.

<sup>1572</sup> Luis Fenollosa Emilio, *History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865* (Boston: Boston Book Company, 1894); Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 85.

after we have been kept out of it for nearly a year. You can imagine how we all felt. We felt overjoyed, and at the same time thankful to God for the successful termination of our suit.” Shorter then consults his letter’s recipient: “Now, don’t be surprised at what follows. We resolved to have a celebration. It was thought by the wise ones that an event of so much importance to us and ours deserved it.” Shorter was appointed to a Committee consummated to prepare a program of festivities, and it finished its duties “with a promptness as commendable as it is rare in such bodies.” As in Union-occupied Charleston, the planning of celebrations provided both organizing experience and facilitated conflict resolution between different personalities and social groups within the Black community with a “commendable promptness.”

Music was conspicuous in the parade that Shorter and other “officers of the [planning] meeting” organized. “It [the celebration] came, and at precisely 3 o’clock, the assembly was sounded.” Sounded by which instrument—a trumpet, a drum, or a human voice—we do not know. But then, in straight lines, “The procession, headed by the band, marched by the right flank in two wings, with space between, which was occupied by the speakers and officers of the day.” After marching out, the paraders “were saved the trouble of erecting a platform, as there was a piece of rising ground, just the right height, and in the right place.” On the top of this mound, seats were arranged: for the officers, the event organizers, and the band.

Shorter shared the program in his letter, which I have reproduced here:

*Programme*

Prayer by the Chaplin [John Bowles]

Opening Address by the President Sergt. P[eter] R. Laws

Music by the Band

Speech by Sergt. H[enry W.] Johnson, Co. F

Music by the Band

Speech by 1st.Sergt I[saiah H.] Welch. Co. C

Music by the Band

Speech by Sergt. [Richard] White, Non-com Staff

Reading of resolutions by Sec’y Shorter

Music by the Band  
Speech by Sergt. G[abriel] P. Iverson, Co. D  
Song – “Vivel’ America”

Shorter makes clear in his description that the celebration was not only, or even principally, over equal pay. “It was a most impressive scene,” he writes. “We all felt proud of him [Sargent Iverson] as he stood there describing in the most beautiful language our triumph, its legal bearing, the slave power, the past sufferings of our race, and ‘the bright future which awaits it as the reward of its wisdom, patriotism, and valor.’” Don’t be surprised, but Shorter also makes special mention of the band. “Our spending Regimental Band played a number of popular airs. There could be nothing finer than their performance.” The music continued well after the parade, at a celebratory supper afterwards, where we are told “Gentlemen sang that night who were never known to sing before.”<sup>1573</sup>

This struggle was thus musical in many of its maneuvers. The improvised campfire songs morphed into sonic spaces to fortify resolve, to mock their white superiors in coded language, and to respond to the ongoing intricacies of national and military politics. The celebratory songs, too, announced a new feeling, that something unprecedented had taken place: a successful campaign for Black rights. Lest we think this movement and its consequences began and ended in Folly Island, we should consider the analysis put forth by the editors of *Freedom*: “By virtue of its policy of inequality, the Union government inadvertently enriched the black military experience. Unequal pay incited black soldiers to challenge discrimination with the same vigor and determination they used to fight slavery...the protest, and its largely successful outcome, shaped the thoughts and actions of black soldiers returning home to commence a new struggle for freedom.”<sup>1574</sup> Indeed, in

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<sup>1573</sup> Edwin S. Redkey, *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army 1861–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Chapter 7.

<sup>1574</sup> Ira Berlin et al., “Fighting on Two Fronts: The Struggle for Equal Pay,” *Prologue* 14 (Fall 1982): 135.

Shorter's accounts, what emerges as the fruit of this political struggle is not only equal pay but the augmenting and consolidating of a Black political *voice*. Yet this voice is not only ideological: it is aural, it is affective, it is, above all, musical. It developed new leadership, new vocabularies, new sounds, and new musical subjects: "Gentlemen sang that night who were never known to sing before."

Among scholars who dedicate themselves to Civil War music, these social and political valences of Black music are almost never acknowledged. James Stone's take is the traditional one: military music is either a "lubricant" or as a "sedative," intended to intensify the killing instinct or to help soldiers cope with post-battle trauma.<sup>1575</sup> Henry Hall argues that "music, as a military adjuvant, might well be regarded as the oil which makes the wheels of war machines run smoother."<sup>1576</sup> Both of these points of view emphasize a top-down approach: it is the logistical and strategic needs of military which dictate song function and form. The stories of African American soldiers demonstrate how musical affect was created from below. Music took on political meanings during the equal pay struggle; it facilitated social bonds within a community born of intense trauma and displacement, one in which peoples of vastly different social experiences, from freed people and free people, might have to construct a musical language to cooperate. Through new institutions and new musical instruments, Black political consciousness and Black voice were expanded, defined, and creatively negotiated. In Shorter's account, once again, it is within the *aural* aspects of celebration where the primary sensorial experience for liberation is developed, and, within these rebellious auralities, visions of freedom. As the African American woman poet, Frances Ellen Waktins Harper, orated at a fundraiser for the war effort in 1864: "Tell me if the

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<sup>1575</sup> James Stone, "War Music and War Psychology during the Civil War," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 36 (1954): 554.

<sup>1576</sup> Henry H. Hall, *A Johnny Reb Band from Salem* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 1.

whole world of literature...can equal the *music* of these words: ‘I grant you full, broad, and unconditional freedom.’”<sup>1577</sup> The music discoursed by Black soldiers and, as we will see in the next section, Reconstruction activists attempted to create and expand the beauty of this music which the written word could only approximate.

#### 6.4 The Radical Bands of Yielded Streets: Brassroots Democracy during Reconstruction

*To be radical is to go to the root of the matter. For man, however, the root is man himself.*

- Karl Marx<sup>1578</sup>

*They know when I make that roll, they got a certain distance.*

- Art Blakey<sup>1579</sup>

In an 1887 article in the *Alexandria Gazette* titled “DISGRACEFUL PROCEEDINGS,” writers denounced “a large crowd of disorderly negro men, women and children, headed by a negro band, [who] paraded [in] some of the streets” of Alexandria, Virginia. The occasion was to celebrate the electoral defeat of a white supremacist Democrat, Judge Stuart. Particularly “disgraceful” for the writer was how “the mob passed his [Stuart’s] house, they yelled, jeered and discharged cannon crackers, and then proceeded to a lot, near the local depot, where, with shouts and dances, they burned Judge Stuart in effigy.” The paraders then congregated by the store owned by the victor, Mr. Corbet, who celebrated the “victory they had won in the hot-bed” of the

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<sup>1577</sup> *Christian Recorder*, 31 December 1864; quoted in Ella Forbes, *African American Women During the Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 200. Emphasis mine.

<sup>1578</sup> Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Paris: Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, 1844).

<sup>1579</sup> Ben Sidran, *Talking Jazz: An Oral History* (New York: De Capo Press, 1995), 105.

Democratic Party. Most revealing, however, is how this spectacle brought back for the writers of the *Gazette* an almost traumatic memory of the 1870s: “The action of the negroes last night showed what they would do if their party should ever get into power again.”<sup>1580</sup>

In account after account of newspapers from the late 1880s, nothing so startled and disturbed the peace of mind of the white supremacist press as Black brass band music. It almost always brought back memories of the most “disgraceful” moments of Reconstruction. In 1889, a journalist in Anderson, S.C., bemoaned, almost traumatized, how a Black band led “the largest and most enthusiastic Republican or negro meeting” in recent memory. With “a crowd of negroes...estimated at about 500,” the band marched to the courthouse in Anderson, South Carolina. Black men and women came from far away at the direction of the African American Republican organizer Henry Kennedy. “It was equal to a circus to the lookers-on,” wrote the correspondent, “and brought back forcibly to the minds of our citizens the scenes and incidents that often occurred when the thieving carpet-baggers would come around on their campaign tours.”<sup>1581</sup>

One way to measure the extent to which sound and band performance undergirded the changes during Radical Reconstruction can be traced through these later memories of disaffected whites. These festivities were apparently so common in Alexandria, Anderson, and Wilmington during Reconstruction that their re-emergence in the late 1880s sparked intense anguish and paranoia amongst this group of “Redeemers.” Their reaction provides a window into just how integrated Black band music was in mass meetings, during election campaigns, and in the social

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<sup>1580</sup> “Local News,” *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, Nov. 10, 1887, 3.

<sup>1581</sup> Henry Kennedy, a black man and chairman of Anderson County’s Republican Party, organized the rally and sent out a call for the county’s black citizens to attend. They answered the call and came from all over to participate. See Mark A. Johnson, “‘The Best Notes Made the Most Votes’: Race, Politics, and Spectacle in the South, 1877-1932” (PhD Dissertation, University of Alabama, 2016), 212.

events of everyday life, both within Radical Republican spaces and conservative white circles. For instance, in 1872 the *Wilmington Star* editorialized that the city's white elite should fund the training and recruitment of white musicians, and rapidly. "We will then be no longer dependent upon a Radical band for our musical enjoyment."<sup>1582</sup> It is certainly interesting that the *radical* nature of the band was of particular concern. In these bands' performative style, white ears heard the forces of Radical Reconstruction.

Indeed, parades and music were commonly used to index social progress and Black advancement during Reconstruction. In 1874 in Claiborne, Mississippi, the boundaries of Southern society were tested when Ellen Smith married Haskin Smith. Ellen's parents owned the Port Gibson hotel; before the Civil War, they had also owned Haskin. Now free and a major Republican politician, the marriage caused the predictable stir, and Ellen's father, William, threatened to kill Haskin. When the newlyweds returned to Port Gibson after a short honeymoon, a "cadre of armed bodyguards"—Black volunteer militias—"paraded" Haskin Smith through the town, a move that Behrend suggests "may have upset white Democrats even more than the marriage."<sup>1583</sup> Across Southern cities and rural parishes, what made these musicians "radical" is how organically they were tied to rituals of legitimization, to sites of political mobilization, and to the spirit of expansive antiracist democracy—which was experienced by former Confederates as a "circus."

In this section, I highlight exactly what was made Black sound so threatening to Jim Crow politicians. Specifically, I document how Black bands helped drive voters to polls, inaugurate mass meetings, adorn parades, and legitimize—or delegitimize—elections. That is, I examine the

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<sup>1582</sup> *Wilmington Star*, 16 March 1872, 17 March 1874, 7 June 1876, 19 January 1877; Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 62; Evans, *Ballots and Fence Rails*, 159.

<sup>1583</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 210.

interconnected nexus of music, activism, and democratic expansion in the Reconstruction years. This associative web between sound and social struggle was as recognized by the recalcitrant white press cited above as it was by Black activists, and the prior formations of sound and social movement in jubilee celebrations and Black military bands brought extra layers of history and signification to bear on these forms of musical assembly. Symbolic and material, hopeful and cautious, looking towards the future and honoring the past simultaneously: Black musicians performed these phenomenologically dense gestures while grinding, day to day, as laborers, organizers, and freedom dreamers. As Mark Johnson notes, these Reconstruction musicians “did more than bang on drums and toot on horns. They generated enthusiasm, made political statements, and enforced their community’s political norms and boundaries. At political spectacles, they also reinforced the connections between the Republican Party, Civil War victory, and emancipation.”<sup>1584</sup>

Take, for instance, James H. Alston, an Alabama shoemaker, Civil War musician, and the former slave of Confederate General Cullen A. Battle. Alston actually accompanied his owner as a drummer in Mexican War and, for some time, in the Civil War in the Confederate Army. Monroe Nathan Work, a pioneering African American sociologist who founded the Department of Records and Research at the Tuskegee Institute in 1908, wrote the following about Alston: “It was reported that before the war there was a Military Company in the town of Tuskegee. The members of this company desired to have a drummer, and for this purpose they sent to South Carolina and bought James H. Alston.”<sup>1585</sup> This rather amazing story indicates that Alston was forcibly “recruited”—

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<sup>1584</sup> Mark A. Johnson, “‘The Best Notes Made the Most Votes’: Race, Politics, and Spectacle in the South, 1877-1932” (PhD Dissertation, University of Alabama, 2016), 208.

<sup>1585</sup> Monroe N. Work, “Some Negro Members of Reconstruction Conventions and Legislatures and of Congress,” *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (1920): 67.

that is, purchased by General Battle—and served in two wars, at the behest of his new owner, because of his musical skills. Indeed, Alston was never given a musket. At some point in the Civil War Alston managed to secure his liberation and played drums for the Union Army. When Alston came back from the war, Battle remarked, angrily, that his former slave was a changed man.<sup>1586</sup>

The historian of the Civil War, Paul Cimbala, has argued that in antebellum slave quarters, Black musicians were a “folk elite” who enjoyed special privileges amongst both other slaves and their masters. Because of this, Cimbala claims that “Musiciansers [*sic*] did not respond to the political challenge of Reconstruction in ways that broke with their old roles...they did not participate in any substantial way in the new political dimension of rural black life in which ex-slaves would attempt to define the parameters of freedom.”<sup>1587</sup> James H. Alston utterly upends this hypothesis. Alston served as the president of the Tuskegee Republic club in 1867 and was then elected to the Alabama Legislature for Macon County between 1868-70. A hostile sheriff William Dougherty claimed he had “a stronger influence over the minds of the colored men in Macon county” than any other individual.<sup>1588</sup>

Alston was not only an elected official but, importantly, an organizer. In 1867, he was tapped to organize a local Union League. The leagues were initially conceived as vehicles for mobilizing Black voters, but these organizations quickly outgrew this narrow mandate and developed into what Julie Saville calls “hybrid organizations”—“part political machine, part labor union, part popular tribunal, part moral or intellectual improvement body, part renters’ association,

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<sup>1586</sup> Richard Bailey, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 1991), 108.

<sup>1587</sup> Paul A. Cimbala, “Black Musicians from Slavery to Freedom: An Exploration of an African-American Folk Elite and Cultural Continuity in the Nineteenth-Century Rural South,” *The Journal of Negro History* 80, no. 1 (1995): 15.

<sup>1588</sup> Eric Foner, *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

part retail cooperative.”<sup>1589</sup> Scott Nelson has described the broad and important function of the Union Leagues in Black community organization: “The Union and York County [South Carolina] leagues resembled institutions as diverse as Masonic clubs, evangelical churches, and modern trade unions.”<sup>1590</sup> Writing in 1937, the Marxist historian James S. Allen emphasized the importance of these spaces for radical dialogue and consciousness raising. He wrote that the Union Leagues “developed as the organizational centers of the popular movement, some respects similar to the Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution. They became units of a well-disciplined organization and by 1867 played a decisive role in preparing for the new Constitutional Convention...They were the heart of the Revolution...the Negro looked upon this organization as his own.”<sup>1591</sup> In Alabama, where Alston was based, contemporary newspapers emphasized the radical politics inoculated in these spaces. The *Montgomery Advertiser* observed that “The Union Leagues lay down as part of the creed sympathy with labor against capital, and the Republican platforms generally do the same thing. In other words that they are the champions of the poor man as against the rich.”<sup>1592</sup> One Alabama overseer complained that freedpeople claimed “they were to have the lands and the growing crop upon it, one or two said they understood now such things, they all belong to the u[n]ion league.”<sup>1593</sup>

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<sup>1589</sup> Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Wage Labor to Free Labor in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 186.

<sup>1590</sup> Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 124.

<sup>1591</sup> James S. Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, 1865-1876* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 94.

<sup>1592</sup> *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 28, 1867; quoted in Michael W. Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 168.

<sup>1593</sup> W. O’Berry to Paul Cameron, Aug. 11, 1867, Cameron Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; quoted in Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 128.

Thus, despite his status as prized property for his master and as a member of the “folk elite” amongst other slaves, Alston emerged as a Reconstruction labor activist through and through. In addition to founding Macon’s Union League, he attended the founding convention of the Alabama Labor Union (ALU), the first group explicitly organized around the demands made by Black farmworkers. The ALU was one of the strongest such organizations in the Southern states, and it was part of the first attempt at a modern agricultural union among Black Alabamans, demonstrating how central labor, and specifically agricultural labor, was to Reconstruction’s militancy. The ALU’s founding included other Black leaders prominent in the Union League from other parts of the state, including George Washington Cox of Tuscaloosa and James K. Green of Hale.<sup>1594</sup>

These activists not only discussed labor contracts and strategies for agitation but also the acquisition of land. At this meeting, Alston relayed how his own strategies of building self-sufficiently through collective land ownership met violent opposition. In 1868, the Klan attempted to intimidate him so that he would order other freedmen to abandon rented land and return to work on white-owned plantations. He refused, and two years later in 1870, he and his family were attacked at night, with gunshots fired into their house. He survived, summoned backup, and after a protracted standoff between armed Black freedman against the Ku Klux and the Democratically controlled police forces, some of his followers were arrested and he was ordered to leave the county. (Alston later testified at the congressional Ku Klux hearings that it was his former master, Cullen Battle, who had led the movement to expel him).<sup>1595</sup> His ideas were threatening. One of the

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<sup>1594</sup> Eric Foner, *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>1595</sup> Richard Bailey, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 1991), 108.

outgrowths of the ALU was its working group, “The Committee on Labor and Wages,” of which Alston was a member. The Committee denounced gang labor on white-owned plantations as akin to slavery, and strategized how to collectively buy land on an installment plan.<sup>1596</sup>

Given that Alston was a well-reputed musician, did he, in fact, ensure that music was part of this multi-day gathering of agricultural workers from across the state? It seems unlikely that it would not have been part of the activities, given the previously discussed links of the League, and Reconstruction activism more broadly, to communal musical performance. Alston manifests the transition of musical and organizing skills from the Civil War experience into the ambitious and revolutionary organizing led by Black communities during Radical Reconstruction. Yet historians who have discussed Alston have only mentioned his musicianship in passing, and his importance as a drummer remains overlooked.<sup>1597</sup> This is consistent with studies of Reconstruction more broadly, which view music and aurality anecdotally, and not as a major venue of political struggle. However, the legacies of these military bands created the conditions for modern brass band traditions. Their explicit link with military motifs in dress, march style, and repertoire well into the twentieth century harkened back to this period. Black military officers and post-war militias instilled great pride in African American communities. Known as the “Black and Blues,” former soldiers in Mississippi created the backbone of a militia force with which to defend Reconstruction governments and policies against white terrorism.<sup>1598</sup> Vincent Harding argues that these “black

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<sup>1596</sup> Montgomery *Alabama State Journal*, November 15, 16, 1873; *Montgomery Advertiser*, November 11, 16, 1873; Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South*, 168. See also Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers Co., 1947), 402-408.

<sup>1597</sup> Alston is discussed in Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South*, 168-169; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 600; Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 7; Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, *The Scalawag In Alabama Politics, 1865-1881* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1977), 148;

<sup>1598</sup> Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998), 81.

men in blue are central to any proper understanding of the self-liberating movement of their community in the year of Jubilee. Only when we comprehend the meaning of their presence do we see the powerful potential for revolutionary transformation in the South which they represented.”<sup>1599</sup>

A cursory study of the Union Leagues reveals that the music played by Reconstruction activists had profound martial and cultural functions reminiscent of the Union military experience. For instance, one North Carolina railroad baron and Confederate army veteran, Josiah Turner, detested the leagues for their opposition to the railroad. He claimed they assembled at night “at the call of drum and fife.” These sounds, again, summoned negative associations: “We knew then that this was all leading to trouble and blood.”<sup>1600</sup> Music appears to have had a similar role in Macon, Mississippi, in 1875, during a tense mass Republican meeting two days before the election, where 1,500 mostly unnamed freedpeople were harassed by hundreds of armed White Leaguers. One Republican organizer remembered, “On account of the state of feeling we decide to take the negroes off the streets... We told the colored men to get their drum and fife and call them down there. The white men got hold of the drum and cut it all to pieces. In fact, they had given notice before that the beating of the drum would be a signal of war.”<sup>1601</sup> Meetings were called with drum and fife, and so were marches and parades coordinated with these instruments—in the latter case, a failed tactical retreat. This communicative technology was resonant with an earlier period: during antebellum slavery, musical instruments and field hollers were used to organize across plantations.

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<sup>1599</sup> Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981), 301.

<sup>1600</sup> *Raleigh Sentinel*, 16 Mar. 1870; quoted in Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 106.

<sup>1601</sup> US Senate, *Mississippi in 1875. Report of the Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington: Government Print Office, 1876), 1178,

In the late 1930s and early 1950s, freedpeople in Sumter County, Alabama, recalled to folklorists how people communicated via “hollers,” in which verbal phrases and musical tones could communicate across plantation lines. These forbidden relays used Black tonality and musicality to plan meetings.<sup>1602</sup>

Indeed, there is assorted evidence that outlines connections between music and Black self-defense. In Meriwether, South Carolina in 1874, the all-white Sweetwater Sabre Club fired into Black militia leader Edward “Ned” Tennant’s home. Tennant survived, and called on his militia’s drummer to sound the “long roll,” summoning two hundred members of his militia from the surrounding plantations to confront the sixty white paramilitaries.<sup>1603</sup> According to music folklorist David Evan, these marching drums can be heard six miles away.<sup>1604</sup> While drumming languages had provided Black Carolinians with a military communication infrastructure as far back as the 1739 Stono Rebellion,<sup>1605</sup> the long roll emerged out of a particular Civil War sonic vocabulary. Col. George Sutherland remembered “the sudden awakening in the night by the alarm of the ‘long roll’...which seems to say, ‘Arise, oh men! To your death.’ No one knows what is coming; how near the danger is, or how great it is.” While Sutherland, a white officer, bizarrely claimed that

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<sup>1602</sup> Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 48; Virginia Pounds Brown, *Toting the Lead Row: Ruby Pickens Tartt, Alabama Folklorist* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2002), 94–95, 121, 134, 143, 148 n. 24; Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.* (1963; reprint, New York: Dover, 1991), 80–85; Marie J. Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 186.

<sup>1603</sup> Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 148; Rosemunde Goode Smith, “Dying to Vote: The Negroes’ Struggle to Secure the Right to Vote in Upcountry South Carolina 1868–1898” (Master’s Thesis, Morgan State University, 2008), 42. Tennant has been described as a “dashing officer [who] bore himself with great dignity” and he had previously managed to escape a similar white militia ambush in Edgefield where he marched “twenty-five miles through a country swarming with whites looking for him” until he was able to safely surrender himself to federal officials with his militia unharmed. Vernon Burton, “Race and Reconstruction: Edgefield County, South Carolina,” *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 1 (October 1978): 41.

<sup>1604</sup> David Evan, “Black Fife and Drum Music in Mississippi,” *Folkstreams*, 1972, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film-context.php?id=86>.

<sup>1605</sup> Mark M. Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion,” *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 3 (2001): 513–34.

“the white soldier would learn to stand the ordeal [of the long roll] better than the black,” it is clear that Tennant’s militia disproved Sutherland’s racist one-upmanship. Black drummers and veterans retained the sonic language of the Civil War to fight for autonomy in the Reconstruction era.<sup>1606</sup> In short, James Alston’s experience as a military drummer was not ancillary to his talent as an organizer. Indeed, when he was attacked by the Ku Klux, it would not be surprising if he had used a long roll himself to summon support.

Musical instruments may have actively administered by Union Leagues. In July of 1868, a barbeque attended by nearly fifteen hundred Black South Carolinians was organized in the town of Edgefield by the Union League for the purposes of recruitment.<sup>1607</sup> According to a Democratic newspaper, the Edgefield *Advertiser*, Union League Major John Bates had “invited the negroes to organize and promised arms and music for them at an early day, and encouraged preparations of a military character on the part of the negroes.”<sup>1608</sup> As a result of this rumor, a white militia rode in, attacking several attendees and killing at least one, a murder which went unprosecuted.<sup>1609</sup> While it is impossible to know how much truth there this accusation of Black arm-bearing, it is striking that musical instruments were interpreted by belligerent whites as quasi-military in scope, understood as potent tools of organizing. Thus, brass band instruments functioned, not only to facilitate communication, but as important recruitment tools to the Radical Republican cause, just as it had been for the Union Army during the Civil War.

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<sup>1606</sup> George E. Sutherland, “The Negro and the Great War,” in *War Papers*, by Wisconsin Commandery, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, WI: Burdick, Armtage, and Allen, 1891), 182.

<sup>1607</sup> “Negro Violence Threatened in Union District—the Whites Refer the Matter to Governor Scott,” *Daily Phoenix*, July 30, 1868, p. 2; quoted in Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 231.

<sup>1608</sup> “Negro Violence Threatened in Union District,” *Edgefield (S.C.) Advertiser*, August 5, 1868, p. 4; quoted Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 231.

<sup>1609</sup> Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 231.

Black musicians asserted themselves in Southern cities, too, in ongoing parades, marches, and celebrations, each of which continuously rankled the planter establishment. In 1868 in Lexington, North Carolina, an offended reporter complained that, “A most pitiful and Godforsaken looking set of negroes” paraded through the town in a “mock military style...[a] self-important manner,” including a mule-drawn wagon that produced “discordant music” produced by three fiddlers, a drummer, and several musicians playing iron triangles. Lexington’s public square became the site of promises of land reform, as marchers were promised sixty acres of land through planter land confiscation by white and Black Radical Republicans.<sup>1610</sup> In 1866, the federal officer James W. Johnson witnessed a march, “with red colors flying,” of Black workers protesting to demand better contract terms.<sup>1611</sup> The pro-Confederate historian, John Abney Chapman, remembered how Black militiamen and bands which marched through the streets of Edgefield, South Carolina in 1870; he claimed they were followed by “every Negro man *and woman*[who] thirsted to be enrolled”, and this mobilization of thousands was a marker of the “disintegration of the old order of things that was taking place all around.”<sup>1612</sup> Another angry white observer in South Carolina described an interconnected network of marches, military training, and a movement for agrarian reform:

The meetings of the Councils were held once a week in Negro churches and schoolhouses, around which armed guards were stationed; inflammatory speeches were made by carpetbaggers and Negro leaders; confiscation and divisions of property and social rights were promised...The members went armed to the meetings and were there trained in military drill, often after dark, much to the

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<sup>1610</sup> Austin Marcus Drumm, “The Union League in the Carolinas,” Ph. D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1955, 128-132. Edward Magdol, *A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen’s Community* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977).

<sup>1611</sup> James W. Johnson to A.M. Crawford, December 17, 1866, South Carolina Governor’s Papers; quoted in Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 122.

<sup>1612</sup> John Abney Chapman, *History of Edgefield County: From the Earliest Settlements to 1897* (Newberry, S.C.: E.H. Aull, 1897), 238.

alarm of the whites in the community...Military parades were frequently held.<sup>1613</sup>

In these marches, parades, and countless other sites across the reconstructing South, music emerges as powerful technology of communication, unification, and political projection. In the fight for the commons, new commons were built in such processions. Radical marches “symbolized the revolutionary transformation in social relations wrought by emancipation,” writes Eric Foner.<sup>1614</sup> Writing on Charleston, Brian Kelley observes: “Throughout the early years of Reconstruction the city’s streets and public spaces, its black churches and any facilities not exclusively claimed by whites, were transformed by a rapidly maturing black political culture.”<sup>1615</sup>

Here was the core of brassroots democracy’s power: its appropriation of public space and its ability to reproduce the energy of jubilee and direct the ongoing social revolution in South. Mobility and presence were made possible and spiritualized by musical rituals. “For former slaves,” argues Jackson, “the ability to move about the city at will was one of the first enactments of freedom, and the organized marching of black people was an early indication of their collective mobilization.”<sup>1616</sup> Black political ritual was so consistent that many whites considered counter-mobilization a lost cause. One commentator in Colombia, Missouri, wrote in 1868 that “The whites have, to a great extent—greater than ever before—yielded the streets to the negroes.”<sup>1617</sup> Of course, these marches happened not only within cities but across miles of rural parishes, parishes

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<sup>1613</sup> Walter L. Fleming, *Documents Relating to Reconstruction* (Morgantown, W. Va.: University of West Virginia, 1904). No. 3, p. 5.

<sup>1614</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 122.

<sup>1615</sup> Brian Kelly, “Labour and Place: The Contours of Freedpeoples’ Mobilization in Reconstruction South Carolina,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 660.

<sup>1616</sup> Thanayi Michelle Jackson, “‘Devoted to the Interests of His Race’: Black Officeholders and the Political Culture of Freedom in Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865–1877” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2016), 23.

<sup>1617</sup> Quoted in Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861–1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), Chapter 1.

connected by communicative and cultural technology called music. As late as the 1890s, musicians such as Sunny Henry and Ben Kelly recall brass band parades that started at the church on the Magnolia plantation, and proceeded to march south to the Woodland, St. Sophie, and other plantations in the sugar belts.<sup>1618</sup>

Indeed, Black activists and musicians deployed sound to revitalize the civic life of both the countryside and the cities, collapsing rural and urban divisions and creating, in effect, an alternative public sphere. It was precisely the spread of this new polis which was so problematic for the planter class. This sonic communication network remapped old geographies of enslavement based in capitalist agriculture, imbuing urban architecture and rural landscape with the sonic *logos* of community. Justin Behrend's accounts this era's democratic mass meetings reveals how music was used extensively at mass political meetings of freedpeople across the south during different phases of Reconstruction, a music "offered[ing] freedpeople a collective experience in which they could feel secure in a shared cause."<sup>1619</sup> In 1872, the *North Louisiana Journal* noted that "there never has been so large an audience composed of both white and black citizens, in [the] town...the Republican clubs turned out en masse with banners and music."<sup>1620</sup> These musically-imbued counterpublic spheres remind us of Farah Jasmine Griffin's definition of "Safe spaces," which are "both material and discursive."<sup>1621</sup> Whether through protest-parades, workers associations, or mass meetings where a shared political outlook was developed, it seems that music played an important function in this new type of public space, one both aural and ideological.

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<sup>1618</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, January 8, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive; Ben Kelly, Interview, August 11, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1619</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 164.

<sup>1620</sup> *North Louisiana Journal*, 12 October 1872.

<sup>1621</sup> Griffin, *Who Set You Flowin?*, 9; see also R. A. Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners, 1890-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), for an argument of the stage as a site of Black freedom of expression in the Jim Crow South..

The ties of music to grassroots democracy were made most visible, perhaps, in their connection to the voting process. Steven Hahn has emphasized how logistically difficult voting was, especially in the rural parishes: Black organizers “had to get their voters to the polls, at times over a distance of many miles, and make sure that those votes received the correct tickets. They had to minimize the opportunities for bribery, manipulation, and intimidation. And they had to oversee the counting of ballots. Voting required, in essence, a military operation.”<sup>1622</sup> In Greene County, Georgia, despite mounting political violence by the Klu Klux Klan, the former slave and community activist Abram Colby helped organize column after column, in military formation, to march to the polls with voters and Black community members for the 1872 election. Like the emancipation parades, voters carried flags, banners, corn stalks, and projected unity in spirit and their step with song, resulting in a remarkable turnout of more than 1,200 of Greene County’s 1,500 eligible black voters. The county was carried for Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>1623</sup>

We can deduct some form of music was mobilized, too, when the Virginia journalist and Confederate Edward A. Pollard remarked he was surprised “at the solid array in which the Negroes moved to the polls in the vote for the Convention.”<sup>1624</sup> Musical ritual was also put to use in the service of enforcing African American community voting norms: in Lincoln County, North Carolina, one “conservative” Black man associated with the Democratic party was surrounded by Black Republicans who embalmed his home with the sound of “tin pans and horns,” as well as displays of guns and pistols, and sang a song that denounced his recent Democrat vote. Its chorus

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<sup>1622</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>1623</sup> Jonathan M. Bryant, *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885* (Chapel Hill, N.C: UNC Press Books, 2014), 138.

<sup>1624</sup> Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York, 1868), 143.

rang: “He had voted himself into Slavery.”<sup>1625</sup> These scenes reveal that voting was treated as communal property, or, as Elsa Barkley Brown has termed it, a “collective” possession of the franchise. Even without the right to vote, women were at the center of these mobilizations, and they accompanied men to the polls, wore political badges at work (to the chagrin of their planter bosses), and withheld affection to or practiced social exclusion of men who did not fulfill their voting duties.<sup>1626</sup>

Public musicking also undergirded rallies in which the *right* to vote was being fought. On the fourth of July following the Emancipation Proclamation, Black and white New Orleanians then living under Union military occupation made their voices heard through a massive parade and rally in grandstand at the base of Canal Street. As night fell, the torchlight parade to Canal Street, complete with marching bands and an array of red, white, and blue banners, led to a feast of “twelve bacon hogsheads”—again an important symbol of Black self-sufficiency—and the Black preacher Reverend James Keelan extolled a multiracial and multilingual audience: “Fellow citizens, this is the first time for eighty seven years that the son of Africa is permitted to join in a public celebration of the Fourth of July—yet he had the right, according to the Declaration of Independence.” His remarks continued: “Our country has given us our rights—we have now but to defend them.” What makes Keelan’s speech so noteworthy is that this was, according to the event’s organizers, “the first time on any public occasion in the south, among white men, a colored man spoke to a public audience like a man.”<sup>1627</sup> This “miscegenated” gathering outraged former confederates, and a week

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<sup>1625</sup> Bryant, *How Curious a Land*, 138.

<sup>1626</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 107–46.

<sup>1627</sup> Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

later in New Orleans, white rioters rampaged through the South's largest city, lynching random Black men whom they blamed for the war.

Unintimidated, activists continued public mobilizations through musical performance. In 1867, New Orleans *Tribune* described a truly “new and glorious era in our history,” ushered in by a parade with some “fifteen thousand Chinese lanterns,” “banners and flag flying to the breeze,” and “Drums, fifes, and brass bands [which] were heard from all sides.” These were political spaces as much as musical and celebratory ones, where Republican candidates, ideas, and real human connections came to life. Slogans were borne, and born, on these streets: “Eight Hours a Leg Days Work,” “No Contract System,” “Free Press,” “We Know our Friends,” “Free School Open for All” adorned several banners.<sup>1628</sup> They reflected the broad, multi-class character of parishioners, as well as their diverse geographic backgrounds, since the postwar contract system uniquely reproduced slavery-like social relations on the plantations.<sup>1629</sup> As Dorothy Sterling notes, “Men traveled long distances to attend mass meetings and barbeques and to take part in [these] parades.”<sup>1630</sup> One freedman in Montgomery justified both his attendance at parades and the political determination of freedpeople more broadly when he intoned at a mass meeting in 1867: “We’d walk fifteen miles in wartime to find out about the battle. We can walk fifteen miles and more to find out how to vote.”<sup>1631</sup> These were spaces of political education as much as celebration.

Music at these festivities created solidarity through sonic negotiations. At the Mechanics Institute in 1876, a joint event between president-elect Rutherford B. Hayes and ex-governor

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<sup>1628</sup> The New Orleans *Tribune*, May 30, 1867.

<sup>1629</sup> James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008).

<sup>1630</sup> Dorothy Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 100.

<sup>1631</sup> *The Loyal Georgian*, April 10, 1867; Sterling, *The Trouble They Seen*, 100.

Warmoth featured a “liberal supply of music,” ranging from a “fife and a drum in the lobby,” to “music by the band” in between Warmouth’s speech and others, and a special mention of “that old negro melody...*Chere mo l’aimain toi.*”<sup>1632</sup> *The New Orleans Democrat*, being a Democratic periodical, did not take a positive view of these events: they editorialized that this song was “added to soothe the savage breasts of the politicians.” One of these politicians, James Lewis, a Republican Party politician, had been born into slavery and deserted a Confederate steamboat during the Civil War; after safely crossing into Union-occupied New Orleans, he helped organize the First Louisiana Volunteer Native Guard, the first Black regiment of the Civil War.<sup>1633</sup> In this scene, English-speaking Anglo-American “carpetbaggers” negotiated their differences with their politicized Franco-Haitian constituents through the musical selection, which consciously invoked the repertoire of the Creole of Color community. Creole songs were prominent in Black musical circles in the 1870s, and as Caroline Vézina has argued, impacted the repertoire and formation of early jazz, documenting at least eighty French-language Creole songs were in circulation amongst New Orleans musicians during the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1634</sup> Louisiana’s Reconstruction events were one site where these songs were circulated, and brought to the minds of those present a proud Creole of Color culture. Republican party meetings were notable not only for their use of music, but how this music mobilized solidarity across racial and class difference.

The specter of national politics rearing its head in the above scene should not obscure the ways that Radical Reconstruction emerged as a revolution by grassroots activists in the field.

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<sup>1632</sup> *The New Orleans Democrat*, June 18, 1876, 1.

<sup>1633</sup> Adele N Nichols, “Lewis, James,” in *African American National Biography.*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>1634</sup> Caroline Vézina, “Jazz à La Creole: The Music of the French Creoles of Louisiana and Their Contribution to the Development of Early Jazz at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” (Carleton University, 2015), 6.

Freedpeople generated a diametrically different vision of democracy, one frequently at odds with established power brokers in the Republican Party. “We often think of democracy emerging from the Greek polis or an eighteenth-century European coffeehouse or a New England town hall,” notes Behrend, “yet here in the Deep South was another display of democracy in the making. It was an open and public debate between citizens and an elected representative. And the substance of their discussion[s] addressed competing philosophies of democratic governance.”<sup>1635</sup> This unique form of participatory democracy effectively decentralized power and could be considered one of the truly popular and democratic movements of the age of revolutions. Yet, as we have seen, these forms of open and public debate were prefigured in the campfire songs during the Civil War, and before these, an ancestral technology: the structural antiphony heard in Black music, what Olly Wilson has called the “heterogenous sound ideal.”<sup>1636</sup> Jazz musician-scholars Fred Ho and Salim Washington have considered Black antiphony in terms of social and spiritual contract: a “macro-antiphonal” call and response between the self and the political society: “Macro-antiphony means that the music must perpetually demand, insist upon, change.”<sup>1637</sup> Similarly, Fred Moten describes Black music as the “antiphonal accompaniment to gratuitous violence,” whereby sound is both a response to violence and “that to which such violence responds[.]”<sup>1638</sup>

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<sup>1635</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>1636</sup> Olly Wilson, “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African American Music,” in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honour of Eileen Southern*, ed. Samuel Jr. Floyd and Josephine Wright (Michigan, IL: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 327–40.

<sup>1637</sup> Fred Ho, “Why Music Must Be Revolutionary -- and How It Can Be,” *Solidarity* (blog), August 2012, <http://solidarity-us.org/atc/159/p3642/>, accessed September 15, 2020.

<sup>1638</sup> Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 737–80.

## 6.5 Planter Repression

*They're come a time  
When the world won't be singin'  
Flowers won't grow,  
Bells wont be ringin'  
Who really cares?  
Who's willing to try  
To Save a world  
That's Destined to Die.*

- Marvin Gaye<sup>1639</sup>

The planter power responded to this musical technology ruthlessly. One of the most tragically visible episodes of this campaign of terror occurred on July 30, 1866, as activists engaged in years-long debates and movement building that led to the 1868 Constitutional Convention. That day, two hundred veterans of color marched to Mechanic's Hall, led by a fife player, a drummer, and flag bearer hosting the banner of the Louisiana Native Guards. The day ended in a monumental massacre which dramatically realigned national public opinion in favor of a continued Northern military occupation of the United States South.<sup>1640</sup> The New Orleans Sheriff and confederate veteran Harry Hayes deputized 1,500 white paramilitaries as "policemen" and they collectively opened fire on over one hundred and thirty radical and Black Republicans who had amassed at Mechanics Hall, killing at least forty-six.<sup>1641</sup> In sworn testimony to congress during an investigation a year later, he explained his motivation for opening fire was because the

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<sup>1639</sup> Marvin Gaye, "Save the Children," on *What's Going On?* 1971.

<sup>1640</sup> Daniel Brook, *The Accident of Color: A Story of Race in Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

<sup>1641</sup> G. Howard Hunter, "Late to the Dance: New Orleans and the Emergence of a Confederate City," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 57, no. 3 (2016): 307.

demonstrators had a “marching band.”<sup>1642</sup> The massacre was so repugnant that a veto-proof majority overrode President Johnson to pass the Reconstruction Acts that stripped Louisiana and the former Confederacy of their status as states, and disenfranchised those who had fought in the Civil War for the Southern states.

Yet militias were unrepentant of their distaste for organizing political music. A massacre sparked by song was narrowly avoided in 1870, when five hundred Black and white Republicans faced near death when they marched down the streets of Lexington, Kentucky singing “John Brown’s Body.” Three different white militias—the Ashland Rifles, the Citizens’ Guard, and the State Guard—lined up behind the local police, who fought the singers; in the resulting violence, two Republicans were wounded, and one officer was killed.<sup>1643</sup> One commentator remarked: “If a single gun had been fired after the assembling of the militia the dead bodies of scores of innocent...negroes...would have covered the streets of Lexington that night.”<sup>1644</sup>

In line with Fred Moten’s sonic-social algorithm, white violence had the effect of dampening the music. Such was the situation in the aftermath of White League Riots of September 1874. The Crescent City White League, the de-facto armed wing of the Democratic Party, successfully staged a coup-d’état, overthrowing Governor William Pitt Kellogg and beating back the integrated Metropolitan Police’s counterattack. It was a fight in which Rodolphe Desdunes would sustain a wound. President Grant threatened to send in federal troops, and the coup government of Davidson Penn stepped down and allowed Louisiana’s Kellogg to return to office.

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<sup>1642</sup> Jerry Brock, “Notes on New Orleans Brass Bands,” *OffBeat Magazine*, July 1, 2001, <http://www.offbeat.com/articles/notes-on-new-orleans-brass-bands/>.

<sup>1643</sup> Marion Brunson Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 306-7.

<sup>1644</sup> *Lexington Observer and Reporter*, Aug. 3, 1870; quoted in Patrick A. Lewis, “The Democratic Partisan Militia and the Black Peril: The Kentucky Militia, Racial Violence, and the Fifteenth Amendment, 1870-1873,” *Civil War History* 56, no. 2 (June 2010): 159.

The editorial board of *The Caucasian* was obviously not neutral in their interpretation of the affair – they published a note from coup leaders Penn and John McEnery, signed “Governor” and “Lieut. Governor,” which included the words “We congratulate you, fellow citizens, on this great result...[your children] will be proud.” *The Caucasian* represented the illegitimacy of Governor Kellogg via the musicality of his reinauguration—or rather, the lack of it. “No one in all the neighborhood had seen either carriage or Kellogg arrive...Kellogg’s actions will, therefore, only become known when tells it himself...This, and this only, was his reinstallation[,] so imperiously ordered from Washington. There was no music, no cheers. The negroes opposite appeared congregated there more from curiosity than joy or demonstration.”<sup>1645</sup> Black musical celebration, so integrated into Reconstruction elections, was now marked by its absence. Brassroots democracy required brass, drums, singing, and antiphony to have meaning, to express not only the “consent of the governed” but their active shaping of the political process. When silence replaced these scenes of political voice, the legitimacy of governor Kellogg was effectively nulled.

Silence expressed white agency in Lafayette, Mississippi in 1877. At a conjoined parade and mass meeting in which thousands attended to prepare for upcoming elections, a march to the meeting location was accompanied by “two bands [who] played music to keep the pace.” When they made the trek from the countryside to the town entrance, Black activists were dismayed to find that two hundred heavily armed paramilitaries, known as the “white line,” were in possession of a canon. The band stopped playing. This silencing of music was a key tactic to cast a shadow on the mass gathering of blacks, interrupting the communal spirit under construction and deny them public space. The public was brassroots democracy’s oxygen and carbon dioxide: inhaled, a resource to congregate, and exhaled, social transformation. When town squares were blocked,

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<sup>1645</sup> *The Caucasian*, September 26, 1874.

these symbolic gestures lost political meaning, or rather, gained a different one: the activities of Lafayette's "white line" was coordinated among other white militias across the state, and in the following weeks Democrats intimidated a small Black church in the countryside, and a major massacre of Black workers rocked Jefferson, Mississippi not long after.<sup>1646</sup>

Perhaps nowhere more than Mississippi was the targeting of musicians open game for white militias, especially in the Natchez county region which shared a border with Louisiana. One of the most serious threats to a brass band was nearly consummated when, in 1875, a Black brass band was returning from a series of Republican mass meetings in Copiah County on the eastern side of the state. White militias circulated a rumor that hundreds of Black men would accompany that band to Port Gibson, which they supposedly planned to set on fire. As white militias mobilized to intercept and presumably massacre the band, Black militias rushed to the woods near Port Gibson. The situation was diffused by white Republican politicians, who convinced the white militias to pull back, but a Republican district attorney claimed that the Black militia in the woods held such a strategic advantage that they would have "cleaned them out" had the white-leaguers advanced.<sup>1647</sup> Nonetheless, the brass band likely would have been collateral damage in this nearly-avoided conflagration.

Some months later, Black brass bands were actively dismantled by White Leaguers during a mass meeting in Macon, Mississippi. J.W. Robbins, a Republican activist of Washington, Mississippi and editor of the *Free Opinion*, recalled that it was during the summer of '75 when

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<sup>1646</sup> Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 165; M. Howard to Ames, 6 November 1877, folder 153, box 18, Ames Family Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Quoted in Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>1647</sup> Testimonies of E. H. Stiles and J. D. Vertner, *Mississippi in 1875*, 164–66, 193–94; quoted in Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 212,

armed white men associated with the “White League”<sup>1648</sup> began attending Republican meetings—Robbins counted at one meeting “at least two or three hundred men in the courthouse,” and additional men outside on the street.<sup>1649</sup> It was also during this year that “Democrats said...publicly and openly that the negroes should have no more meetings at night, and that they could not beat any drums.”<sup>1650</sup> After that declaration, Robbins relays, “there was a difficulty between a white man and a black man in the lower part of the country occasioned by the beating of drums by the negroes.” Not long after, Macon became “full of armed men, and men riding in hundreds with pistols and with guns; and on that day, at a little colored church about twelve miles from Macon, there were several Negroes shot,” although at that particular shooting there were no casualties.<sup>1651</sup> These had dampening effects on mobilization: “Where before this, in the previous campaigns, there had probably been from two to three hundred colored men in the attendance, at mass-meetings last year we were not able to get over fifty or a hundred, and I have no doubt it was because they were afraid to come.”<sup>1652</sup>

The tensions culminated in a mass meeting in which Robbins and other organizers had successfully defied the political mood and mobilized some 800 freedpeople from the rural parishes to come to Macon. The Democrats held their own mass meeting in response, displaced the Republicans from Macon’s courthouse; they then attacked the Republican band. “Some of the negroes came in there with drums,” but White-Leaguers:

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<sup>1648</sup> The white league was a corollary of the Ku Klux Klan, a white militia organized around suppressing Black political mobilization with gratuitous violence. Unlike the Klan, however, they operated openly in communities, solicited coverage from newspapers, and the men’s identities were generally known. Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007), 70-76.

<sup>1649</sup> Testimony of J.W. Robbins, in U.S. Senate, *Report of the Select Committee into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, 44th Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1886.

<sup>1650</sup> Testimony of J.W. Robbins, in U.S. Senate, *Report of the Select Committee into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, 44th Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1876

<sup>1651</sup> *Ibid.*, 1196.

<sup>1652</sup> *Ibid.*, 1197.

...beat them, and their drums were seized, and their heads smashed in or cut out. At the same time there was a cannon that the democrats had planted in the streets of Macon and were firing it off. They had a brass band at their head and marched all over town; marched by my office, and as they came by pointed their pistols at me where I was at work in my office...They filled the town with music and shooting that day; but when this attempt was made by the colored men to make a little music on their drums, the democrats seized and destroyed them, and after that we could have no music of our own that day.<sup>1653</sup>

This unequal balance of sonic power galvanized the white leaguers to shoot and kill a Black activist.<sup>1654</sup> These moments of musical repression and musical substitution by the White Leaguers were not incidental to their political momentum in 1875 Mississippi: as Jacques Attali notes, “Music, the quintessential mass activity, like the crowd, is simultaneously a threat and a necessary source of legitimacy; trying to channel it is a risk that every system of power must run.”<sup>1655</sup> But brassroots democracy was not just another interchangeable music tradition within another interchangeable system of power. It was not only that Black visibility and Black sound were silenced, but that a unique procedural mechanism for arriving at an affective consensus had been critically interrupted. As musical parades became increasingly attacked, interrupted, and silenced across the South, so too did the ability of grassroots activists to martial a collective response to weather the devastating attack on their organizations and persons. If Redemption was fundamentally related to the physics of violence—of which side could effectively control space and bodies—then the loss of the brass band and the drum was a huge tactical setback for Black Republican forces that they would not recover from in the short term.

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<sup>1653</sup> *Ibid.*, 1199-2000.

<sup>1654</sup> *Ibid.*, 1199-2000.

<sup>1655</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 14.

White forces were perceptive of brassroots democracy's symbolic power, and in at least one instance, white conservatives employed a Black band to inaugurate their own vision of white supremacy. This event, which infuriated Black protestors, took place in Charleston, South Carolina, at the onset of a heavily publicized baseball match between two all-white teams, one representing Savannah and another Charleston, an event organized by vocal white conservatives.<sup>1656</sup> According to a Charleston *Courier* account reprinted in the *Times*, "one of the most disgraceful riots that as ever been witnessed" broke out when a Black man, Rafe Izzard, refused a police officer's directive to keep clear of the baseball field. After cursing at the officer, Izzard was attacked; he resisted arrest, other Black onlookers came to help him, and suddenly "Clubs, bats, fence rails were seized" and a massive confrontation broke out. Over three thousand Black protestors then occupied the city square. Interestingly, the baseball teams decided to, in the middle of this confrontation, march from the field to Vigilant Hall to host the Savannah Baseball Club, and were headed by a "band, composed of colored men" who had travelled from Savannah. They performed "Dixie," which did not calm the demonstrators. The band was singled out for attack by the Black protestors, and "were met by a volley of stones from the vagabond mob." The musicians, having no weapons, defended themselves with their musical instruments and baseball bats. At least three band members were wounded, one severely: W. H. Woodhouse, Benjamin Morell, and R.H. Butler, whose head was cut with a rock. Nonetheless, they reached Vigilant Hall, where the baseball teams toasted each other, and then the Savannah team, with their "colored" band, marched to the Wharf to the tune of "Dixie." By this time, the military had been deployed, and the song, apparently, went uninterrupted.<sup>1657</sup>

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<sup>1656</sup> Brian Kelly, "Labour and Place: The Contours of Freedpeoples' Mobilization in Reconstruction South Carolina," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 660.

<sup>1657</sup> *New York Times*, July 30, 1869.

The newspaper was confused by this violence against Savannah's Black musicians. "Why their wrath was directed against the colored band it is impossible to say, save, perhaps, the fact may be accounted for by its being hinted abroad that they were all Democrats."<sup>1658</sup> But perhaps it is not so surprising. South Carolina's new State Constitution in 1868 introduced revolutionary changes, including removing the racial and property barriers for obtaining the right to vote. In 1870, the Academy of Music was threatened with a discrimination suit, which led to the white community issue a counter-threat to withdraw their patronage to the theater.<sup>1659</sup> The sight of an all-white baseball team was infuriating to the Black public and contradictory to the spirit of the new State Constitution and desegregation more broadly. But the sound of a Black marching band from out of state honoring these provocateurs was perhaps even more unacceptable. An almost sacred tradition of sound, struggle, and community mobilization was used as form of "trolling" to provoke the onlookers.<sup>1660</sup>

This would not be the last time that Democrats and white supremacists appropriated the sounds of Black brass bands to service their struggle to regain lost ground. In 1909 the "father of the blues," W.C. Handy wrote the campaign jingle for Democratic mayor of Memphis, Edward Crump, who was a white supremacist. The song, which became "Memphis Blues," was so popular it helped launch Handy's career.<sup>1661</sup> According to Handy, as the Democratic primaries neared, the "three leading Negro bands were sent out by the managers of each candidate to whoop it up and bring home the bacon." Handy describes these campaigns with a flair: "Bynum's with their flashy

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<sup>1658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1659</sup> Williamson, *After Slavery*, 15.

<sup>1660</sup> As Benjamin Aspray argues, modern-day "trolls" are demarcated by their strategy of demoralizing adherents of "legitimate" political discourse that fails to promote a coherent politics. See Benjamin Aspray, "On Trolling as Comedic Method," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 3 (May 14, 2019): 154–60.

<sup>1661</sup> Mark A. Johnson, "The Best Notes Made the Most Votes: W. C. Handy, E. H. Crump, and Black Music as Politics," *Southern Cultures* 20, no. 2 (2014): 52–68.

cornetist, Frank McDonald, hoped to win Beale Street for one candidate,” while “Eckford’s tried to blow another man into office with the help of Teddy Adams, the speed demon clarinetist.”<sup>1662</sup> Virtuosity and Black musical codes became forces for political mobilization, even for white supremacists. Mark Johnson notes the irony of these sonic politics: “Despite the eagerness of the candidates to eliminate African Americans from politics, all three of them employed black musicians for their campaigns.”<sup>1663</sup> Yet their musicians did not always deliver the intended message: Handy’s refrain for “Memphis Blues” included: “Mr. Crump don’t allow no easy riders here,” met with the response “We don’t care what Mr. Crump don’t allow. We’re going to barrelhouse anyhow” before resolving with “Mr. Crump won’t allow it ain’t gonna have it here.” The phrase is a little unclear who the listener would identify with – the law and order of Crump, or the defiance of the barrelhouse-goers. This ambiguity allowed Handy to deploy hidden messages that preserved his dignity and values. Handy was conflicted about his participation in these spectacles; as the trumpeter remembered in his autobiography, his performances for white supremacists reminded Handy of “the first time I had to listen to oratory of this sort” as a youth, after which “[I] buried my head in a pillow and wept after listening to sentiments like these uttered from the courthouse steps by a politician of the same stripe.”<sup>1664</sup>

Handy was hardly alone in negotiating the dilemma. Across the country in the post-Reconstruction South, Black music became increasingly deployed for both Republican and Democratic gatherings. It had become a grammar of power, and even white supremacists knew they needed it to mobilize votes. Black bands played in white supremacist events for a number of

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<sup>1662</sup> Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 98–99; quoted in “The Best Notes Made the Most Votes,” 62.

<sup>1663</sup> Johnson, “The Best Notes Made the Most Votes,” 62.

<sup>1664</sup> W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1941), 81.

reasons. Many did so in order to make money, something in devastatingly short supply for all freedpeople. Even if it was “just a gig,” however, they occasionally were still able to exert political agency at such events. Such was the case in on November 14, 1927, when Black musicians participated alongside white supremacists in an Armistice Day parade in Ft. Worth, Texas. During the parade, the Black musicians marched behind the Ku Klux Klan. As they marched behind the white-hooded Klansmen, Black musicians played “The Old Gray Mare Ain’t What She Used to Be,” a selection, argues Johnson, with which “the musicians hoped to portray the Klan members as outdated, useless remnants of the past.”<sup>1665</sup> It is harder to parse out Daniel Desdunes’s motivation when he accepted an invitation from the KKK to perform with the Boys Town Band in Council Bluff, Iowa, in 1925. He withdrew his offer after an “avalanche of public opinion” convinced him of the horrible symbolism that such a performance would entail.<sup>1666</sup>

Yet perhaps most telling salience of brassroots democracy’s effective fusion of aesthetic and political organizing was how the Ku Klux developed their own fusion of music, of the minstrel variety, with political organizing and political violence. A founder of the Klan, Frank McCord, was a well-known musician, and his fiddle is in the collection of the Tennessee State Historical Museum. A *carte de visite*, a late nineteenth-century business card adorned with a photo, proudly displays the seven members of the “Midnight Rangers,” holding violins, banjos, and other assorted instruments. Each of the musicians pictured were also the earliest members of the Klan.<sup>1667</sup> Parsons points out that “the first public appearances of the Pulaski Ku-Klux was

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<sup>1665</sup> “The Confederate Veteran,” *Courier-Journal*, May 2, 1900, 5; Mark A. Johnson, “‘The Best Notes Made the Most Votes’: Race, Politics, and Spectacle in the South, 1877-1932” (PhD Dissertation, University of Alabama, 2016), 154.

<sup>1666</sup> “Negro Band Cuts Ku Klux Picnic,” *The Helena Independent*, Jul. 26, 1925, 1.

<sup>1667</sup> In fact, the word rangers, as Elaine Franz Parsons notes, was a synonymy for informal white militia associated with nighttime violence. Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 33.

apparently a parade in which members wore a variety of bizarre and elaborate costumes and played makeshift musical instruments.”<sup>1668</sup> During the 1871 congressional hearings on the Klan, “parades of disguised men” were frequently listed as a Klan organizing tactic, sometimes “in masked procession with stuffed elephants and other grotesque animals.” According to Parsons, elaborate costumes, as well as the Klan’s favored “Ghost” identity, both had their roots both in the Western traditions of *charivari* as well as antebellum minstrelsy. Benjamin Linley Wild argues that such performances were attempts “to challenge the perceived hegemony and deleterious effects of black culture in the period of Reconstruction.”<sup>1669</sup> Klan-related performance culture was a response to the ubiquity of Black brass bands and parade culture, and became integrated even into nighttime attacks on “carpetbaggers” and Black activists: the assailants often made music, danced, and imitated animal noises to disorient and humiliate their victims.<sup>1670</sup>

The performative aspects of Ku Klux activity should not obscure the litanies of assassinations, house burnings, midnight shootings, and other assaults by white militias on people of color that fueled the counter-revolution called Redemption. While there is no singular white South, and militias had a variety of contradictory motivations and class interests, this movement had one common denominator: as Eric Foner notes, “The pervasiveness of violence reflected whites’ determination to define in their own way the meaning of freedom and their determined resistance to black’s efforts to establish their autonomy.”<sup>1671</sup> Similarly, the pervasiveness of music reflected Black determinations to continue pushing at the limits of political possibility. For, if a

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<sup>1668</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>1669</sup> Benjamin Linley Wild, *Carnival to Catwalk: Global Reflections on Fancy Dress Costume* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 16, 70.

<sup>1670</sup> U.S. Congress, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, Vol. 2, North Carolina, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 88; cited in Wild, *Carnival to Catwalk*, 71.

<sup>1671</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction*, 120.

plan to utilize the state to effect Black empowerment and cultural revolution had, in effect, come to bloody halt, freedmen and women still understood its collective musical forms to be of enormous import for their ongoing struggle of autonomy.

## 6.6 Remixing the State: Black Fire Companies and Brass Bands During Redemption

*The spectacle...is a world view transformed into an objective force.*

- Guy Debord<sup>1672</sup>

One might say that the clarinetist Willie Parker of the Eagle Band lived several lifetimes. Before his musical career in New Orleans, Parker was not raised by his mother, but by his Godmother in St. Sophie plantation in Plaquemines Parish, a prominent sugar region 73 miles southeast of New Orleans. He received a music education from brassroots formations from a young age, playing drums “every night of the week” in the Terminal Band that existed on the plantation, with James Humphrey providing instruction.<sup>1673</sup> He remembers the moment he finally met his mom vividly. “And my mother didn't see me till I was 19 years old. And how she come to see me!”<sup>1674</sup> It was on the fourth of March, which was the big day of the fireman’s parade. Without missing a beat, Parker jumps from his dramatic reunion with his mom to a vivid description of the day’s festivities, which were punctuated by the Black Vigilance Fire Company and the Excelsior Brass Band, seemingly marching in lock step:

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<sup>1672</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. David Nichols (New York: Zone Books, 1967), 12-13.

<sup>1673</sup> Karl Koenig, *Music in the Parishes Surrounding New Orleans: Plaquemines* (Running Springs, CA: Basin Street Press, 1997), 60-62.

<sup>1674</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 7, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

Oh, that used to be a big day once. The fourth of March, fireman's parade, boy, firemen they didn't have no, no car, automobile like they got now. They used to pull the wagon, you know, the fire department. Long red rope, long, eight, nine blocks long and cars hook on to them every company had its position and that rope enters on to all of them, and pulled them all along. Band of music and everything. I know the band here, you've read of it, called Excelsior Brass Band, old man George Baquet was the leader of that band and the fireman didn't have to hire—didn't have to sign no contract with them or nothing, just tell 'em, “we want you for tomorrow night.” All right, they gonna be there...the firemen made them a present of a suit, full dress suit, red, white, and blue. Blue pants and a big red cape, blue coat with red stripes in it. Oh, they had caps, you know, they had pretty uniforms. Yeah, the firemen made 'em a present, of that. They used to do all the fireman's work.<sup>1675</sup>

As in the Civil War and Reconstruction, these brass band parades were spaces of communal reintegration and healing. But Parker was attending this parade in 1904, when the Republican Party had been all but banished from electoral politics. Yet these parades still articulated modalities of Black power and organization; they still mediated the concerns and wishes of the Black community through spectacle and negotiated sound; they still provided a space for congregation. Bands understood these events as such and participated in these communal endeavors by not requiring payment, accepting in-kind services instead. The clothing they were gifted from the fire company seems to have been an important element—an essential part of a counter-spectacle, performing statecraft from below. Ten years earlier than Parker's account of his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday (1889), the Excelsior Brass Band had marched with a different firefighter group, the African American Pelican Fire Company, in an 1879 picnic. The *Weekly Pelican* noted:

One important and noticeable feature of the day's celebrations was the appearance of the “Excelsior Band” at the head of Pelican Fire Co. No. 4...in their new and beautiful uniforms, planned after the style of the Prussian military costumes, with dark blue helmet hats,

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<sup>1675</sup> Clarinetist George Baquet was never the leader of the Excelsior Brass Band according to existing documentation, but George Noret and Theogene Baquet were both bandleaders of the Excelsior. Willie Parker, Interview, November 7, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

ribbed with burnished brass, corded in white, with white horse-hair plumes; long military coats, three rows of brass buttons, corded in white with brass epaulets; pants of dark navy blue cloth with white stripe. Everywhere they appeared their approach was heralded with murmurs of admiration.<sup>1676</sup>

Such militarized costumes, even without the presence of weapons, sent a signal to their would-be paramilitary harassers. And their association of music, militancy, and commanding public space created exactly the kind of spaces and energy that Democratic paramilitaries and white supremacist activists found so threatening. The performances of the Excelsior Brass Band and the Black Vigilance Fire company demonstrate how, in the words of Shana Redmond, “Black musics have remixed the modalities of the state in order to foster alternative exercises of freedom and justice.”<sup>1677</sup>

This section traces how brass band culture became integrated into the politicized spectacles of Black volunteer fire companies. These were only an outlet for brassroots democracy’s interventions, but a powerful intervention in an age of antiblack violence for their quasi-military garb.<sup>1678</sup> Indeed, Black fire companies provided a symbolic import as counterinstitutional formations whose members were disciplined and uniformed. There was a dire need for such entities within the Black community: with the 1877 ascendancy of Democratic rule in Louisiana, the White League quickly assumed the role of the state militia and the new governor Francis T.

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<sup>1676</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, March 8, 1879, quoted in Charles E. Kinzer, “The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933” (The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993), 139-140.

<sup>1677</sup> Shana L. Redman, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 4.

<sup>1678</sup> Through Charles Kinzer’s research of the Black press from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is evident that the Excelsior Brass Band and other popular brass bands performed at a range of mutual-social aid functions both in New Orleans and in the plantation parishes, such as Thibodaux. Charles E. Kinzer, “The Excelsior Brass Band of New Orleans, 1879-1889: A Decade in the Development of a Vernacular Archetype,” *Journal of Band Research* 29, no. 1 (1993): 14-24.

Nicholls forced Black militias to disarm.<sup>1679</sup> As the tide turned on Reconstruction and organized paramilitaries attacked Black labor and civil rights activists, music and public performance was still utilized to push back against racial violence. Fire companies may seem like a surprising link to brass bands—and brassroots democracy at large—but these understudied phenomena reflect some of the most important autonomous Black institutions in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction epochs.

The history of Black fire companies in New Orleans is not well-documented. It is possible that Black fire companies were developed in response to the abuses of power by white fire companies. In 1867, a Black man was gravely injured by a white fire company who impaled him with a ladder, possibly a manifestation of anti-Reconstruction violence. After this incident, a contemporary observer noted that “there was a concerted attack by colored men on the firemen.”<sup>1680</sup> In the same year, a white fire company was accused of interfering with a “colored procession” by “sending a [false] fire alarm during its progress.”<sup>1681</sup> Fire companies, like all public institutions, became battlegrounds over space and power in Reconstruction New Orleans, a terrain of conflict in the struggle between brassroots democracy and white silencing.

It is possible, however, that free people of color developed prewar fire companies of their own. This was the case in Mobile, Alabama, where a small but thriving Creole of Color community developed the “Neptune Number 1 Creole Fire Company” (hereafter referred to as the Creole Fire Company) in 1830, and the city’s Aldermen put the group in charge of one of the city’s fire

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<sup>1679</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 70.

<sup>1680</sup> Thomas O’Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans: From the Earliest Days to the Present Time* (New Orleans: Self-Published, 1895), 184.

<sup>1681</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

engines.<sup>1682</sup> The city allowed an unusual amount of autonomy to this group of mixed-race men; the company could establish its own regulations as it “may deem expedient and proper to adopt, for the purpose of compelling the attendance of their members” either at fires or other company functions, although it was required to “elect for their captain a white man citizen of Mobile.”<sup>1683</sup> Due to racial discrimination from the white fire companies, which included acts of sabotage against their fire engine, the Creole Fire Company paraded separately on the anniversary of its company's founding instead of on the anniversary of the Mobile Fire Department Association. When, in 1852, the Creole Fire Company was publicly offered to take its “proper place” in the annual parade, Creole firemen declined, explaining that “all they have ever clamed [sic] is simple justice.”<sup>1684</sup> These institutions were thus vehicles for civil rights activism as well as fire suppression.

The Creole Fire Company was not, however, strictly antiracist. It was conceived as an exclusively Creole of Color organization and it discouraged its membership from associating with slaves. By 1867 the politics of the group had changed drastically with the Civil War and the shift sweeping the South. Many of Mobile's Creoles of Color served important government positions during the Reconstruction era, and worked to improve public schools.<sup>1685</sup> And so did the politics of the Creole Fire Company change accordingly: in 1883, John A. Pope, the president of the Creole Fire Club, celebrated the birth of his son Odeil by founding the Excelsior Brass Band (not to be confused with New Orleans's Excelsior Brass Band).<sup>1686</sup> The band was conceived as an appendage

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<sup>1682</sup> Harriet E. Amos Doss, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1985), 101-102; Nahfiza Ahmed, “Race, Class and Citizenship: The Civil Rights Struggle in Mobile, Alabama, 1925-85” (Ph.D. Dissertation, England, University of Leicester, 1999), 51; Christopher Andrew Nordmann, “Free Negroes in Mobile County, Alabama” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Alabama, 1990), 182-183.

<sup>1683</sup> Nordmann, “Free Negroes in Mobile County, Alabama,” 182.

<sup>1684</sup> Doss, *Cotton City*, 103.

<sup>1685</sup> David Ernest Alsobrook, “Alabama's Port City: Mobile During the Progressive Era, 1896-1917” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Auburn University, 1983), 118-120.

<sup>1686</sup> Angela D. Davis, “Excelsior Band” *New Times Weekly*, Feb. 11, 1988

of the Creole Fire Company, and several members of the company, such as Alex Terez, joined the musical outfit. It included many important African American musicians in the city and was the most prominent of the city's Mardi Gras brass bands. Still active today, the Excelsior Band "leads many if not most of the parades [of Mobile]," and its ranks are populated by, according to Joey Brackner, "[o]nly the finest of veteran musicians".<sup>1687</sup>

In Louisiana, one concrete example of post-Reconstruction militancy of fire companies occurred in 1881, when some five hundred members of another self-organized group, the Black Vigilance Fire Company, visited the town of Thibodaux outside of New Orleans and "serenaded" the mayor in song. Thibodaux was a hotbed of White League activity, whose paramilitary militias imagined themselves engaged in a race war "not between Republicans and Democrats or Liberals, but between the whites and blacks."<sup>1688</sup> White Leaguers were operating against a budding labor movement: only a year before, the neighboring parishes of Ascension, St. James, and St. John the Baptist erupted in a strike that extended over several plantations and was only put down by arresting strike leaders.<sup>1689</sup> But the Black Vigilance Fire Company seems to have won the battle on this occasion. When they "serenaded" the mayor, "the gentlemen was either absent or did not want to receive negro *serenaders*," reported the *Weekly Pelican*. It must have been quite a spectacle to see 500 uniformed Black men taunting a white supremacist mayor, who refused to leave his home. Afterwards, the firemen "repaired to Eureka Hall, where dancing was indulged to a late hour."<sup>1690</sup> The dancing, and probably the serenading, would have been accompanied by a band.

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<sup>1687</sup> Joey Brackner, "The Excelsior Marching Band, Mobile," Alabama State Council on the Arts, 2013, [https://arts.alabama.gov/Traditional\\_Culture/heritageaward/excelsior.aspx](https://arts.alabama.gov/Traditional_Culture/heritageaward/excelsior.aspx), accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>1688</sup> D. Caffery to "My dear Wife," June 9, 18, 1874, August 17, 1877, Letter File Book #3, 50-51, 63, Donelson Caffery and Family Papers, LSU; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 282; Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 181.

<sup>1689</sup> Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 174-195.

<sup>1690</sup> *Weekly Pelican* (New Orleans), 23 July 1887.

Based on accounts of such gatherings in the 1880s relayed above, it is more than likely that one of the popular brass bands from New Orleans such as the Excelsior Brass Band might have been contracted for the occasion.<sup>1691</sup>

As in earlier epochs, music was used to command public space and generate an affective consensus amongst grassroots activists, and specifically in a struggle to counteract the antidemocratic violence that threatened their movements for autonomy. For Rebecca Scott, the Black Vigilance Fire Company's initiative deliberately "threatened elements of white supremacy on two fronts: the workplace and the public sphere." Scott reads these organizations as a continuation of Reconstruction era Black militias which guaranteed a measure of self-defense for Black grassroots activists. She notes that while "the black and interracial militias of the 1870s had been destroyed, there were still black fire companies and mutual-aid associations that drew members from town and country,"<sup>1692</sup> and they were not afraid to use their numbers, their uniforms and military discipline, or their music to challenge the White League's takeover of public space.

As Albert O. Hirschman has noted in his studies of Pinochet's Chile, activists resisting right-wing regimes prioritize the "conservation and mutation of social energy" by shifting their focus from national or regional projects to "micro-developmental activities." Such activists may have "previously participated in other, generally more 'radical' experiences of collective action, that had generally not achieved their objective, usually due to official repression," but found outlets in these localized and symbolically charged protests to sustain or rebuild momentum from a

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<sup>1691</sup> Lawrence Gushee, "Black Professional Musicians in New Orleans, C1880," *Inter-American Music Review* 11, no. 2 (1991): 53–63; Charles E. Kinzer, "The Tio Family: Four Generations of New Orleans Musicians, 1814-1933" (The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1993); Charles E. Kinzer, "The Excelsior Brass Band of New Orleans, 1879-1889: A Decade in the Development of a Vernacular Archetype," *Journal of Band Research* 29, no. 1 (1993): 14–24.

<sup>1692</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 83.

previous epoch.<sup>1693</sup> In a similar fashion, the performances put on by the Excelsior Brass Band in conjunction with the Pelican Fire company (and possibly the Black Vigilance Fire Company) demonstrates their commitment the “conversation and mutation of social energy” by employing the sonic language of brassroots democracy from a decade prior. Aesthetics and musical forms underwent a similar process of conservation and mutation. Amiri Baraka has used the phrase “the changing same” to outline the continuities of blues-derived vocabulary and social philosophy heard in a wide array of contemporary African American forms such as jazz, R&B, and Rock and Roll.<sup>1694</sup> In this case, the jubilee resonance of brass still commanded the resonance of revolution; if, as Du Bois said about this period, “The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again into slavery,” then Black brass continued to share the memories and lessons of those sun-lit moments as the darkness of Redemption and Jim Crow was resisted, through the communal solidarity effected by organized brass and group singing.<sup>1695</sup>

## 6.7 Labor and Sound: Post-Reconstruction Brassroots Democracy

*The musician, like music, is ambiguous. He plays a double game. He is simultaneously musicus and cantor, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it.*

- Jacques Attali<sup>1696</sup>

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<sup>1693</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *Getting Ahead Collectively: Grassroots Experiences in Latin America* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984), 42-43.

<sup>1694</sup> Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), “The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music),” in *Black Music* (New York: De Capo, 1968).

<sup>1695</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 30.

<sup>1696</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 12.

In addition to Fire Companies, organized labor was another site where brassroots democracy bore its formidable weight. As early as 1873, music accompanied labor unrest in the rural parishes. On January 5, self-organized sugar workers strike commenced at Zion Church, near Houma, when strikers demanded a \$20 a month minimum wage with rations. As with the ALU, the strikers proposed forming subassociations to rent land collectively. William H. “Hamp” Keyes, the Republican representative for Terrebonne, encouraged them to continue the strike and occupy plantations so that scabs could not replace their labor. The strikers then marched throughout the city, “with fife and drum,” again connecting their struggles on plantations to the expansive rights fought for during the Civil War.<sup>1697</sup> As described above, in 1887, after similar labor unrest led to the Thibodaux Massacre, the town’s mayor was unequivocal: Black bands were banned.<sup>1698</sup> Both of these incidents are discussed at length in Chapter 4, but I highlight these episodes here to emphasize the fusion of expressive culture and political organizing is apparent in the beginning of Black organized dock labor.

One year before the Houma strike, New Orleans’s Black longshoremen first organized into a union, named the Longshoremen’s Protective Union Benevolent Association (LPUBA), in 1872. Before long, they had organized a dock strike with their white counterparts. The following call, significant because it was signed by both white and Black union representation, announced their intentions:

Notice is hereby given to the public, coal merchants, stevedores and contractors in particular, that the Longshoremen's Protective Union and United Laborers' Chartered Societies do, on the seventeenth day of October, 1872, strike for wages and regular hours of work...[we cannot spare] so much as a single dollar from our daily wages to aid or support a sick wife or child, or a sick friend, without depriving ourselves of the same amount of bread to eat; so, therefore, we notify

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<sup>1697</sup> Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 162.

<sup>1698</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006),

the public that on the seventeenth day of October, 1872, we strike for \$4 per day, from the Barracks to Carrollton.

Under our charter, Longshoremen's Protective Union  
T. MATTHEWS,  
President Protective Union, Colored.  
WILLIAM CROTTY  
President United Laborers, White<sup>1699</sup>

At this early phase of the dockworker's labor movement, music already figured prominently. Bands accompanied the strike from its departure. As the *Republican* reported,

Carrying out the above proclamation, the members yesterday failed to go to work, keeping their promise to strike for higher wages—\$4 per day. Hundreds of the strikers assembled on the levee at an early hour, as if to make a public demonstration. One large squad had a band of music, and carried a flag, the participants bearing themselves like men who “meant business.”<sup>1700</sup>

The band was still playing when the strikers encountered a stevedore name Captain Barnes, who was directing scab longshoremen to load the barges of the Mississippi Valley Transportation Company violation of the strike. Barnes's refusal to stop work in solidarity with the strikers led to a violent confrontation: “At about twelve o'clock the procession of strikers passed up, preceded by a band of music, and with flags flying, the men in the procession some 1000 or 2000 strong. The crowd again halted at the barge and demanded that the laborers should quit, threatening violence in case they did not obey.” Barnes attacked the strikers with a hatchet; he lost control of the battle and was stoned to death.<sup>1701</sup> The presence of a band in multiple parts of the march, including at the initiation of this confrontation, suggests that the musicians who performed in these routes were deeply engrained in labor movement. Certainly, the comments of the dockworker and clarinetist

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<sup>1699</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 18, 1872.

<sup>1700</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1701</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 22, 1872.

Willie Parker support this conclusion. In a 1958 interview, he remembered his days as a labor activist, and claimed: “Well, ought to kill all them old scabs, people striking and they don't wanna help them out.”<sup>1702</sup> Parker’s common-sense utterance reflects how engrained labor solidarity was within Black brass band musicians, a topic taken up in Chapter 6.

In this dangerous and defiant moment, the band did more than provide excitement. The paper concluded that “the strikers...maintained themselves free from intoxication onto an unusual extent, and seemed fully under the disciplined control of their leaders up to the time of the murderous assault on Captain Barnes.” The organizational element of the strike – led by not only bands, but also marshals who held flags and shouted “four dollars a day or nothing”—are direct invocations of the Civil War brass band celebrations and other types of political-musical activity during Reconstruction; they reveal that the tradition of brassroots democracy extended to the Black labor movement. The cohesion of the marchers and their operating of a single mind reflects the power of the affective consensus that this group of musicians helped generate.<sup>1703</sup>

The accompaniment of music did not only influence the disposition of the strikers. It also communicated their struggle to the broader public. For those who could not be physically present on the march route, they would still hear the resonant sounds of horns, drums, and the combined voices of slogans. Perhaps this helps explain why, in the following days, coal heavers, roustabouts, and railroad workers also went on strike. Their strike had broad appeal in the larger New Orleans community: when the police arrested two or three of the strikeleaders, a crowd of thousands rescued them from the police station.<sup>1704</sup> Band music was a way to signal powerful themes of

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<sup>1702</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 1, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1703</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 22, 1872

<sup>1704</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, October 22, 1872; Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

solidarity and inspire those on the sidelines to participate. These strategies continued through the decade: The *Daily Democrat* mocked Black labor's campaign for "rest[ing] on the '40 cents an hour' song," which apparently referenced a how their demand for a minimum wage was popularized through collective singing.<sup>1705</sup>

The 1872 and 1880 demonstrations are examples of Black waterfront workers' engagement with performance cultures to achieve an affective consensus during political struggle. Even politically sensitive meetings, where tensions ran high, included music. At one 1903 Longshoremen's Protective Union Benevolent Association meeting at the Longshoremen's Hall, two white stevedores (who worked for the shipping companies) were denied entry by the Black body despite their attempted forced entry. "They weren't even on the membership list," explained the doorman. Nonetheless, the meeting was characterized by "perfect harmony" by the *Picayune*. "They came out of the hall smiling and in a good humor. In fact, the closing act of the meeting as the singing of the old rally hymn of the organization, and every man in the hall joined in. The swell of voices could be heard for blocks away. It sounded like a revival meeting broken loose in the Longshoremen's Hall, which was the very opposite from what everyone expected."<sup>1706</sup> By performing this Black anthem, the members of the LPUBA became "citizens of sound" who challenged their negation of rights by the white republic.<sup>1707</sup> As I will show in Chapter 6, Black dockworkers' unions were fundamental to the expansion of Black political and economic power in the post-Reconstruction era, and their support of the working-class music that become known as jazz was fundamental to this success.

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<sup>1705</sup> *The New Orleans Daily Democrat*, April 6, 1880, page 2.

<sup>1706</sup> *Times Picayune*, September 9, 1903.

<sup>1707</sup> Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 15.

A final study in the legacies of post-Reconstruction Black labor struggles and brassroots democracy can be gleaned from the United Confederate Veterans' (UCV) 1903 reunion, held in New Orleans. This story, recounted by historian Mark A. Johnson, is a case study of political power wielded by Black brass bands in the era when jazz was still consolidating its stylistic voice.<sup>1708</sup> The UCV comprised of 65,000 out the 100,000 Confederate veterans still alive at that time,<sup>1709</sup> and its presence in New Orleans was greatly anticipated by the city's white population. In Louisiana and Mississippi, according to one Atlanta newspaper, students in public school had Friday off to "witness what they will probably never have a chance to see again."<sup>1710</sup> At the beginning of the reunion, journalists estimated that 150,000 people would come to New Orleans for the festivities, including "tens of thousands of school children" and 25,000 veterans. Putting forward a revisionist history of the "Lost Cause," veterans attempted to use sound to re-legitimize their struggle. "The confederate yell that goes up as the procession marches by recalls one of the striking features of the civil war" intoned one enthralled journalist.<sup>1711</sup>

Musical selection for the parade became a flashpoint of both civil rights and labor organizing with tangible consequences for the development of the labor struggle in the Crescent City. The UCV inadvertently set off this process when it contacted the New Orleans Musicians Union with a request for 20 bands, but no colored musicians. The Musicians Union included separate chapters for white and Black musicians, but the two cooperated and shared a charter. Because the Union could only supply twelve white bands and Union members were prohibited

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<sup>1708</sup> Mark A. Johnson, "'Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets': Black Musicians and the United Confederate Veterans Reunion in New Orleans, 1903," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 56, no. 3 (2015): 315–43.

<sup>1709</sup> "For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie Crescent City Gates are Ajar," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1903, B2, quoted in Johnson, "Red Flag an Army of Old Vets," 317.

<sup>1710</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1711</sup> "For Grizzled Veterans," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1903; quoted in Johnson, "Red Flag an Army of Old Vets," 324.

from playing events with non-union musicians, the Union was obligated to demand Black bands be included in the parade. Confederate veterans had mixed views on the subject. For organizers, the ban on Black musicians was especially necessary because of the bands' proximity to white women paraders, whose "protection" was a cornerstone of Redeemer ideology. As Hannah Rosen notes, "Both the hopeful visions of former slaves and the terror that ultimately dashed their hopes were frequently expressed through discourse and practices of manhood and womanhood,"<sup>1712</sup> and this "gendered rhetoric of race" was mobilized in the UCV which, as Johnson notes, "put white women in a position with special significance because of their value to the Lost Cause mythology."<sup>1713</sup> Other veterans, however, were quick to argue that there "was no color line in music," and that "old vets are willing for their sons of their old plantation darkies to make music for them anywhere."<sup>1714</sup> One Confederate Veteran in the *Raleigh Post* opined "we venture to say they [Black bands] will furnish more really inspiring music than all the other bands—composed of foreigners as they are—ever dreamed of, and more reaching after the Southern heart...when did Southern people cease employing the colored band...for their strictly social function?"<sup>1715</sup> As Johnson points out, this veteran "drew on a long history of black musicians playing for white audiences in an idealized Old South"<sup>1716</sup> and in doing so divested the current movement of Black music of its political valence or interpretative power. Nonetheless, for the organizers of the parade,

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<sup>1712</sup> Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5-6. For a study of the interconnection of "protecting" white women and the lynching of Black men, see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 139-40, 158.

<sup>1713</sup> Johnson, "'Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets,'" 339.

<sup>1714</sup> Johnson, "'Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets,'" 316.

<sup>1715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1716</sup> Mark A. Johnson, "'Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets': Black Musicians and the United Confederate Veterans Reunion in New Orleans, 1903," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 56, no. 3 (2015): 333.

the Black popular music was still too emblematic of the dark days of Reconstruction, when radical bands took over streets and soundscapes to inaugurate an interracial, grassroots democracy.

The Musicians Union was less divided in its opposition, but it is hard to imagine that this episode would not have caused an internal struggle between its white and Black factions. The parade offered a substantial amount of money and national prestige for participating bands. In addition, white musician-labor activists, as Johnson notes, “had to choose between supporting their nostalgia for the Old South and reaffirming their modern labor.”<sup>1717</sup> The Union, however, did pay musicians who turned down work on account of the ban on sharing performances with non-union musicians. Because it shared this collective, institutional mechanism, it was able to overcome potential rupture over racial animosity—which would have been an especially welcome outcome for Confederate veterans and southern white leaders who considered interracial labor alliances a serious threat to their hegemony. When the Union eventually refused to commit any of its bands, the UCV hired amateur non-union bands from across the South – which must have been a unique insult to the Crescent City’s highly regarded and nationally influential brass bands. Upon learning of the UCV’s decision, Union musicians held ranks, and the Union representative played hardball by appealing to the Central Trades and Labor Council, demanding the UCV be placed on the infamous “unfair to labor list.”<sup>1718</sup> This did not come to pass, but had their motion been successful, all unionized labor of the entire city would have been barred from doing business with the reunion. The fact that this was even a possibility points to the power of organized labor (and organized

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<sup>1717</sup> Mark A. Johnson, ““Red Flag before an Army of Old Vets’: Black Musicians and the United Confederate Veterans Reunion in New Orleans, 1903,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 56, no. 3 (2015): 330.

<sup>1718</sup> *Ibid.*

music) well into Jim Crow era. Indeed, the ascendance of interracial labor struggles became the primary vehicle with which to advance Black independence during Jim Crow.<sup>1719</sup>

While the Trade Councils did not make a decision because “of the sentiment surround the Confederate Veterans,” one potentially sympathetic member organization would have been the Dockworkers’ Council. This power of interracial organization made democratic decisions on behalf of all dockworkers and had a “50/50” white-Black labor ratios on the docks and council representation written into its charter. The Longshoreman’s Protective Union Benevolent Association (LPUBA) not only included several musicians who daylighted at the docks, but was led by William Penn, an African American activist who travelled in both freedpeople and Creole of Color circles and had previously been the business manager of the Excelsior Brass Band (while the Tios were in the group). Penn was celebrated for his musical management,<sup>1720</sup> and he was also revered as a labor leader, and his 1902 funeral included thousands of white and Black mourners.<sup>1721</sup>

As I take up Penn’s story later in Chapter 6, for now it is suffice to say that the Trades Council had the imprint of two powerful interracial unions. That the dockworkers’ unions in New Orleans, four years later, would become “strong enough and sufficiently cohesive” to wage and win “a mammoth general strike” of both white and Black workers in 1907 bears no small relation to these organizers and musical activists.<sup>1722</sup> Historians have presented this strike as pivotal; David Montgomery has called it “the most massive struggle of the period” in the entire South, and “one of the most stirring manifestations of labor solidarity” in American history writ large.<sup>1723</sup> Philip

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<sup>1719</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

<sup>1720</sup> New Orleans *Louisianan*, July 9, 1881, 2.

<sup>1721</sup> *Times-Picayune*, December 26, 1902.

<sup>1722</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>1723</sup> David Montgomery, *Workers’ Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 83.

Foner has pointed out how in the strike, working class “Black-white unity [was] explicitly and decisively asserted.”<sup>1724</sup> This significance should compel us to consider the role of Penn across a linked set of musical, cultural, and political activities, as well as countless other Black musicians who worked in the docks, including Willie Parker, Pops Foster, and Jelly Roll Morton. Historian of the dockworkers’ union, Eric Arnesen, puts it aptly when he surmises that William Penn’s biography “reveal[s] how inseparable were union activities and the larger world of black social and political life.”<sup>1725</sup> That it does. But more specifically, it reveals how communal music making still carried both aesthetic connotations and a lived performative practice of Black self-organization. These were brassroots legacies, pushing the limits of democratic change even when Jim Crow political repression was at its peak.

## 6.8 Conclusion: It’s a Long Way to Tipperary

*And from that mighty music the beginning  
Of jazz arose, tempestuous, capricious,  
Declaring to the whites in accents loud  
That not entirely was the planet theirs.  
O Music, it was you permitted us  
To lift our face and peer into the eyes  
Of future liberty, that would one day be ours.*

- Patrice Lumumba (assassinated President of the Congo)<sup>1726</sup>

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<sup>1724</sup> Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers Co, 1964), 253.

<sup>1725</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

<sup>1726</sup> Patrice Lumumba, “May Our People Triumph,” in *The Truth about a Monstrous Crime of the Colonialists* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 48–49.

Brassroots democracy did not appear only to disappear. Its legacy of assembly— “the power of coming together and acting politically in concert”—continued to flourish, through Reconstruction and into the generation of musicians who defined jazz.<sup>1727</sup> For instance, Civil War iconography in instruments and songs did not disappear: the clarinetists Sidney Bechet and George Lewis started their musical education on the fife. Lewis remembers that his mother, Creole of Color Alice Zeno, “hummed” French opera for Lewis to play, but it “was impossible to make it on six holes.” He played fife in “kid parades, call[ed] them Field Bands. [They’d] have a drum, a couple of fifes, three of four boys I knew could fife, at that time.”<sup>1728</sup> As David Evan notes, unlike the militia bands in the North, fife and drum bands were exclusively a Black phenomenon in the South.<sup>1729</sup> Another legacy of Civil War was what George Lewis called “advertising” he and other musicians were contracted to perform during the Great Depression:

They’d send out to different clubs...what they call waivers, that would be a column of people they were invited out of that particular club, and they would march and when they’d get to the door, they give you the sing, and the tune would be, all the time to march them in, ‘Gettysburg March.’ And they would come in with their regalias or their banners, you know, representing the club. And then they would go to the bar.<sup>1730</sup>

Not only a New Orleans ritual—Lewis remembers that “they used that tune, also, in the country,”<sup>1731</sup> – these episodes point to lines of descents between Louisiana jazz and the sonicography and the performative regalia of the brassroots epoch.<sup>1732</sup> Perhaps this is why the New

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<sup>1727</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, 7.

<sup>1728</sup> George Lewis, Interview, November 1, 1968, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1729</sup> Evan, “Black Fife and Drum Music in Mississippi.” 163.

<sup>1730</sup> George Lewis, Interview, November 1, 1968, HJA.

<sup>1731</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1732</sup> Musicians would be paid separately for this “advertisement” than the gig—Lewis remembers \$2 for the ad, and \$5 for the show—and would involve long parade routes through the city from club to club, sometimes leading to confrontations with other bands. “There would be a battler right there...they’d play three or four tunes [and] one band would pull off...Sometimes the [other] band would be half drunk, they would even tie the wheels together, chain

Orleans city legislature was so eager to annul the permits for the Colored Veterans Benevolent Association in 1899, which had been meeting in that contradictory social factory for jazz, sex work, and communal solidarity, Storyville. White proprietors claimed that they constituted a “nuisance.”<sup>1733</sup>

One clear legacy of brassroots democracy and the instrumental traditions it nurtured was the geographic *range* that Black brass could affect. Louis Armstrong recalls the Onward Brass Band passing through a baseball game he played as a child. In his account, it is the range of this band which shatters the isolation he and other poor Black youth are confined to; the band completely transforms the daily lives of community members in the parade’s aural radius. He explains:

McDonald Cemetery was just about a mile away from where the Black Diamonds [Armstrong’s baseball team] was playing the Algiers team. Whenever a funeral from New Orleans had a body to be buried in the McDonald Cemetery, they would have to cross the Canal Street ferryboat and march down the same road right near our ball game. Of course, when they passed us playing a slow funeral march, we only paused with the game and tipped our hats as to pay respect. When the last of the funeral passed we would continue the game. The game was in full force when the Onward Band was returning from the cemetery, after they had put the body in the ground, they were swinging “It’s A Long Way to Tipperary.” They were swinging so good until Joe Oliver reached in the high register beating out those high notes in very fine fashion. And broke our ball [game]. Yea! The players commenced to dropping bats and balls...and we all followed them. All the way back to the New Orleans side and to their destination.<sup>1734</sup>

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they wheels up, and nobody would get away then.” It seems that the bands were carried on carts George Lewis, Interview, November 1, 1968

<sup>1733</sup> Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 299.

<sup>1734</sup> “Louis Armstrong,” *Jazz Review*, July 1960.

Louis Armstrong specifically made a point to comment on the range of musicians. It was not only Joe Oliver's heavens-splitting upper register, but the distance that the band could be heard. It shattered not only physical distance but social distance, too; they crossed the river, and marched through neighborhoods where they could not have travelled alone. This is why, in another anecdote, Armstrong made such a special mention of how Buddy Bolden's sound could be heard three miles away in Armstrong's home. Such sentiments are echoed by dozens of other commentators.<sup>1735</sup> Like Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton commented on the sheer size of Bolden's sound, and claimed that it channeled a liberation theology: he referred to Bolden as "the blowingest man since Gabriel."<sup>1736</sup> Like the Reconstruction brass bands from which they were descended, New Orleans brass bands in the second line tradition challenged the white monopolization and ordering of public space. They boldly traversed segregated racial orders, using brassroots democracy's jubilant sociability and sheer volume to augment the impact of musical ideas and communal gathering. This alchemy between desegregation, social imagination, and earth-shaking sound summoned thousands of devotional listeners to Gabriel's new flock.

Brassroots democracy offers an alternative genealogy from which to understand the retentions and transformations of the jubilee visions of spirituals. Sterling O. Brown, writing in 1953, commented on the rupture caused by the Great Migration: "It is evident that Negro folk culture is breaking up...In the city the folk become a submerged proletariat. Leisurely yarn-spinning, slow-paced aphoristic conversation become lost arts; jazzed-up gospel hymns provide a different sort of release from the old spirituals; the blues reflect the distortions of the new way of

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<sup>1735</sup> See, for instance, Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992).

<sup>1736</sup> Laurence Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (New York: Crown Archetype Publishing, 2012), 45.

life. Folk arts are no longer by the folk for the folk[.]”<sup>1737</sup> Other commentators have emphasized the stylistic continuities between spirituals and the notion of “calling down the spirit” that is experienced both in antebellum traditions and contemporary jazz.<sup>1738</sup>

These approaches both have one thing in common: the parameter for Black continuity lies in the spirituals. Yet the spirituals’ brilliance and sacred function lay in their utility as organizing devices, as revealed in Civil War campfires. Their ability to parse out an affective consensus through antiphony allowed a distinct political voice among strangers to emerge. This cultural technology was refashioned to respond to the violent enclosures of Jim Crow and other antiblack modalities of violence, and invoked democratic possibilities in the worst of times. In fact, Brown himself wrote elsewhere: “Of all the arts, jazz music is probably the most democratic.”<sup>1739</sup> Three decades earlier, the African American A.J. Rogers wrote, “Jazz, with its mocking disregard for formality, is a leveler and makes for democracy.”<sup>1740</sup> Contemporary commentators still note that, “On the bandstand, an ensemble of individual musicians displays in action an intimate sort of democracy as each one adapts to the other’s playing.”<sup>1741</sup> The music reflected the social process of its participants, reflecting something that was experienced as outside the self. Oliver Lake said that the members of the World Saxophone Quartet do not have a single “leader”; rather, they “know that the music is the leader of the band.”<sup>1742</sup>

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<sup>1737</sup> Sterling Brown, “Negro Folk Expression: Spirituals, Seculars, Ballads and Work Songs,” *Phylon* 14 (Winter 1953): 45–61.

<sup>1738</sup> Roger D. Abrahams et al., *Blues for New Orleans: Mardi Gras and America’s Creole Soul* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 49.

<sup>1739</sup> Sterling A. Brown, “Spirituals, Blues, and Jazz,” in *Jam Session: An Anthology of Jazz*, ed. Ralph J. Gleason (New York: Putnam’s, 1958), 12–26.

<sup>1740</sup> J. A. Rogers, “Jazz at Home,” in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Touchstone, 1925), 223.

<sup>1741</sup> Gregory Clark, “The Rhetoric of Jazz,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, ed. Nicholas Gebhardt, Nicole Rustin-Paschal, and Tony Whyton (New York: Routledge, 2019), 358.

<sup>1742</sup> AAJ Staff, “A Fireside Chat with the World Saxophone Quartet,” All About Jazz, All About Jazz, <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/a-fireside-chat-with-the-world-saxophone-quartet-world-saxophonequartet-by-aa-j-staff.php?page=1>, accessed September 29, 2020.

Certainly, the trope of jazz’s embodiment of democracy is one that has been well-used and abused in the past half century, a metaphor uttered by a diverse commentariat from the United States State Department to leading African American musicians.<sup>1743</sup> We must distinguish from the capital-D “Democracy,” which United States institutions and foreign policy have symbolically monopolized, with the radical act of assembly.<sup>1744</sup> This latter, participatory model is itself a form of communal antiphony which continuously negotiates the contradictions between representation, popular sovereignty, and collective decision making. This has been a feature of radical democratic movements from the Levelers to the Zapatistas, was prefigured in the communal musical creation process heard in Civil War campfires.<sup>1745</sup> The transliteration of these songs into marching band repertoire, and then New Orleans brass band traditions, increasingly emphasized collective improvisation as a means to rearticulate this device of arriving at an affective, and political, consensus during social movements which attempted to create more space for Black decision making and autonomy.

There was nothing inevitable about New Orleans musicians playing brass. Had American history taken another turn—if the central government of the United States had forcibly negotiated the planter class into a phased transition to wage labor, as Britain did with the Jamaica planters—then perhaps these instruments and this history would not have developed the way it did. With

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<sup>1743</sup> For a critical take on this metaphor, see Benjamin Givan, “How Democratic Is Jazz?,” in *Finding Democracy in Music*, ed. Robert Buch and Esteban Adlington (New York: Routledge, 2020), 58–79. Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010); Tony Scherman, “Currents: The Music of Democracy” *The Utne Reader*, no. 74 (1996): 29–36.

<sup>1744</sup> Jesse Stewart, “Freedom Music: Jazz and Human Rights,” in *Rebel Musics: Human Rights, Resistant Sounds, and the Politics of Music Making*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Montreal: Black Rose Press, 2003), 88–107.

<sup>1745</sup> Dylan Eldredge Fitzwater, *Autonomy Is in Our Hearts: Zapatista Autonomous Government through the Lens of the Tsotsil Language* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2019); Kenneth Good, “The Drive for Participatory Democracy in Nineteenth Century Britain,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 2009): 231–47.

how the Civil War actually unfolded, however, brass band instruments came to explicitly signal jubilee. Brass bands bore witness to, and mapped mobilization during, the endlessly creative reinvention of democracy at the grassroots of Reconstruction. Black brass bands never ceased their fight back against the objectification of Black bodies and everyday life. As Shana L. Redmond writes about Black anthemic music, Black music has “helped to sustain world-altering collective visions,” as “devices that make the listening audience and political public merge.”<sup>1746</sup> They spoke to a decentralization of power more radical than that envisioned in the United States constitution and its theory of liberalism. Such world-altering “visions” were triggered aurally, from one generation to the next, and to this day, they continue to bring the spirit down to imbue Gabriel’s flock with a soulful synchronicity.

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<sup>1746</sup> Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 2.

## 7.0 Dockworkers' Activism and New Orleans Jazz

*Their unionism was far more than a matter of hours and wages. It was a religion, and their only hope of rising from the depths of a slavery more cruel in many respects than chattel slavery. For dock work is back-breaking work. It wears men out rapidly, is extremely seasonal, and at the wages these black men received before unionism came to their rescue, their standard of living was but little, if any, above the chattel slave. What emancipation had given them in mobility it had taken away in security.*

- Oscar Ameringer

So attested the German-American Socialist author, artist, and organizer Oscar Ameringer in 1902 after attending a meeting with “the Negro union in their own labor temple.”<sup>1747</sup> Ameringer had spent decades lending his skills to the American labor movement; he emigrated from Bavaria to Cincinnati, Ohio at the age of 16 and joined the American Federation of Labor (AFL) as a cabinet maker, and later as a musician (a flutist and cornetist).<sup>1748</sup> In Columbus, Ohio he became editor of *Labor World*, a socialist periodical, where he first began a prolific career of left leaning journalism that earned him the unofficial honorific the “Mark Twain of American Socialism.”<sup>1749</sup> When he came to New Orleans with the AFL in 1902 to organize brewers and dockworkers, Ameringer held these Black workers in high esteem: “[W]ith a wisdom born of suffering,” he claimed that “[a]s strikers, there could be no better”—they might “lose the shine of their skins,

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<sup>1747</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1940), 199.

<sup>1748</sup> Bernard K. Johnpoll, “Ameringer, Oscar (1870-1943),” in *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left*, ed. Harvey Klehr and Bernard K. Johnpoll (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 5–6; Grace Poole, Irma C. Hayssen, and Solon De Leon, *The American Labor Who's Who* (New York: Hanford Press, 1925), 4.

<sup>1749</sup> Eric Blanc, “Red Oklahoma,” *Jacobin*, April 13, 2018, <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/04/teachers-strikes-oklahoma-socialism-sanders-unions>, accessed October 8, 2020.

grow thinner as the weeks go on,” but in the end, while “There were a few breaks on the part of the white men,” there were “none on the Negro side.”<sup>1750</sup>

Black dockworkers made up the rank and file of the historic interracial strikes of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century New Orleans docks, which sent shock waves through the white supremacist commercial and political establishment. State Senator Charles C. Cordill, a segregationist strongman with “almost dictatorial power” of Tensas Parish, was assigned to negotiate with the strikers.<sup>1751</sup> When Senator Cordill discovered the “50-50” arrangement whereby Black and white workers were each equally represented in both jobs and union decision making, he was furious: “The ideah! The ve’y ideah! White men conspirin’ with n----s against the honoah and prosper’ty of the gre’at po’t of N’yo’l’ns; against the honoah and propsepr’ty of the gre’at State of Louisianah itself!”<sup>1752</sup> Cordill had experience repressing Black-white labor solidarity: such as in 1878, when a coalition of white and Black farmers joined together in the “Country People’s Ticket,” he brutally massacred the interracial gathering.<sup>1753</sup> He would not have the same luck at suppressing Black organizing this time. His mid-negotiation outburst was quickly answered by the African-American jockey, screwmen, and Marxist labor organizer A.J. Ellis:

Please sit down, Senator. We’re not here to save the honor and prosper’ty of the great State of Louisiana. We is here to settle the strike. That’s what they sent you down here for. Your job is to see to it that we work the longest possible hours at the least possible pay. Our job is to make your crowd pay us the highest possible wages for the lowest possible amount of work. Now, let’s get down to business. What’s more, we’ve won the strike already, else you gentlemen wouldn’t be here to talk compromise, honor, and prosperity.<sup>1754</sup>

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<sup>1750</sup> Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 197-98.

<sup>1751</sup> Frederick W. Williamson and George T. Goodman, eds. *Eastern Louisiana: A History of the Watershed of the Ouachita River and the Florida Parishes*, 3 vols. (Monroe: Historical Record Association, 1939), 569-571.

<sup>1752</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 218. Quotation marks are in the text.

<sup>1753</sup> William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969), 72-73.

<sup>1754</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 218. Quotation marks are in the text.

While a logical enough explanation of labor demands—as few working hours for as much compensation as possible—A.J. Ellis articulates a battle not only over the quantity of work or wages but the control of time itself. In this remark, Ellis’s words seem to echo those of five freedmen in the Concordia Parish who were ordered to go to work when a plantation owner blasted a horn. Instead, the freedmen deserted the plantation, marched to the office of the local Freedman’s Bureau agent,<sup>1755</sup> and protested: “Haven’t we been working ten hours a day all summer for a share of the crop, and now you begin to keep our time!”<sup>1756</sup>

This chapter traces the postemancipation struggle over time. Time, in the capitalist framing of this period, was increasingly instrumentalized into an tool of profit and productivity, measurable by output and the rate of distribution. But amongst the counter-plantation dreams of Black labor activists and the communities that supported them, time was something sacred, communal, indestructible. The idea that its rules and regulations would belong in the hands of an adversarial managerial class was the unacceptable infringement of a basic phenomenological right. Dockworkers fought to set a limit on the amount of bales that could be loaded into ships during one day, thereby, as with the freedmen in Concordia Parish, fixing their day’s alienated labor to

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<sup>1755</sup> The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, usually referred to as simply the Freedmen's Bureau, was a U.S. government agency from 1865 to 1872, after the Civil War, to direct "provisions, clothing, and fuel ... for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children." The Freedmen's Bureau Bill, which established the Freedmen's Bureau on March 3, 1865, was only intended to last for one year after the end of the Civil War, but its scope expanded with the Reconstruction Acts. The Bureau's impact and political orientation varied greatly depending on region and year. See Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999); Paul A. Cimbala, "The Freedmen's Bureau, the Freedmen, and Sherman's Grant in Reconstruction Georgia, 1865-1867," *The Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 4 (1989): 597–632; James D. Schmidt, "'A Full-Fledged Government of Men': Freedmen's Bureau Labor Policy in South Carolina, 1865-1868," in *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 219–49; Claude F. Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Land Ownership* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

<sup>1756</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 69.

the task instead of the clock. I highlight the institution of dockworkers' activism, not only because of its inspirational victories in a period long considered "an age of accommodation" and defeat for Black activists,<sup>1757</sup> but because dockworkers recognized the all-important truism articulated nearly a century later by the painter Jean-Michel Basquiat: "Art is how we decorate space, music is how we decorate time."<sup>1758</sup> Dockworkers unions created spaces for new music – the "blues for dancing" to emerge. Such tunes were often emphasized by their slowness and their sexuality. Bassist Pops Foster, himself a longshoreman, describes the way the "good time people" looked and acted: "They'd dance with no coats on and their suspenders down. They'd jump around and have a bunch of fun. They wanted you to play slow blues and dirty songs so they could dance rough and dirty."<sup>1759</sup> Foster was not the only musician to associate slowness as a fundamental part of a new southern sexuality. Bassist Steve Brown called the music "dragged out," "bump music" and "slow drag music."<sup>1760</sup> "When musicians from other places . . . played hot, they just played fast," said Emmanuel Sayles. "That's what people called playing hot." But New Orleans musicians could "play hot and at the same time be playing in a groovy tempo where you [could] dance or clap your hands or join."<sup>1761</sup> When dance hall owners asked the Juvenile Protective Association, a white middle-class reformer organization, "What can we do to make our dance halls more respectable?" their answer: "Speed up your music."<sup>1762</sup> As can be seen, time was not only manipulated in labor negotiations but also musical and cultural spaces.

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<sup>1757</sup> Shawn Leigh Alexander, *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), xiv.

<sup>1758</sup> Anthony Blake Clark, "Concert Music: The Soul of Our Society Enshrined: Baltimore Choral Arts Society," Baltimore Choral Arts, September 5, 2017, [https://www.baltimorechoralarts.org/mod/dated\\_posts/concert-music-the-soul-of-our-society-enshrined](https://www.baltimorechoralarts.org/mod/dated_posts/concert-music-the-soul-of-our-society-enshrined), accessed October 9, 2020.

<sup>1759</sup> Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 37.

<sup>1760</sup> Steve Brown, Interview, April 22, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive; quoted in Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 43.

<sup>1761</sup> Charles Chamberlain, "Searching for 'The Gulf Coast Circuit': Mobility and Cultural Diffusion in the Age of Jim Crow, 1900-1930," *Jazz Archivist* 14 (2000): 10.

<sup>1762</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Jazz on the River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 35.

The construction of time is a political project that imperial hegemony has taken seriously since antiquity. Benedict Anderson, among many others, found that the construction of “homogenous empty time,” to be shared by all citizens, was essential to the construction of the “imagined community” of capitalist nation-states, so that ideas such as wages, which are paid hourly, could function.<sup>1763</sup> As Partha Chatterjee has observed, when a nation “encounters an impediment, it thinks it has encountered another time – something out of precapital, something that belongs to the pre-modern,” and something, therefore, that thus must be eradicated.<sup>1764</sup>

Time was not only a site of imperial imposition. Chatterjee’s comment draws attention to how “calendars from below” could disrupt the rhythms and epistemologies that dominant powers expected their supposedly docile subalterns to internalize. For the purposes of this dissertation, I was curious to trace how capitalist notions of time and work impacted Black musicians in turn of the century New Orleans. What did speed and tempo mean to Black musicians? Or, what were the meanings of the day and night as daily time markers? Robin D.G. Kelley explores the contradictory meanings of the night for Black artists and working people dreaming of and fighting for a new world in his book *Freedom Dreams*. ““The night time is the right time,” a time to reveal and fulfill desire, a time to dream, the world of the unknown, the hallucinatory,” according to Kelly, but also embedded within its placenta was deep terror and the possibility of extreme violence. “Besides its blackness, with all its mystery and elegance, richness and brilliance, the night is associated with hooded Klansmen and burning crosses, the long night of slavery, the oppression of dark skin.”<sup>1765</sup>

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<sup>1763</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 26. Anderson writes that “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.”

<sup>1764</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “The Nation in Heterogeneous Time,” *Futures* 37, no. 9 (2005): 925.

<sup>1765</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 157-158.

Yet even in the darkest of nights, namely, of antebellum slavery, nighttime was a space for secretive dancing—in sugar-houses, in barns at other plantations without a pass—and these dances would truly last all night. “Night is their day” complained one planter aware of the clandestine activities.<sup>1766</sup>

These subterranean phenomenologies reemerged during the day. Black communal work song had long figured as a site where time could become a dimension for communal reintegration, even during physical decimation through torturous work. Devonya Natasha Havis theorizes slavery’s work song, when labor was produced for the “monstrous other,” as a site that created both new values and shared phenomenologies: “Time functions not on behalf of utility but for the sake of the vernacular community that is engaged as group and individual in Work... the ‘work song’ transforms time and launches a critique of work as labor.”<sup>1767</sup> This communal experience of time is one interrelated to the values that developed in the counterplantation corridor described in Chapters 4 and 5, in the communal production of the gardening and bartering complex, and of the collective leadership within brassroots democracy formations. As Havis notes, “Work in the fields was communal, driven by interrelated rhythms in which all participated equally despite the existence of song leaders. Leaders could be rotated and were, in terms of role not style, interchangeable.” These songs reinforce communalistic values, creating “leadership in the context of the vernacular community,” and prioritize “an interrelatedness that is mindful of relationality

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<sup>1766</sup> Ebenezer Pettigrew as cited in David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). For examples of nighttime activities of slaves, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation, as well as Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 68-69; and Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana’s Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 231.

<sup>1767</sup> Devonya Natasha Havis, “Nimble or Not at All: The Ethico - Political Play of Indeterminancy” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, 2002), 145-148.

while insisting on individual expression”<sup>1768</sup> which “holds dissonant paradoxes in harmony while remaining relational, context aware, and [crucially] activist.”<sup>1769</sup> Holding dissonant paradoxes in harmony is quite akin to the multi-timbral, multi-rhythmic, and multi-emotional “heterogeneous sound ideal” heard in jazz.<sup>1770</sup>

Dockworking unions formalized the critique of work as labor, and its postbellum corollary of time as capital. It is no coincidence that a formative cadre of early jazz musicians – including Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Pops Foster, Danny Barker, Willie Parker, and Johnny St. Cyr – all worked on the docks in some capacity. Nor is it a coincidence that major Dockworker union leaders, such as William H. Penn, were both brass band managers and later Black union leaders. Nor is it a coincidence that union halls, such as Longshoreman’s Hall, were major cultural centers for both the new slow music and the Black Baptist church. The fact that these entities shared a roof allowed musicians such as Buddy Bolden to play through the night and attend mass next morning, infusing his new style with the communal affect of Black spirituals.

Although the history of labor activists appear in the following pages, I will not reproduce that historical chronology here.<sup>1771</sup> Although the stories of these movements appear in the following pages, I will not reproduce that historical chronology here. Instead I explore the major themes that animated Black-organized dockworkers’ relations to the new music embraced by their

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<sup>1768</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>1769</sup> Devonya N. Havis, “‘Now, How You Sound’: Considering a Different Philosophical Praxis,” *Hypatia* 29, no. 1 (2014): 237–52.

<sup>1770</sup> Olly Wilson, “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African American Music,” in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honour of Eileen Southern*, ed. Samuel Jr. Floyd and Josephine Wright (Michigan, IL: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 327–40.

<sup>1771</sup> For readers interested in learning about the complex fluctuations of these movements, including their victories, their defeats, their organizational strategies, and the health of the white-Black labor alliance on a year-to-year basis, I suggest consulting the volumes of Daniel Rosenberg and Eric Arnesen, whose authority on the subject continues to be unchallenged. Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

base. Union leaders never, to the best of my knowledge, directly commented on the music or their preference for it. However, their relationship to it was undeniable, for whether at parades, funerals, or even at protests, the influence of blues-based music was systemic within the dockworkers' unions. Thus, I utilize primary sources such as newspapers and musicians' testimonies, and reframe important details from existing literature, to demonstrate the pervasive influence of music on waterfront unions, and, in turn, union organizers and their working-class base on the music.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Broadly, it examines the relationship of brass band funerals, dockworkers organizers, and New Orleans's Black working-class culture. I am interested in this relationship because I believe one reason why New Orleans waterfront unions were uniquely strong was because of their relationship to this revolutionary music. My research suggests that the audiences and performance spaces of this music grew precisely because of the strength of organized Black labor. I begin with a brief overview of the economic and political strategies that marked "the New South," of which New Orleans's elite were an important force. I overview literature that explores the relative weakness of organized labor in the South as a whole. Such a perspective helps us appreciate just how significant New Orleans Black union activism was in the context of the early 1900s.

In the chapter's second section, I analyze how the music facilitated spaces of interracial solidarity, creating new languages to teach multiethnic workers how to understand each other as human, and deepening the goals of the labor movement to move beyond ensuring wages and jobs. I continue by analyzing the funerals of Black dockworkers, which were the best-attended funerals of their day, and some of the only Black funerals which included both white and Black mourners. One of these funerals, that of longshoremen president William H. Penn, deserves special mention, because Penn was the manager of the New Orleans-famous Excelsior Brass Band before becoming

longshoremen president. In fact, I argue that this connection is critical for understanding how the Black dockworker unions positioned themselves within Black culture. I suggest Penn's prolific and tireless presence in multiple spheres of Black cultural life was reflective of a larger strategy of the Black labor movement, of which he was such a prominent leader.

The third section focuses more specifically on the institutional framework of union halls. Many observers and historians of early jazz will surely recognize the names "Longshoremen's Hall," "Odd Fellows Hall," or "Union Sons Hall" (which became informally known as "Funky Butt Hall") as places where Buddy Bolden, Kid Ory, and a new generation of jazz-blues artists spread their music to a working-class audience. Each of these spaces were locations organized by Black labor, and member dues went to the paying of insurance, electricity, and even garbage collection for the building. The explosion of jazz and blues in these spaces, as well as the many Black Baptist churches that called union halls home, demonstrate their commitment to creating spaces of communal pleasure and spiritual healing as well as developing class-consciousness. In fact, I argue, these processes were one and the same. Through considering the music of Buddy Bolden, I suggest that both "organic" and "institutional" types of power were in play.

In the final section of this chapter, I analyze the integration of blues-based and Baptist-influenced music within the Black Labor Day parades. By introducing arguments from work that traces jazz and resistance ontologies in the books of Charles Hersch and Fred Ho, and invoking important insights by philosophers who have studied the nature of time and social organization, including Lefebvre and Foucault, I argue that the musicians embedded within these spectacular processions were fighting to decolonize everyday life, starting with the experience of time. This argument is not innovative in itself, but it has not yet been understood in the context of Labor Day parades and waterfront labor activism more generally. I hope to demonstrate how musicians

organized a dissident critique of capitalist ontology by developing a new structure of feeling, which was participatorily constructed by the union audiences and their families, whose attendance and dancing also embodied knowledge.

Through the conclusion of these interrelated studies, I hope to show that early twentieth century Black American music, whether brass band parades or smaller early jazz ensembles, gained expressive power through the fusion of rituals and overlapping membership between Black labor movements on the docks and more informal forms of working-class activity related to the blues people of the port city. In both their musical expressions and their activism, Black dockworkers articulated a distinct rhythm of freedom and autonomy that is invisible if we restrict our sources the Black print sphere. “Drawing on a shared language,” notes Arnesen, “working-class black activists contributed distinct ideas about the relationship between labor and capital that contrasted sharply with the ideology espoused by middle-class black politicians and journalists of the era.”<sup>1772</sup> But these workers did more: they embodied it. They enacted what Robin D.G. Kelley has called the “task [which] might have been the most important of all” by creating “alternatives to Jim Crow capitalism” during the darkest nights of Southern violence against Black peoples by activating and reimagining communal phenomenology and a shared sense of time. This resilient resource, one might say, stood the test of time.<sup>1773</sup>

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<sup>1772</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 52.

<sup>1773</sup> Robin Kelley in Jordan T. Camp, “Black Radicalism, Marxism, and Collective Memory: An Interview with Robin D. G. Kelley,” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013): 230.

## 7.1 Overview of the Labor Movement and the Political Economy of the New South

If you are unfamiliar of New Orleans's waterfront unions but you do possess a passion about early jazz, you are not alone. A common assumption within jazz scholarship is that jazz musicians did not engage directly in the struggles over power and rights in the 1890s and especially by the 1900s. In fact, more commentators believe that working-class Black New Orleanians ceased to engage in politics altogether, at least in an organized way. The words of Thomas Brothers, in his invaluable study of Louis Armstrong, is one example of this trend. Brothers suggests that the new music filled the space in Black consciousness that political activism once held. "The same moment the Robert Charles riots made clear how desperate the situation was, Bolden's star was rising. Political power was in decline, musical power in the ascent. They heard Bolden's brassy defiance as both a proclamation of vernacular values from the plantations and a new, urbanized professionalism."<sup>1774</sup> Sociologist Leon Litwack, writing more generally about the Black south, makes a similar point. Litwack notes that "dissent had proven to be a risky enterprise in the New South," and that large portion of Black youth "became essentially interior exiles...None of them had access to the more privileged functions and organizations of black society...Operating in a kind of underworld emerging in the 1890s, mostly in the cities and towns, young blacks tested the limits of permissible dissent and misconduct." Their goal was to "avoid a suicidal confrontation" that political activism would all but ensure, while nonetheless "creat[ing] and sustain[ing] a culture of their own."<sup>1775</sup> Brothers and Litwack, writing in very different disciplines for very different

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<sup>1774</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 154, 283–84.

<sup>1775</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 428, 434.

audiences, share a theoretical lens which is eager and willing to invest in “hidden transcripts” of Black cultural organizing, which are said to be independent from formal political organizing by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, these spaces of interior exile take on a certain strength precisely because its distance from formal political organizing allows and compels its expressive potential to expand.

In the following chapter, I challenge this notion. Reexamining the history of Black political activism in New Orleans during the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s may help us move beyond a dichotomization between formal politics and what some scholars have referred to as the “pre-political” utterances of jazz.<sup>1776</sup> Indeed, instead of seeing the transition of *Plessy v. Ferguson* to Jim Crow as a nadir in Black political resistance to white supremacy, it is probably more accurate to describe it as a transformation; a strategic reorientation from struggle for the vote, to the struggle to obtain power over the labor process on the docks. We would do well to remember that from 1887 through 1923, New Orleans was home to perhaps the most powerful Black Union, not only in the South, but in the entire country: the Black longshoremen union.<sup>1777</sup> Dockworkers’ habit of shutting down the docks brought the city’s power elite to its knees so frequently that the city of New Orleans, which governed the United States’s second largest port, had to create several commissions to study the “problem of the docks.”

“One of the greatest drawbacks to New Orleans is the working of the white and negro races on terms of equality,” expressed the results of one such investigation, the City of New Orleans’s

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<sup>1776</sup> Reid Mitchell, *All on a Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>1777</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 189.

*Report of the Port Investigation Commission to the Louisiana General Assembly.*<sup>1778</sup> The leadership of a strike in 1907, named the Executive Committee, was made up of twelve white and twelve Black screwmen, a fact that shocked the aforementioned Senator C.C. Cordill. “Do I understand you to say that twelve white men and twelve negroes dominate the commerce of this port?” an astonished Cordill asked. “Well, we are practically under negro government.” This powerful phrase uttered by a suddenly powerless (or at least, less powerful) white supremacist shows how the Commission was terrified of this “half-and-half compact,” which had been carefully negotiated between Black and white dockworkers through “six weeks of talk and an endless number of special meetings,” and which had resulted in the fact that “whites and the blacks are now amalgamated as they have never been before in this city.”<sup>1779</sup> The commission denounced this “bad condition” of “social equality,” and wrote that they “were of one accord in saying that such equality of races as exists today on the Levee was a disgrace to a southern city.” Their conclusion explicitly recommended the separation of the races on the levee for “sociological reasons.” Waterfront unions did not comply.<sup>1780</sup> Labor activist George McNeill, writing in 1888, came to a different conclusion but did not disagree on the importance of the dockworkers unions and their particular interracial power-sharing agreements. “The formation of this association of trades and labor unions is confessed to have done more to break the color line in New Orleans than any other thing that has been done since the emancipation of the slaves, and to-day [*sic*] the white

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<sup>1778</sup> *Report of the Port Investigation Commission to the Louisiana General Assembly*, May 28, 1908, quoted in Rosenberg, Daniel. *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, 142.

<sup>1779</sup> *Picayune*, October 30, 1902.

<sup>1780</sup> *Picayune*, March 28, 1908; see also Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 154.

and colored laborers of that city are as fraternal in their relations as they are in any part of the country.”<sup>1781</sup> As we will see, McNeill’s words may have been an understatement.

In addition to arguments suggesting the hegemony of “prepolitical” formations in Black working-class New Orleans, conventional wisdom often states that white racism in the 1890s prohibited Black workers from participating in trade unionism. More recently, historians Eric Arnesen and Daniel Rosenberg have challenged this chronology, and convincingly demonstrated that interracial cooperation survived the 1890s and persisted “intact” until the more general destruction of union power in 1923, despite deadly interruptions in 1894 and 1904.<sup>1782</sup>

For many commentators, Southern hostility to organized labor has had historic, even world-historic, implications. In 1931, the economist George Mitchell linked the South’s lack of organized labor to the continuity of plantation power structures. “The South,” he wrote in the 1930s, “is still an authoritarian society. The cotton industry has reproduced for its owner the position of power held by the masters of plantations.”<sup>1783</sup> C. Vann Woodward, twenty years later, built off of this conclusion when he wrote that by the 1880s the South “came to be regarded...as a bulwark of, instead of a menace to, the new capitalist economic order.”<sup>1784</sup> More recent scholarship continues this tradition. Gerald Friedman has demonstrated that at times when Union membership grew in part of the United States, it was faltering in the South, with implications for the whole country.

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<sup>1781</sup> George E. McNeill, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today, Comprising a History of Capital and Labor, and Its Present Status* (Boston: M. W. Hazen, 1886), 168.

<sup>1782</sup> See Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); see also Rick Halpern, “Organized Labour, Black Workers and the Twentieth-Century South: The Emerging Revision,” *Social History* 19, no. 3 (1994): 359–83.

<sup>1783</sup> George Sinclair Mitchell, *Textile Unionism and the South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1931), p. vi.

<sup>1784</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1951), 3-4.

There were periods of extraordinary union growth and strength in the northern states, bringing unions there to levels comparable to unions in Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe. But northern unions were undermined by union weakness in the American South. Union weakness there undermined unionization and social reform throughout the United States...Of the 160,000 union members in 1880, fewer than 6 percent lived in the South.<sup>1785</sup>

It did not have to be this way. Land reform and the economic reconstruction of the United States south was a major goal of freedpeople and some of their more radical allies, and land monopolization by the planter class was bitterly fought. Challenging their power briefly democratized Southern society writ large. As Robin D.G. Kelley notes, during Reconstruction “there was an interracial vision—which was essentially a proletarian rural to urban vision—in which the role of the state was to distribute wealth, eliminate the color line, abolish state violence and racial violence, and create a peace economy built on sustaining the entire population as opposed to the wealthy.”<sup>1786</sup> But in the final analysis, the forces of reaction seized the day. As Steven Hahn explains, “the War of Rebellion [the Civil War] served to energize those forces most committed to advancing a capitalist economy and to defeat those who were most opposed.”<sup>1787</sup> And the consolidation of white supremacy was the path toward this brave new world. Gerald Friedman makes the case rather directly; “New South industrialists used the political hegemony secured by white racism to promote a form of industrialization compatible with continued elite rule: industrialization ‘acceptable to planter and industrialist alike.’”<sup>1788</sup>

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<sup>1785</sup> Gerald Friedman, “The Political Economy of Early Southern Unionism: Race, Politics, and Labor in the South, 1880-1953,” *The Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 2 (2000): 386.

<sup>1786</sup> Robin Kelley in Jordan T. Camp, “Black Radicalism, Marxism, and Collective Memory: An Interview with Robin D. G. Kelley,” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013): 218.

<sup>1787</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 360.

<sup>1788</sup> Gerald Friedman, “The Political Economy of Early Southern Unionism,” 386, 390.

But the “wages of whiteness” were not immediately accepted in lieu of cash payment and union power by white Louisianan laborers. The Knights of Labor, the Greenbackers, and later white and Black interracial labor coalitions in the sugar parishes were a real and present danger to the project of the New South for decades. These formations prompted a ferocious barrage of intimidation, violence, and fraud by white Democrats in Louisiana. In 1878, some local newspapers in the parishes outside of New Orleans began openly threatening retaliation against white workers who would organize alongside Blacks. For instance, the Natchitoches *People's Vindicator* warned that it would be publishing a list of white men who failed to register to vote. “We regard and will treat all who do not aid us as negroes,” warned the *People's Vindicator*, “whether their skins be white or black.”<sup>1789</sup>

The potential politics of this force was still a threat to white supremacists and planters across the state. As the conservative *Thibodaux Sentinel* wrote, a Black and white populist fusion was to be resisted at all costs. “If the[ir] improbable [victory] should happen,” they asked, “[W]ill they have a populist administration, advocating and propagating populist doctrines and fads?” Such a political system could result in such “crimes” as “government loans on farm products; government ownership and control of railroads, telegraph and telephone lines, and in fact of almost everything in sight; in a word, paternalism of such a pronounced type has to hardly be distinguishable from *communism*.”<sup>1790</sup>

Walter Benjamin once polemicized that “Behind every fascism, there is a failed revolution.”<sup>1791</sup> This seems to have been true of the South. A populist-Black republican alliance

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<sup>1789</sup> *People's Vindicator*, Natchitoches, La., October 19, 1878, quoted in Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 78.

<sup>1790</sup> *Thibodaux Sentinel*, February 8, 1896.

<sup>1791</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Théories Du Fascisme Allemand. (à Propos Du Collectif Guerre et Guerriers Édité Par Ernst Jünger),” *Lignes* 1, no. 13 (1991): 57–81.

could have finally defeated the reactionary hegemony of capital and perhaps altered, at least institutionally, the operation of white supremacy, especially in the plantation belt. But it was not to be. The Democrats went on an all-out attack on Black people and Black culture, and worked overtime to ensure that astroturfed fascism was to be the dominant response of the white masses.<sup>1792</sup> Consider, for instance, the words of Edward Ayers on North Carolina populists:

With the national Populist party broken and dispirited, the Populists— and their opponents— realized that North Carolina Populists could hold onto their offices only by combining once again with black Republicans in 1898. The Democrats embarked upon a coordinated campaign to push all blacks and their allies from office. Black speakers were misrepresented, black "outrages" fabricated, black assertion exaggerated. Leading black politicians such as George White tried to calm the waters, but white Democratic papers would not give them a chance. Things that had nothing to do with politics— black bicyclists refusing the right of way to white women pedestrians, black men resisting arrest for drunkenness, a black man crowding a white man to get a window seat on a train— were portrayed as partisan political acts. "Such exasperating occurrences would not happen but for the fact that the negro party is in power in North Carolina," one white paper charged, "and that there are negro magistrates and other negro officials in office, which emboldens bad negroes to display their evil, impudent and mean natures." The height of black audacity, in white eyes, came when George White and his family refused to move from a section reserved for whites at a circus. "Will not the white men of North Carolina resent this insult and vote to forever quell such negro insolence and arrogance [?]" a white paper quaked.<sup>1793</sup>

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<sup>1792</sup> "Astroturfing" refers to a process by which apparent grassroots movements are funded and organized by powerful institutional interests that do not share a class identity with their funders. For a discussion of astroturfed movements versus popular grassroots mobilizations, see Vilma Luoma-aho, "Understanding Stakeholder Engagement: Faith-Holders, Hateholders & Fakeholders," *RJ-IPR: Research Journal of the Institute for Public Relations* 2, no. 1 (2015). For a discussion of how corporate and propertied interests were the main ideological and organizational forces behind the explosion of white supremacy in the post-Reconstruction south, see Joseph Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>1793</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 300.

Some commentators have explicitly linked described these right-wing white supremacists' movements as incipient forms of fascism. Clyde Woods, for instance, argues that "Louisiana had become the epicenter of Southern fascism...the leaders of the New South increasingly redefined progress as a southern variant of fascism: a herrenvolk movement comically referred to as 'Jim Crow.'"<sup>1794</sup> Similarly, Robert Rydell has characterized the ideologies that underlay the New South as resonant with the fascist project, as they both project "a classless society of Anglo-Saxons, ready to lead the rest of the nation in the imperial duties of subjugation and uplift."<sup>1795</sup> This alliance of capital, the state, the ideological reproduction of white supremacy certainly squares with any contemporary conceptualization of fascism.

It is also significant that the group of industrialists that led the New South into the 20<sup>th</sup> century were extremely committed to enforcing Black docility, whether in issues of social decorum, suffrage, or, especially, labor militancy. Historian J. Morgan Kousser argues that they epitomize a "reactionary revolution," whereby "white solidarity" was consolidated especially through disenfranchisement and segregation of Black populations. But such a reactionary revolution was necessary precisely because "the cooperation of Black and lower-class whites had given strength" to "republican, Fusion, Populist, and independent movements" which threatened both capital and class privilege. These movements were so threatening, argues Kousser, because they were partially successful in "submerg[ing] the racism which...white Southerners must have felt."<sup>1796</sup> Segregation was needed to trump solidarity.

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<sup>1794</sup> Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn*, 59.

<sup>1795</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 77-89. Rydell, who analyzes the phenomenon of World's Fairs Exhibitions, maintains that part of their goal was to keep "blacks in check by defining progress as self-improvement along industrial lines and by persuading blacks that builders of the New South would take their best interest to heart."

<sup>1796</sup> Rydell, who analyzes the phenomenon of World's Fairs Exhibitions, maintains that part of their goal was to keep "blacks in check by defining progress as self-improvement along industrial lines and by persuading blacks

At times, white supremacists explicitly connected Black disenfranchisement to their attempts to attract capital investment in the South. In 1891, the *Daily Picayune* mobilized its readership against a “force bill” which would have mandated federal election monitoring. They lamented its existence and suggested it was a threat to their economic development. “All the forces of commercial and industrial involvement are moving southward. Here are opportunities which are offered by no other region. Here are natural wealth and natural advantages of the highest class waiting development and European and American capitalists are ready to develop them.” But federal election monitoring, apparently, threatened all of that. “The force bill mean[s] local civil conflict, race war, chronic commotion, all interest disturbed, all values unsettled, capital scared away and commercial and industrial development wholly stagnated.”<sup>1797</sup> The implication here was that a federal body would prevent the repression of the Black vote, thus leading to capital divestment, because, conceivably, Black political power threatened economic development.

The interracial waterfront workers union were a serious abrogation to this project. Once the unified central body of the Dock and Cotton Council came into existence in 1903, which designated equal representation of white and black delegates, its activists, in the words of Ameringer, “wiped out the Jim Crow law in the chief centers of their lives—[the] working place and union hall.”<sup>1798</sup> Not only did they interrupt the Jim Crow trend by desegregating the workplace during the critical decades of 1890-1910, but Black waterfront union organizers were deeply committed to cultivating a militant working-class consciousness that identified capital as their

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that builders of the New South would take their best interest to heart.” See Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions*, 77-89..

<sup>1797</sup> *Times-Picayune*, February 8, 1891; see also Emily Epstein Landau, “‘Spectacular Wickedness’: New Orleans, Prostitution, and the Politics of Sex, 1897–1917” (Ph.D., New Haven, Yale University, 2005), 138.

<sup>1798</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 214.

antagonist. Major Black dockworker organizers often expressed the need for the Black working class, and indeed, all working classes, to become conscious of their own identity and power as a class. Consider the words of longshoreman Thomas P. Woodland. When he published these words in *The Longshoreman* in 1916, he was president of the Black Central Labor Council, which represented all of Black organized labor in New Orleans.

The capitalist class owns the factories, land, ships, railroads, in fact all the means by which wealth is produced and distribute...in order to emancipate ourselves from the influence of the [capitalist] class that is hostilely arrayed against the wage-working class, the wage-working class must organize and oppose the power of capital with the power of organized labor and must champion their own interests on the docks, in the cotton presses, the team drivers, in fact, every class of labor that is connected with the shipping interest of the port of New Orleans...The class-conscious power of capital with all its camp-followers, is confronted with the class-conscious power of labor...There is no power on earth strong enough to thwart the will of such a majority conscious of itself. The earth and all its wealth belong to all.<sup>1799</sup>

Woodland's words demonstrate how committed Black organizers were to facilitating the emergence of class-consciousness. He was certainly not the only radical in the Black union leadership. Black screwmen leader A.J. Ellis was one of the leading Black laborers in the union movement. One newspaper suggested he had been a dock organizer for twenty-five years during the 1907 strike. In his early life, he belonged to a tradition of African American jockeys who turned

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<sup>1799</sup> Thomas P. Woodland, "An Open Letter on Affiliation." *The Longshoreman* 6, No. 7 (May 1915), 5, quoted in Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 323-324. Such beliefs, as Arsen notes, however, did not lead Woodland to embrace either the Socialist party or the IWW. Rather, he admitted that "I am not one of those who believe that capital and labor are natural enemies. On the contrary, the welfare of both is best promoted by a harmonious understanding between the two.... Let us ask nothing more than justice from the employing class, but accept nothing less. I believe that 'Labor and Capital should always go hand in hand in the God-like work of promoting the greatest good of the greatest number.': The solution to labor's plight, Woodland concluded, lay in membership in the ILA and the AFL. As the "channel of expression and activity for the united labor hosts of DOCK WORKERS," the ILA has "succeeded in establishing better wages, shorter hours, better conditions, protection of your job, pensions, and such just demands as every dock worker wants."

the sports world upside down with their dominant performances on the tracks. The Kentucky Derby was won by a majority of Black jockeys before the 1902 Jim Crow law which prohibited their participation.<sup>1800</sup> Ellis took advantage of his stature in the horseracing to travel, and “and in that capacity [had] seen much of the world.” In Europe, this part of his life came to an end. According to his fellow organizer and friend Ameringer, “When he had become too heavy for jockeying, a disaster which overtook him [*sic*] during a European tour, he secured a job on one of the boats of the Hamburg-American Line. His intentions had been to desert after landing in God’s Country, but liking his job and having no other in prospect, he had stuck.” He became a member of the German Seamen, which Ameringer explains was “the reddest of the German unions.” Apparently, this experience affected Ellis deeply, and he acquired “a fair smattering of German, and more than a fair understanding of the *Communist Manifesto*. He had swallowed whole the theory of the class struggle and uncompromisingly regarded the [American Federation Labor president] Gompers notion of the identity of interest between capital and labor as high treason to the proletariat of the world.”<sup>1801</sup>

By 1903, he was fully committed to New Orleans’s dockworkers unionizing. He would often tell the press in their frequent coverage of him, “I am a union man and will be until death.”<sup>1802</sup>

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<sup>1800</sup> 15 winners of the Kentucky Derby were ridden by African American Jockeys, compared to 13 by white jockeys during the years from 1875 to 1902. At the Kentucky Derby in 1890, the Louisville Courier-Journal praised the Black competitor Issac Murphey, “who piloted [his horse] Riley to such a great victory” that he should be celebrated as “the greatest jockey that ever mounted a horse.” After the 1902 law, many went abroad to keep competing; as Black rider Jimmy Winkfield noted, “I went to Moscow and won the Emperor’s Purse that year, worth about 50,000 rubles... We really cleaned up. He was soon “enjoying a valet, a suite at the National Hotel in Moscow, and caviar for breakfast. During the Russian Revolution, Winkfield fled Russia and resettled in France, where he continued to race. See <sup>1800</sup> Michael Leeds and Hugh Rockoff, “Beating the Odds: Black Jockeys in the Kentucky Derby, 1870-1911,” Working Paper (National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2019), 8; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 15, 1890; Edward Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys: The Lives and Times of the Men Who Dominated America’s First National Sport* (Rocklin, CA: Forum Prima Publishing, 1999), 322, 6. For a discussion of Black mobility and horse riding in the Caribbean under slavery, see David Lambert, “Master–Horse–Slave: Mobility, Race and Power in the British West Indies, c.1780–1838,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 618–41.

<sup>1801</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 217.

<sup>1802</sup> *Picayune*, September 29, 1903.

In newspapers of the time, his presence in meetings is described in dynamic terms, where he was said to “orate...for half an hour with volubility and a vehemence that showed his deep earnestness” with a “very strong voice and cast iron longs.”<sup>1803</sup> Ellis was a critical negotiator with the white screwmen’s union in the early 1900s when he and other Black screwmen—who were the most skilled and highest paid labor on the docks—came to a half and half agreement (previously, this agreement was reserved for longshoremen and other dockworker labor). “We, the colored Screwmen, have not departed from any of our agreements except that we were tired of being used as an instrument to starve our brother workmen, the white men, and who have the same right to live that we have,”<sup>1804</sup> reads a statement signed by Ellis. The white screwmen apparently resonated with Ellis; as their representative noted in the *Picayune*, they could make no progress “as long as black was pitted against the white in the race for levee work.” While there might have been agreement to this in principle, it still required “six weeks of talk and an endless number of special meetings,” with the final meeting not concluding until 11 o’clock.<sup>1805</sup>

Although the meeting was “shrouded in secrecy,” A.J. Ellis was likely a significant organizer in the 1903 convention of Southern dockworkers, where delegates arrived from across the United States South as well as Veracruz, Mexico, which still maintained an active Creole of Color community (see Chapter 3).<sup>1806</sup> The *Picayune* considered it to be of the highest global importance, calling it “one of the most significant moves in the labor world in recent times” and considered it akin to a new international.<sup>1807</sup> New Orleans’s important role in this movement of

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<sup>1803</sup> *Times Picayune*, February 21, 1904; quoted in Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 30.

<sup>1804</sup> *Picayune*, May 4, 1903.

<sup>1805</sup> *Picayune*, October 30, 1902.

<sup>1806</sup> Mary Gehman, “L.A. Creole-Mexican Connection,” Dville Press, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://dvillepress.com/LCMC.php>.

<sup>1807</sup> *Daily Picayune*, May 19, 20, 23, 24, 1903; quoted in Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 75.

dockworkers in the Gulf of Mexico shows how its movement resonated with “the motley crews that manned the ships and labored in port cities around the terraqueous globe, [who] provid[ed] the labor that made possible a dynamic, throbbing, increasingly powerful system of global capitalism,”<sup>1808</sup> as Marcus Rediker has described the port city proletariat. Their “collective bonding and militant action” in seafaring spaces created a new “community based on class, on ship and ashore,”<sup>1809</sup> and Ellis’s life story spoke to this.

The radical sentiments and organizational experience of Woodland and Ellis is one medium by which Black dockworkers understood and expressed their struggle. But the role of expressive culture may have played an even larger role in the development of a class identity amongst working-class Black New Orleanians. In addition to articulating new values and new expressions of communal time and identity, such music disseminated Black workers’ message to white workers, helping construct new alliances and interracial spaces based on a common culture. As Rosenberg notes:

Over the decades, music became a common ground that promoted interracial interaction. Unionism bore on a range of activities involving workers of both races: social, athletic, fraternal, religious, cultural, recreational. At levee union dances, parades, funerals and parties, Black dockworker-musicians experimented with the new improvised forms of the period before crowds of levee laborers, including whites.<sup>1810</sup>

The following section will survey the use of music over four decades of Black dockworker activism. Their mobilization of space and sound made public the Black waterfront labor movement at its inception. Music served as point of potential congregating amongst dockworkers that could

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<sup>1808</sup> Marcus Rediker, “Afterword: Reflections on the Motley Crew as Port City Proletariat,” *International Review of Social History* 64, no. S27 (2019): 256.

<sup>1809</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1810</sup> Rosenberg, Daniel. “Race, Labor and Unionism: New Orleans Dockworkers, 1900-1910.” Master’s Thesis, City University of New York, 1985, 311.

overcome the “misunderstanding and friction”<sup>1811</sup> that erupted before the existence of the Dock and Cotton Council.

For the purposes of our discussion, I draw attention to the use of music during four critical movements. I have already examined the use of music in the 1872 strike which launched the first Black waterfront union, the Longshoremen’s Protective Union Benevolent Association (LPUBA), in Chapter 5. It receives special attention because of its link to earlier legacies of Reconstruction brass bands, also described in the previous chapter, became repurposed for labor militancy. I similarly highlighted an 1880 protest that involved white proprietors of musical establishments. I argued that their involvement reflected connections between musical entertainment and Black labor worlds. In the following section, I expand this notion of an integrated labor organizing and musical New Orleans underworld by considering the role that lawn parties played in fostering an interracial working-class movement. I argue that these spaces provide one clue as to how white and Black dockworkers were able to withstand the attempts of shipping companies and government officials to divide their movement. These were extensions of how dockworkers’ union meeting culture itself was musical, and their sonic embodiments of their political commitment educated white radicals as to the strength and nuance of their dissident counterculture.

## **7.2 From Lawn Parties to Funerals: Black Music Challenges the Wages of Whiteness**

*The black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don’t be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man’s definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper*

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<sup>1811</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (1940; Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 214.

*name. You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers—your lost, younger brothers. And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it... We cannot be free until they are free.*

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*<sup>1812</sup>

Pops Foster was one of the most important bass players New Orleans ever produced. His career as a sideman spanned the bands of King Oliver to bebop avatar Charlie Parker. But like so many musicians of his generation, he was born into planation poverty. After his family moved to New Orleans at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he got his start working on the docks. His words about his hybrid life capture the duality of the night for New Orleans's Black dockworker-musicians who labored in levies and lawn parties during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "It was pretty rough playing and working a full[-time] job too," he explained. Sleep deprivation and force of will were required to get through the weekend, and "Monday was your roughest day."

You might play a dance from eight that night till four o'clock the next morning. You'd go home then, hang up your tuxedo, put on your overalls and leave about 5:00 a.m. and catch the streetcar to the stables. There you'd pick up your mule team at 6:00 a.m. and start out for the docks to pick up a load at 7:00 a.m... You could [then] sleep because your mules would follow the wagon in front.

Even on Mondays, Foster might have a gig with the Magnolia Band in the Irish District, so after getting home at four o'clock in the afternoon, he would "get a little shuteye, and start playing at eight o'clock."<sup>1813</sup>

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<sup>1812</sup> James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dial Press, 1993), 9-10.

<sup>1813</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard*, ed. Tom Stoddard and Ross Russell (Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 40.

The ranks of professional musicians and dockworkers both exploded as Black rural to urban migrants to New Orleans increased exponentially in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Musicians as diverse as Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, George Lewis, Pops Foster, and Willie Parker all spent a significant part of their early lives loading and unloading cotton, tobacco, bananas, coal and other commodities whose distribution through the New Orleans port was so essential to New Orleans's reemergence as the financial center of the South. And many jazz musicians' parents and loved ones also found employment here, such as trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen's father, who moved from Lockport in 1890 to work on the docks.

Willie Parker is another musician who played music throughout the night while toiling on the docks during the day. His words help us understand the regimented time discipline of the life of a dockworker-musician. Interviewed in 1958, fifty years since his dockworking days, Parker still vividly remembered the exacting conditions of his cargo. "I hauled tobacco, tobacco used to come in hogsheads then, you know, great big hogsheads, couldn't put but four of 'em on a wagon" he remembered. But Parker's testimony brings forth an aspect of the docks that Foster's omits: his participation in organized labor. During the 1907 historic interracial dockworker's strike that brought New Orleans's commercial elites to their knees and shut down the port, Parker had an interaction with another worker about a strikebreaker—a scab—who had been assassinated. "There was a fella' [who] said, fella' said, "Man, a scab just now got killed." "Yeah," I said, "Well, ought to kill all them old scabs, people striking, and they don't wanna help them out." Parker may have changed his support of the death sentence when he, "Come find out [it was] a friend of mine—my father's god child."<sup>1814</sup> Nonetheless, the ease with which Parker utters this line, its flow and

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<sup>1814</sup> Willie Parker, Interview, November 1, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

rhythm, is striking. Almost fifty years after the strike, the importance of labor solidarity was still common sense.

Starting in 1902, Louisiana, and its musicians, began to celebrate Labor Day. For a city in which music imbued almost all public rituals, especially those of a political nature, it was destined to be a very musical event. Over several weeks, the festival was a topic of “all-absorbing conversation” among union organizers, with arrangements regarding “route, programme[*sic*], order of formation, etc.” requiring minute planning. It was an event predicted to “excel, both in number of men in line and the interest of the occasion, any ever seen in this city.”<sup>1815</sup>

The anticipation leading up to the Labor Day of 1902 was amplified by the announcement of a very illustrious guest. Samuel Gompers, the President of the Association of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), chose to celebrate Labor Day in New Orleans that year. Gompers spoke to a “large congregation of [white] working people” in the afternoon and then addressed “the colored organization” in Globe Hall, downtown. The march, as was custom with AFL Labor Day parades across the country, was segregated, and the gatherings afterwards were no different. He had nothing but positive experiences and perceived the labor movement in New Orleans to be unexpectedly strong:

What I have witnessed has surprised me a little....I have attended many Labor-day [*sic*] celebrations in the northern states, and this one in New Orleans stands alongside of any of them for numbers in parade, in interest in the advanced labor movements and for the fruits of organized labor....This is the first time the Louisiana celebration has been held on the first Monday [of September], and the change will result in many good benefits. It will bring your labor organization in closer touch with the labor organizations of the whole country.<sup>1816</sup>

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<sup>1815</sup> *Picayune*, August 30, 1902.

<sup>1816</sup> *Picayune*, September 2, 1902.

Gompers would soon be surprised again. For, in 1903, the interracial Dock and Cotton Council—the heart and soul of New Orleans’s entire labor movement—broke from the Central Trades and Labor Council (CTLCL) on the issue of a segregated parade. As previously discussed, the Dock and Cotton Council created an institutional framework that mandated interracial collaboration in decision making and 50/50 white-Black hiring on the docks and equal decision-making powers between the two groups. They plainly did not wish to engage in a celebration of labor that reproduced Jim Crow, and were willing to upset the rest of the New Orleans labor establishment to make this so, even if it meant going it alone with their own parade. In articles that the *Picayune* devoted to this crisis, it emerged that the 1902 parade was not as harmonious it had been made it out to be. The powerful screwmen, both white and Black, “did not march at all” in the 1902 parade in protest over its segregation.<sup>1817</sup> The Black Central Labor Union had been invited to march in the third position, at the rear of the white parade, but they refused as well. “We thought we were entitled to [at least] second place [in the parade],” they explained.<sup>1818</sup>

Eventually, the white screwmen gave in, and did march in a segregated Labor Day in 1903. But for several months, the Dock and Cotton Council planned a “mixed” Labor Day parade that defied not only the local CTCL, but a wing of the mainstream international labor movement. This decision brought immense internal strife to New Orleans’s white labor organization. “Their scheme to parade Labor Day with both white and colored organizations,” complained a CTCL representative, “will not find favor with their international headquarters, and will be frowned down.” Another explained even more dramatically: “We regard it as a direct insult, a slap in our face and an attempt to weaken our cause with the heads of the American Federation of Labor. It

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<sup>1817</sup> *Picayune*, May 3, 1903.

<sup>1818</sup> *Picayune*, July 29, 1903.

has always been the policy to endeavor, so far as possible, to separate the white and colored unions, and, as you know, only whites can belong to the central body.” Expulsion of the Cotton Council was threatened from the CTCL. Finally, the implications were considered by one (non-dockworker) white labor activist as a precedent for desegregation of public life: “Mixing of the unions will result disastrously and every leader in the Dock and Cotton Council knows it. If the Dock and Cotton Council wishes to parade on Labor with white and colored unions side by side, then they should feel equally at liberty to give joint picnics, etc.”<sup>1819</sup>

Yet such “joint picnics” were already well underway in New Orleans’s interracial musical nightlife. Black musicians and white dockworkers were at the forefront in a revolution of values that challenged the status quo of Jim Crow in the workplace, and more fundamentally, the power of capital itself. As Hersch notes, “the [new] music flourished in racially mixed milieus and pockets of leisure set up in opposition to routinization and industrialization.”<sup>1820</sup> While I recognize the serious limitations of this project and the very real possibility of white working-class violence, it is nonetheless striking how much evidence in primary source documents speaks to the strength of interracial solidarity and, simultaneously, the repeated occurrence of music in dockworking spaces. As Samuel Gompers said, “What I have witnessed has surprised me a little.”

As we will see, musicians were a big part of constructing an improvised unity. Pops Foster’s description of the hiring process on the docks helps us understand how this came to be. In his autobiography, Foster describes how at the brink of dawn, longshoremen and screwmen reported to the pier en masse to look for work, and were picked if a ship was ready for loading or unloading. But when the gangs were picked, many job-seekers still remained, unhired. They went

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<sup>1819</sup> *Picayune*, May 3, 1903.

<sup>1820</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 84.

over to the other piers in search of work, or waited for ships to come in. Under the half and half clause, selected teams had to be half white and half Black, which prevented wage undercutting and created a mechanism of interracial cooperation. These institutions, over time, led to some interesting and compelling interactions. Foster recalls in 1908 that:

Joe Sullivan was the union leader for the [white] longshoremen, and he had all the best musicians working on longshore work. That's what I did most of the time I wasn't playing. Joe lived out in the Irish Channel and would throw lawn parties on Monday nights. He'd ask the guys who worked for him to come out and play. Joe took care of us and if a good boat was coming in, he'd send word around for the guys to come to work. If a ship needed tying up, it took about ten minutes and you got paid.<sup>1821</sup>

Apparently, Joe specifically tried to “get the word out” to hook the musicians up. Foster’s relationship with Sullivan did not end there; Foster implies he even tried to give him bass lessons: “Joe tried to play string bass, but he wasn’t any good.”<sup>1822</sup>

The significance of this comment may elude first reading. Joe Sullivan was the president of the white longshoremen’s union. He was not a random laborer. His deep connections to the Irish Channel spoke to his political power and leadership amongst white organized labor. And he made a special attempt to recruit musicians into his work gangs, and hired them to play at functions after work, functions called lawn parties (to which I will return shortly). Black music, for Sullivan, created a space that challenged the exclusionary social capital of whiteness. Somehow, he had come to love the music that Foster and his Black colleagues played.

Foster’s comments also point to the depth of musicians’ involvements on the levees. Who were some of the musicians who might have worked alongside Foster? Jelly Roll Morton, guitarist

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<sup>1821</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard* (Berkeley, CA; Backbeat Books, 2005), 69..

<sup>1822</sup> *Ibid.*

Johnny St. Cyr, Louis Armstrong, drummer Henry Zeno, and clarinetist George Lewis all worked on the docks in some capacity in their lives. As Bruce Boyd Raeburn notes, “If clarinetist George Lewis...had not been recommended as Big Eye Louis Nelson’s replacement for trumpeter Bunk Johnson...in all probability, he would have worked himself to death on the riverfront as a stevedore who played a little music on the side.”<sup>1823</sup>

Likely, both prominent and lesser-known Black musicians contributed to the interracial interactions at Irish Channel “lawn parties,” which were crucial economically for musicians and an important part of the social life of Black and white dockworkers. Pops Foster met his wife Bertha while he played at an Irish Channel lawn party in 1912.<sup>1824</sup> These lawn parties would be spoken of today as do-it-yourself (DIY) spaces that operated outside of the formal entertainment economy, in which food, marketing, and entertainment were all managed by the homeowner or community themselves. Sometimes musicians would organize them directly: “If the guys didn’t have a job to play a lawn party, they’d put on their own and hire somebody’s yard.”<sup>1825</sup> Lawn parties were usually on Monday or Wednesday nights, while “[a]ll over New Orleans on Saturday night there’d be fish fries.” Organizers were responsible for hiring a policeman, obtaining a permit, and preparing food, beer, and music for guests, who would pay a twenty-five cent entry fee and fifteen cents more for food. “It was a good way to make a little change...The fish fry that had the best band was the one that would have the best crowd.” Unlike parades, these were usually composed of string trios of mandolin, bass, and guitar, and sometimes adding violin.<sup>1826</sup>

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<sup>1823</sup> Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “George Lewis and Friends,” in *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story*, by Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>1824</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard*, ed. Tom Stoddard and Ross Russell (Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 72.

<sup>1825</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster*, 18.

<sup>1826</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops*, 16.

The working-class constituents who frequented these spaces created a shared space between Black and white workers that contradicted Jim Crow etiquette. As Charles Hersch notes, “Particular neighborhoods,” such as the Irish Channel “were also sites for interracial interactions centered on jazz.”<sup>1827</sup> According to guitarist Johnny St. Cyr,

This was the neighborhood along Tchoupitoulas, from Annunciation to Orange. The people were all longshoremen and screwmen. They made good wages and liked to have a good time, drink and dance, but most of all they liked to fight. We would play in the homes down there. I never played in a hall in that area, just in the homes.

Well, after the party would get going good then a fight would start. They never bothered the musicians, but they would sometimes break up the instruments, or it would be such a disorganized party that we could not get our money. Then too, they would get “wound up” and keep us playing long past our quitting time before we could get paid. We finally had to quit them for awhile, until they got a way worked out so we would not have all this trouble. I played down there with Celestin, Ory and different pick-up groups. We would get \$2.00 or \$2.50 a man a night for playing.<sup>1828</sup>

Johnny St. Cyr’s words can help us in avoiding an uncritical romanticization of these spaces. They could be dangerous, though St. Cyr’s account indicates that the violence was generally not racialized. Charles Hersch devotes some time to the topic of lawn parties in particular and its interracial dimension. He acknowledges that “there were limits to jazz’s ability to erase boundaries,” and suggests that spaces such as lawn parties created uniquely “heterotopic” spaces:

In such parties and lakefront picnics, as in the nightclubs, the music flourished in racially mixed milieus and pockets of leisure set up in opposition to routinization and industrialization. Jazz had begun as a means for lower-class blacks to create freer spaces for themselves within an increasingly racist city, spaces built on an alternative

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<sup>1827</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 83.

<sup>1828</sup> St. Cyr, “Jazz as I Remember It: Part 2,” Hersch, *Subversive Sound*, 83.

ethos. Now, however, the music and its values spilled into the public square, much to the displeasure of the guardians of purity.<sup>1829</sup>

Several musicians commented how Jim Crow was noticeably absent from lawn parties. According to Pops Foster, “Musicians had fun then and never had any Jim Crow...[t]he white and colored musicians around New Orleans all knew each other, and there weren’t any Jim Crow between them. They really didn’t much care what color you were, and I played with a lot of them around New Orleans.”<sup>1830</sup> As clarinetist Emile Barnes put it, at lawn parties, “White and black were at the same table. They didn’t interfere with it.”<sup>1831</sup> Drummer Paul Barbarin also remembered the fights, as well as the proprietors’ kindness to him and the bandmembers, at events in the Irish Channel: “Them Irishes, man, they tough...they start a fight man—whoo whoo,” but he clarified that the fights were amongst the Irish themselves. “They don’t bother us...they was good people, though; yeah, they were really nice. I played a lot of...jobs up there.”<sup>1832</sup>

According to Brothers, lawn party audiences in the Irish Channel already reflected cultural creolization. Interracial audiences expected to hear musical techniques of the Black Baptist church, including the specific syncopated, high note riffs on a single note, the “stubborn repetition that instantly indicates spiritual engagement.”<sup>1833</sup> Trumpet player Hypolite Charles, when he subbed for Joe Oliver at one of the lawn parties, was frustrated that he could not capture the effect and disappointed the audience. “That’s all he’d [Joe Oliver] do [the high note riffs]—I couldn’t see

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<sup>1829</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>1830</sup> Pops Foster, Tom Stoddard, and Ross Russell, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard* (Berkeley, CA; Backbeat Books, 2005), 1, 71.

<sup>1831</sup> Emile Barnes, Interview, February 1, 1960, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1832</sup> Paul Barbarian, Interview, January 7, 1959. Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1833</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 43-44.

it.”<sup>1834</sup> The white immigrant audiences strongly connected to the traditions of Black rural to urban migrants.

In addition to Irish-American labor leaders like Joe Sullivan, the neighborhood produced several notable Italian-American jazz musicians like the Brunies brothers, Nick La Rocca, Tony Sbarbaro, Happy Schilling, and Johnny Fisher.<sup>1835</sup> Perhaps the Italian blues composer and anarchist, Antonio Maggio, who composed the hit rag “I Got the Blues” (which contained the subtitle, “respectfully dedicated to all those who have the Blues”), might have found inspiration for his composition at these parties. In 1901, Maggio was caught in a massive anti-anarchist dragnet in New Orleans after being named a suspect in the attempted assassination of President William McKinley.<sup>1836</sup> Italian immigrants had a range of ideological proclivities in the 1890s. Many Sicilian migrants to New Orleans were engaged in mass revolts against capitalist land enclosures in their homelands. The Fasci Siciliani dei Lavoratori (Sicilian Workers Leagues) led a popular movement with a base of hundreds of self-sufficient communes. The movement had successes between 1889 and 1894, until it was violently repressed by 40,000 Italian troops. As John S. MacDonald has shown, labor militancy and emigration were alternative strategies whereby rural workers responded to the intensifying pressures of agrarian capitalism, although Donna Rae Gabaccia suggests that the militancy of rural migrants abroad was, at best, complicated, and certainly not inevitable.<sup>1837</sup> Regardless of their ideological purity, both Black workers and

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<sup>1834</sup> Hypolite Charles, Interview, April 1963, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1835</sup> Hersch, *Subversive Sounds*, 83.

<sup>1836</sup> *Daily Picayune*, June 23, 1902, see also Shane Lief, “Anarchist Blues,” *The Jazz Archivist*, no. XXV (2012): 34–42.

<sup>1837</sup> J. S. MacDonald, “Agricultural Organization, Migration and Labour Militancy in Rural Italy,” *The Economic History Review* 16, no. 1 (1963): 61–75; Donna Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians Become American Workers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988).

displaced Sicilians were linked by capitalist land privatizations that compelled their migration, a subject I discussed at length in Chapter 4.<sup>1838</sup>

A further discussion of Italian-American radicalism, or its diminishing returns in the United States, is not possible in this chapter, but it is interesting that at least one interracial jazz relationship may have had its roots in the complicated racial experience of Italian immigrants. In 1891, Italian longshoremen were accused of killing the police chief Daniel Hennessy, which resulted in the execution of eleven Italians by hundreds of white New Orleanians who broke into the city jail to ensure mob justice. The editors of the *St. Mary Banner* hailed this “killing of the Dagoes” as “the greatest event of the year.”<sup>1839</sup> The lynching almost led to war between the United States and Italy and was closely watched and commented on by the Latin American press.<sup>1840</sup> The historic oppression of Italian immigrants in New Orleans during the years of the New South led clarinetist George Lewis’s Italian-American manager, Nick Gagliano, to develop a critical consciousness regarding racial oppression in the United States, and cited the politics he inherited from his father and grandfather. “While the parallel is clear, I would not in any way suggest that the [anti-]Italian prejudice was anywhere near that practiced against blacks. Nevertheless, George

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<sup>1838</sup> As Michael Denning notes, rural hinterlands such as Sicily and Louisiana became disrupted by new capitalist enclosures which intensified dramatically in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Lands that had sustained indigenous communities were seized and put on the market--a worldwide “enclosure” of the commons--for the industrial cultivation of common foods and fibres--wheat, rice and cotton--as well as a host of tropical plants that became everyday commodities in Europe and North America: rubber, coffee, tea, tobacco, sugar, cocoa, and bananas.” The result was that “millions of ordinary migrants passed through these colonial ports” such as New Orleans. See Michael Denning, *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (New York: Verso Books, 2015), location 858 (kindle version).

<sup>1839</sup> Franklin *St. Mary Banner*, March 23, 1891; quoted in William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877--1900* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969), 188.

<sup>1840</sup> Sarah Fouts, “The Mafia, La Raza, and the Spanish-Language Press Coverage of the 1891 Lynchings in New Orleans,” *Journal of Southern History* 83, no. 3 (August 7, 2017): 509–30.

and I were kindred spirits of a sort in this situation, but George and his family paid dearly all of his life for the oppression imposed upon him.”<sup>1841</sup>

Perhaps these were the some of the conversations held at lawn parties. More likely, Italian-American, Irish-American, and African-American dockworkers and sometimes their families were enjoying music, eating and drinking together, and getting into fights as well. As Barkley and Kimball note about Black and white working-class bargoers in Richmond, “close proximity could lead to political alliances; it could just as well lead to conflict. No doubt most of the time it did both.”<sup>1842</sup> Whatever the limitations of the potential interracial dialogue, those present in these spaces worked on the docks, and they created conditions for informal interaction that simply did not exist in the same way or at the same scale in Mobile or Galveston. While mixed race dances and bars did appear, they did not sustain an entire informal economy for musicians where guitarists like Johnny St. Cyr could make \$2.50 a day, or an Irish American union leader and bass player might receive bass lessons from one of the Black longshoremen. The values of this fusion of Black music and spaces of organized labor may have activated the latent radicalism within the what Cannistraro and Meyer called the Italian to United States “radical chain migration.”<sup>1843</sup>

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that many of the white musicians who grew up in the Irish channel developed and publicized racist attitudes. La Rocca’s famous declaration that jazz was both the white race’s invention reminds us that whatever conviviality existed on the levees did not last in the coming decades. Nonetheless, these young musicians were exposed to the new

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<sup>1841</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 19-20. Gagliano actually cites Gabaccia’s volume *Militants and Migrants*, cited previously, to explain his political development as well.

<sup>1842</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 21, no. 3, (199): 326.

<sup>1843</sup> Philip V. Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, eds., *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture* (Wesleyan, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 5.

music through a space in struggle, at a time when Italian-American identity might have taken different directions.<sup>1844</sup> As Danny Barker remembers in 1916, “The poor Italian immigrants...did not mind living next to Negroes or people of other races,” and they “were mostly dark colored...Soon, however, they learned the southern system of discrimination.”<sup>1845</sup>

Looking at the long arc of four decades of Black longshoremen activism, it is important to note that interracial collaboration and solidarity did not happen overnight. In the 1870s, while Black levee workers “proved to be the most militant of the city’s black laborers,” their initial activism “proved unable to implement their vision on the docks. That failure highlighted both the overwhelming power of waterfront employers during the repression and the need to unify labor’s forces across craft and racial lines.”<sup>1846</sup> This segmentation would not be resolved until the next decade. But when it was, it was the Black expressive culture of dockworkers that served as an important communicative measure that signaled commitment and strength to white allies. When Ameringer spoke to Black strikers in 1907, he found the musicality of their meetings both uncanny and exhilarating. Their aural nuances convinced him of their commitment:

As the audience warmed up, there came responses such as [“]now he’s talking, now he’s talking. Tell ‘em. Tell ‘em.[”] Their responses were harmonized somewhat in the manner of negro spirituals. An eerie picture, these chanting black men, their white eyeballs shining under flickering gas jets. But once I heard them chanting, I knew they would stick for another week.<sup>1847</sup>

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<sup>1844</sup> “In Louisiana, white Italians did move the trajectory from in-betweenness” toward social acceptance by...the dominant system” of white supremacy. During that in-between time, other political identifications and possibilities were in circulation. In the sugar parishes, for instance, Italian immigrants operated bars and sold at markets with Black patrons. Vincenza Scarpaci, “Walking the Color Line: Italian Immigrants in Rural Louisiana,” in *Are Italians White?: How Race Is Made in America*, ed. Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (London: Psychology Press, 2003), 75.

<sup>1845</sup> Danny Barker, *A Life in Jazz*, ed. Alyn Shipton (New York: Springer, 2016), 5.

<sup>1846</sup> Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 53.

<sup>1847</sup> Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 198-199.

### 7.3 Funerals and the Docks: Public Mourning, Brass Bands and Organized Labor

19<sup>th</sup>-century postbellum Black funerals rankled white ears. Their noise was ungodly, dangerous even, sometimes with national security implications. In 1877, in the middle of the Nez-Pierce war in Idaho, the United States War Department was “thrown into intense alarm” by “noise [that] came from a negro funeral.” A Marine detachment was sent out to assess the noise and assured Idaho whites that the mourning and music had no military implications.<sup>1848</sup> In New Orleans, Black funerals could disgust and outrage white audiences. In an 1894 article titled “Why the Homage?” the *Shreveport Progress* was disgusted that for Andy Bowen, “a bestial prize fighter” with “a liberal supply of negro blood,” New Orleanians “devote[d] so much space to this negro’s funeral’s ceremonies.”<sup>1849</sup>

In 1890, Black funerals were increasingly attacked by white New Orleanians. An article in the *Picayune* described “a small-sized riot” between

a crowd of Negroes and whites, during which rocks, bricks and clubs were freely used, and several persons were slightly injured...It appears that a colored procession headed by the Onward Brass Band was marching out Washington Street. They intended on serenading a colored woman, Mrs. Johnson, mother of one of the members. The usual crowd of Negroes who follow up parades of this kind were on hand in force and took charge of the sidewalk as is their custom... A force of young white men . . . pelted them with rocks . . . a signal for a general battle on all sides.<sup>1850</sup>

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<sup>1848</sup> *The Louisiana Democrat*, October 3, 1877.

<sup>1849</sup> *Shreveport Progress*, December 22, 1894.

<sup>1850</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, 1890, quoted in Jason Berry, *City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 181.

Trumpet player Sonny Henry also attests how he was on the receiving end of anti-Black violence while marching. Attackers might have bricks, rocks, knives, and brass knuckles. “[They’d hit you] anywhere they could hit you, they’d hit you on the bottom of your feet, if you run.”<sup>1851</sup>

Coupled with violence on the street was a call for “Reform in Funerals” in the white press. The *Daily States* celebrated the move by “benevolent societies to abolish the custom of brass bands at funerals.” It explained:

Five years from today the hideous brass band and long lines of vari dressed [sic] and tired men traveling through mud and slush at funerals will no longer be seen. There is room for reform in the method of attending and conducting funerals and in the dispensation of the brass band attachment to the funeral of every humble member of some obscure society or club or company.<sup>1852</sup>

Such a “reform” was obviously an attack on the rituals of Black mourning in New Orleans. These denunciations in print paralleled the attacks in the street: both tried to degrade and obstruct Black rituals which reclaimed space and memory. As Robin D.G. Kelley and Claudia Rankine both observe in their work, “mourning is not a lonesome isolated act but a public expression, a collective acknowledgment of the dead that refuses to suppress our rage and anger,”<sup>1853</sup> and for institutional white supremacy, this defiance was not taken lightly. Rankine wrote: “Sometimes you sigh. The world says stop that...sighing upsets...[we are in] no more control of those sighs than that which brings the sighs about.”<sup>1854</sup> While Fred Moten has noted that celebrations would attract the wrath

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<sup>1851</sup> Sonny Henry, Interview, October 21, 1959, Hogan Jazz Archive.

<sup>1852</sup> *New Orleans Daily States*, quoted in Berry, *City of a Million Dreams*, 181.

<sup>1853</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “Forging Futures,” in *A Moment on the Clock of the World: A Foundry Theatre Production*, ed. Melanie Joseph and David Bruin (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), 200.

<sup>1854</sup> Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Minneapolis: Greywolf, 2014), 59; quoted in Shermaine M. Jones, “‘I CAN’T BREATHE!’: Affective Asphyxia in Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*,” *South: A Scholarly Journal* 50, no. 1 (2017): 41..

of the white imaginary (and white violence),<sup>1855</sup> Rankine and Kelley point to how mourning is another unacceptable utterance of Black historical consciousness.

In the history of New Orleans's Black mourning, the 1881 funeral of Black longshoreman James Hawkins takes on special importance. Hawkins was killed by Sargent Reynolds at 9am on the tenth day of a waterfront strike. The funeral involved several benevolent societies, friends, family members, and other laborers. Their combined number reached 2,000 to 3,000 people. And here, something rather unprecedented happened. At this funeral for a Black laborer, 800 of the participants were white laborers. They assembled at a Black church in what Arnesen calls an "unprecedented show of [whites'] recognition"<sup>1856</sup> of Black suffering and Black humanity. Each society present selected a pall bearer and assembled a brass band to pay tribute to the fallen comrade. In this moment, white and Black workers both mourned together in the presence of Black brass bands, sharing a sonically-adorned collective catharsis and in the context of a highly visible and emotionally charged dock strike.

Hawkins's killing drew enormous commentary from all sectors of the press. The *Daily Picayune* dramatically declared him a martyr in the "war between labor and capital."<sup>1857</sup> The *St. Landry Democrat* was alarmed by the implications of the strike and the framing of Hawkins's death. "The people of the Crescent City realized the fact that a great public calamity was upon them – that a gigantic labor strike had been inaugurated in the metropolis of the south." The paper argued that "Hawkins had created a disturbance of the peace and an attempt was made to arrest him when he resisted the officers who thereupon shot him," suggesting his cold-blooded murder

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<sup>1855</sup> Fred Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 737–80; Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>1856</sup> Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 35.

<sup>1857</sup> *Daily Picayune*, September 12, 1881.

was justified. The paper continued that his assassination was grounds for the strikers to give up their larger demands. “The only alternative left to strikers is to ‘make the best of it,’ accept a reasonable remuneration for their labor and go to work...It is folly to suppose that capital can be whipped into submission. It is worse than folly to attempt to do so.”<sup>1858</sup>

The *Weekly Louisianian*, a Black newspaper, took the opposite point of view: not only was Hawkins’s killing completely barbarous and unjustified, but his sacrifice should be motivation to further challenge inequities in the economies of both wages and justice. “Here stands before us three peace officers with their hands dyed in the blood of colored men with no condemnation whatever. Must we strike back, or shall we be protected by the law?” After proposing open rebellion, the paper suggested that the killing represented the coordination of law enforcement, city elites, and capital, and this unholy alliance was at the root of the strikes. “Is it strange that we should have strikes and heaveals, [*sic*] lawlessness, opposition to commerce and every other kind of devilry whilst the authorities and our merchants are blind to these barbarous outrages?” Finally, the paper noted with approval the interracial character of the funeral. “It was a source of satisfaction to see the sympathy express by the white laborers association. Their popular indignation were [*sic*] expressed by the large numbers who turned out to pay their last tribute of respect to the unfortunate man.”<sup>1859</sup>

White laborers sided with the position of the Black newspaper over the reasoning of the *St. Landry Democrat* when they honored the sacrifice of a fellow waterfront worker whose life was taken to silence the strikers. According to Arnesen, such a gathering would have been “inconceivable only a few years before,” but the recent creation of Cotton Men’s Executive

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<sup>1858</sup> *St. Landry Democrat*, September 17, 1881.

<sup>1859</sup> *The Weekly Louisianian*, September 17, 1881.

Council, which included representatives from thirteen Black and white waterfront unions, institutionalized a framework for expressing interracial solidarity. “The 1881 strike and the community support it received sprang from this new departure in working class race relations,” and had “profound implications for race and class relations over the next few decades.”<sup>1860</sup> Working class institutions were the defining factor in creating a space for this collective mourning to take place.

The next time such a large congregation would gather for a Black dockworker was at the funeral of William H. Penn. Elected president of Black Longshoremen Union Benevolent Association following the 1894-1895 violence that destroyed the interracial labor alliance that had existed since the 1880s,<sup>1861</sup> Penn may have been selected for reconstructing the alliance because of his leadership skills developed in the city’s music world, as well as for the web of fraternal organizations he belonged to. Penn was the business manager of the Excelsior Brass Band in the early 1880s (while the Tio brothers were in the group). “Messrs. Hagget and Penn deserve great credit for the successful manner in which they have managed the affairs of the band,” exclaimed the *Louisianan* in 1881 after a particularly successful performance.<sup>1862</sup>

At his death, the otherwise conservative *Times-Picayune* called him “a power for good in the colored labor world,” and noted in his dying moments, Penn had “many good friends, both white and colored, coming instantly to his assistance and relief.”<sup>1863</sup> His death may have been caused by his intense work schedule; the same report tells us that “He had been faithfully working for a settlement of the freight handlers’ strike, and every day for the past two weeks had been

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<sup>1860</sup> Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 34-35.

<sup>1861</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 86.

<sup>1862</sup> New Orleans *Louisianan*, July 9, 1881, 2.

<sup>1863</sup> *Times-Picayune*, December 24, 1902.

serving as a peacemaker between the two contending forces. Early yesterday morning he went to the levee, then over the meeting hall of the freight handlers. While addressing the men, advising them to accept the proposition...he was stricken with paralysis.” Forty years of age, he probably suffered a stroke, which would soon claim his life.

In an article titled “Colored Organizations Turn Out in Full Force, And Make the Funeral of W. H. Penn One of the Greatest of Its Kind,” the *Picayune* reported on Penn’s funeral. The following official delegations were reported to be in attendance:

De Gruy Lodge F. and A. M., 75 members and music; Longshoremen, 800 members and music; Equal Justice Association, 150; Ladies’ and Gentlemen’s Perseverance, 75; Ladies’ Friendship, 90; Daughter’s Friendship, 80; Juniors’ Friendship, 60; Harmonial Association, 75; Friendship M. B.A., 110; Young Men’s Hope, 70; Delecahise, 60; Young Mutual, 40; Pure Friendship, 50; and a long concourse of friends.<sup>1864</sup>

According to these numbers, over 1700 Benevolent Association members attended, plus a “long concourse of friends;” and at least two brass bands. Although the *Picayune* does not mention the racial makeup of the mourners, it likely included white dockworkers, as well, since they “came instantly to his assistance” the day before.

The *Picayune* may have underestimated the fraternal organizations that Penn belonged to. The Black newspaper the *Pelican* estimated that Penn belonged to at least twenty-five different benevolent associations in 1887. These included, but were not limited to, Masonic-Odd Fellow’s Hall: Pure Friendship Association, Harmonial Association, Young Men’s Mutual Benevolent Association, Ladies’ and Gents’ Perseverance Association, Pilgrim Tabernacle No. 4, Young Men’s Hope Benevolent Association, Daughters’ Friendship Benevolent, Junior Benevolent Association, Equal Justice Benevolent Association, Jeunes Amis Benevolent, De Gray Lodge No.

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<sup>1864</sup> *Times-Picayune*, December 26, 1902.

7, D. and A.M. His membership in Jeunes Amis reflected his ability to work in both Creole of Color and African American social worlds, as its membership consisted significantly of persons “descended from the old caste of free people of color.”<sup>1865</sup> That Homer Plessy was a member of Jeunes Amis, as was Rodolphe Desdunes, suggests a significant overlap between civil rights and Black labor activism in late 1880s and 1890s. Penn was also part of organization such as “the Americas Club,” which the New Orleans *Republican* reported was a social and literary association, “composed of intelligent and responsible colored citizens of the city.” At one point, William H. Penn was the chairman of its executive committee.<sup>1866</sup> In 1876 he is found in the roster of a Republican mass meeting, around the same time that Rodolphe Desdunes was chairman.<sup>1867</sup>

These carefully cultivated connections to Republican activists in the 1870s likely helped him to fight the growing movement of white supremacy within Republican ranks. Although Penn died shortly before it was founded, he was probably instrumental in helping organize the Equal Rights League, and it appears a predecessor organization of which he was a part, the Equal Justice Association, attended his funeral. The Equal Rights League is credited for almost single-handedly defeating the Louisiana Republican Party’s “Lily-White” faction which was nearly successful in sending an all-white delegation to the national Republican Convention in Chicago 1893. The Equal Rights League included Black screwmen union leader A.J. Ellis, as well as Penn’s replacement, the Longshoremen’s Protective Union and Benevolent Association (LPUBA) President E. S. Swann, a man born into slavery who escaped a Virginia plantation to serve in the Union Army. Swann served in the Metropolitan Police until it was disbanded, and he enters as footnote in jazz

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<sup>1865</sup> Lawrence Gushee, “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz,” *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 1 (1994): 167.

<sup>1866</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, August 27, 1876.

<sup>1867</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, April 18, 1876.

history as Buddy Bolden's next-door neighbor. Penn worked closely with Swann, and entertained significant power and influence in Black social and cultural life. As Arnesen notes, "as the largest black union in both New Orleans and the South, the black longshoremen's association continued its nineteenth-century involvement in the broader affairs of the black community, requiring its member to pay poll taxes and contributing funds to black churches, schools, and medical institutions."<sup>1868</sup> Penn's funeral, and the range of organizations present, show how it is simply impossible to separate Black dockworking activism from the larger activism and communal structures of Black New Orleans.

Diving deeper into Penn's level of involvement in the various benevolent societies which attended his funeral demonstrates how connected the fraternal organizations were to the Black labor movement. Penn was the treasurer of the Odd Fellows from 1875 through the 1880s.<sup>1869</sup> In the Odd Fellows, he would have worked closely with Sumpter J. Watt, the president of the Black freight handlers union, who became permanent secretary by August.<sup>1870</sup> In fact, longshoremen unions and Black organized labor more broadly served a head-numbing number of important positions in fraternal societies. These connections were reciprocally enforcing: they helped ensure that the struggles and stratagems of dockworkers became known to the wider Black community, and they also ensured that the successes of Black dockworkers strengthened the whole community.

The LPUBA was also keen to support the struggles of other unions and ensure that their own half-and-half agreements were honored, such as when they supported the radical wing of the Brewery Workmen's Union in the early 1900s, an endorsement which socialist and Industrial

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<sup>1868</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 189.

<sup>1869</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, May 14, 1887; *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 1, 1903; see Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 86.

<sup>1870</sup> *Weekly Pelican*, May 14, 1887; see Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 285.

Workers of the World (IWW) member Covington Hall greatly coveted.<sup>1871</sup> When certain beer brewers were boycotted as result, the fraternal organizations followed suit and did not purchase boycotted beer. The politicization of fraternal societies ensured that daily life was political: strikes would receive mass support, musicians received performance opportunities at protests, funerals, and social functions organized by unions, and different groups of working-class Blacks could communicate through fraternal societies outside of official channels. It is possible that Penn's death contributed to the crisis between the white and Black unions in 1904-1905.

Penn was also adept at mobilizing public opinion to support Black labor and civil rights. William H. Penn's ties to the entertainment world were made evident in an article published by the *Daily Picayune* about how the LPUBA's funerals were interrupted by Jim Crow. Titled "Negro Entertainments Seriously Affected by the Operation of the Jim Crow Car Law," the article offers a rare sympathetic take on the impact of the Separate Car law and implicitly condemns its effects, if not its intent. "The Jim Crow Law is playing hob [sic] with colored entertainments and public functions of the race, where crowds would expect transportation in a short space of time, and as a natural result is knocking the Railways Company out of considerable revenue."<sup>1872</sup> What was the occasion for the lost revenue? The *Picayune* continues:

It is a time-honored custom of the colored people of New Orleans to hold a big memorial service and pay honor to their dead on the last Sunday in the month of November. This day is observed by the Longshoremen's Protective Union and Benevolent Association, which Association has over 1,000 members. [sic]

This year, last Sunday, the service was abandoned. William H. Penn, President of the Longshoremen's Association, explained yesterday that it was true that the customary observance had been given up this year owing to the Jim Crow Law.

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<sup>1871</sup> See Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 194.

<sup>1872</sup> *Times-Picayune*, December 3rd, 1902.

“There was nothing else to do,” said he. “We could not get transportation service in the cars. Under the law, when four colored people get in a car [it] is full. At that rate, not any oftener than cars run, it would have taken a day and night to have gotten our folks up to Carrollton, and another day and night to have gotten them back. It is an iron-clad rule of the Association that every member is fined \$1 who does not attend the memorial services and who is not there on time. Holding the observance would have resulted in most all our members being fined.”

It is said colored balls and entertainments are being discontinued because the inability of the members of the organization to go in bodies or to get their places is a reasonable length of time. They say there will be no colored parks or picnics next summer under the Jim Crow Law.<sup>1873</sup>

This article is an anomaly because of the tone it takes, seemingly one of the few articles to sympathize with people of color from the *Times-Picayune* about the pernicious effects of Jim Crow. By foregrounding the economic damage resulting from the LPUBA withdrawal from the transportation economy, it avoids the charged discourse of “social equality,” yet still foregrounds the disruption of Black cultural life by acknowledging the marked restriction on group mobility within the Black community. The coverage and tone of the article reflects the political and economic power of the Black labor movement.

However we interpret this out-of-character *Picayune* article, the details of the pilgrimage to Carrollton are noteworthy on their own terms. The level of organization and commitment to mourning is striking. The mere fact that members were normally fined for being late shows how rank and file took seriously this ritual of collective memory. These were some of the sites where brass bands, of course, performed. It shows how highly choreographed spaces where community members, mourners, and bands moved *en masse* to honor the dead to struggle for the living was organized by not only SAPCs but also by Black labor. The Carrollton pilgrimage points to how

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<sup>1873</sup> *Times-Picayune*, December 3rd, 1902.

important the synchronicity was between the struggles on the docks and every other aspect of Black life, and how every moment, from dancing to strategizing to rituals of the most quotidian to the most festive, was part of a living, dynamic, antiphonal movement. These environments created not only a “spatial continuity between the living and dead,” but specifically “a location of black death that holds in it a narrative soundscape that also promises an *honest* struggle for life.”<sup>1874</sup> Writing about second line traditions in the early 2000s, Helen Regis argues that, while jazz funerals speak to the death of an individual, their commemoration of life is speaks the “social truth” of the community:

The truths proclaimed in New Orleans street performances often speak to individual and communal identities, emphasizing accomplishments gained through strength and integrity. Funerals, or “homegoing celebrations,” are a commentary on the values that guided an individual in life, but they are also perceived as a communal and individual achievement for the organizations that effectively produce them and for the individuals whose lives are commemorated.<sup>1875</sup>

Returning to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Carrolton pilgrimage, the funeral of Hawkins, and William H. Penn’s funeral compel us to consider how the union organizations’ and their working-class perspective was incorporated into the brass band funeral.

This particular intersection of class struggle and Afro-Atlantic cultural practice is one that remains largely unexplored in existing scholarship. Many scholars have invoked Afro-Caribbean and African diasporic culture to analyze the late 19<sup>th</sup> century funerals brass bands, which later became referred to as jazz funerals. “The power of jazz funerals and black brass band music to generate communal feelings of joy and triumph that trump the despair of death,” writes Richard Turner, “underlines these rituals’ surrogation of key themes from Vodou and Congo Square

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<sup>1874</sup> Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures,” *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (December 21, 2013): 2, emphasis mine.

<sup>1875</sup> Helen A. Regis, “Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line,” 759.

culture, including strategies for healing, coping, resistance, and continuity.”<sup>1876</sup> Similarly, Zada Johnson and Freddi Evans’s recent study points to how “the processional traditions of New Orleans, Cuba, and Haiti have continued with common musical and performative threads that link the ancestral past with struggles for freedom and recognition in the present.”<sup>1877</sup> Drawing these connections is crucial to our understanding of the endemic and independent expressions of the Black radical tradition, and applying a transnational lens to Black culture.<sup>1878</sup> I devoted significant time in Chapter 1 to analyzing these formations in lieu of the particular social, ideological, and spiritual genealogies embedded in what scholars have called the Common Wind of Haitian diasporic influence. In this chapter, I further argue that dockworkers mobilized this Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Atlantic ritual of mourning and celebration in order to communicate the urgency and relevance of the contemporary labor struggle on the docks to New Orleans’s Black communities. Their institutionalization of the funeral procession strengthened and organized these rituals, and in turn, they strengthened their own union’s standing amongst the Black urban poor.

That being said, it is important to acknowledge that there was nothing inevitable about the unions’ decision to support funerals on a massive scale for all of their members, or, for that matter, the LPUBA’s involvement in almost every aspect of Black working class life. The creation of this institutional synergy, as the life of William H. Penn demonstrates, required an enormous expenditure of energy and time on activism and community organizing. This demanding and relentless rhythm all happened outside of the normal working hours, within an occupation that was

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<sup>1876</sup> Richard Brent Turner, *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 112.

<sup>1877</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 42.

<sup>1878</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

already considered among the most physically strenuous of its day. On top of this, Black labor leaders representing dockworkers had to navigate the antagonism of the largest capitalist shipping industries in the world, on the one hand; and maintain complex and fragile alliances with white workers on another; all while, most importantly, channeling the demands of their own constituents and ensuring that negotiations were seen as legitimate and followed through by the rank and file of the union. Such a life would have been endless in its varied demands. In the case of Penn, it took such a toll that his life was taken from him, in mid-negotiation.

The innovative fusions of Afro-Atlantic cultural forms with the political and social needs of the Black working class at the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century American capitalism had laid deep roots for others to follow. I argue that dockworkers laid the foundation for the inspiring and emblematic Black brass and carnival traditions the public has come to revere and venerate. The first Black Mardi Gras society, the Zulu Social, Aid and Pleasure Club, founded in 1909, was originally known as the “Tramps,” and as Johnsons and Evans notes, it was “a social club of laborers and longshoremen from Uptown.”<sup>1879</sup> If they were longshoremen from uptown, it would have been impossible for them to not entertain membership within the LPUBA.

But their self-identification as Black workers is suggested by another clue. In 1890s New Orleans, “Tramps” referenced a derogatory word used by white workers to describe Black rural to urban migrants; as one white foreman Henry Hassinger explained to the *Daily Picayune* in 1895, when relations between white and Black dockworkers were strained by miscommunication and violence, white workers were “opposed to the employment of tramp labor secured from the plantations of other states....The white men could not work for the prices paid these tramp

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<sup>1879</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, “Freedom Dances across the Diaspora,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 36.

negroes.”<sup>1880</sup> Thus, the original Zulu Social, Aid and Pleasure Club members appropriated a term that denigrated Black dock labor and repurposed it—a reclamation process that was also reflected in the later naming of the group “Zulu.”<sup>1881</sup> The very genesis of the main krewe of Black Mardi Gras had its roots in Black working-class consciousness and institution building. This working-class link shaped the institutional culture of the organization until the present day: “Zulu is the only social aid and pleasure club to act as both a benevolent association, providing sickness and burial assistance to its members, and as a Carnival krewe with its own parade, one of the highlights of Mardi Gras.”<sup>1882</sup>

In the present day, new Mardi Gras krewes continue to emerge with references to the working-class identity of these early innovators, such as the Black Men of Labor Social Aid & Pleasure Club, which was formed with the “specific mission of perpetuating second line traditions” in 1994.<sup>1883</sup> According to founder Fred Johnson, “the reason we named it the Black Men of Labor...[is because] we mimic the longshoremen’s parade, Labor Day Parade. They didn’t have a brass band, but they had a Labor Day Parade, which was a show of force in the early 1900s of these men who labored, and they would walk from one place to another—hundreds of them.” (The longshoremen did, in fact, contract brass bands for their Labor Day parades, which will be discussed further below.) Johnson’s embrace of the working-class political visions of early 20<sup>th</sup> century dockworkers, and their struggle for self-determination, in no way negates the Afro-

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<sup>1880</sup> *Daily Picayune*, February 9, 1895; see Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 298-299.

<sup>1881</sup> Theater scholar Joseph Roach’s discussion of King Rex and King Zulu remains among the most compelling treatment of the Zulu Social, Aid, and Pleasure Club. But Roach, like others mentioned above, does not mention the powerful connections to Black working-class organizations. Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Chapter 1.

<sup>1882</sup> Leslie Gale Parr, “Sundays in the Streets: The Long History of Benevolence, Self-Help, and Parades in New Orleans,” *Southern Cultures* 22, no. 4 (2016): 27.

<sup>1883</sup> Matt Sakakeeny, “The Representational Power of the New Orleans Brass Band,” in *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making*, ed. S. A. Reily and K. Brucher (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 123–37.

Atlantic influences in the group's identity: "I said, "Well, let's take the Labor Day Parade and put a brass band and then we'll do something that everybody's afraid to do or won't do: We'll get some African attire because most of the culture in New Orleans come out of West Africa. Let's get some African attire, some African fabric, and create something and put it in a parade",<sup>1884</sup> A practice he referred to as a "dance across the Diaspora."<sup>1885</sup> Fred Johnson's genealogy of parades, as both linked to dockworking struggles and diasporic forms of Blackness, shows how markers of working-class identity and pan-African culture are and were complementary, not antagonistic. Fred Johnson calls this fusion of class identity with racial identity "fulfilling a commitment;" he claims it provides "form of relief" and "therapy in dance," a therapy which intensifies "the more energizing the music is."<sup>1886</sup>

Johnson's words add credibility to Stuart Hall's observation that "It is through the modality of race that blacks comprehend, handle and then begin to resist the exploitation which is an objective feature of their class situation...Race is the modality in which class is lived."<sup>1887</sup> The spirit of Hall's argument is against the "neatly reified distinctions" that scholars have traditionally "policed" between a class-based analysis and one that foregrounds race. John L. Jackson, invoking Hall's famous formulation, writes: "I am certainly, and unabashedly, guilty of as much [this reification] in some of my own work, choosing to privilege 'raciality' as my central heuristic device." Yet, for his unabashedness, Jackson contends this analytic sometimes falls short.

Race is most difficult to spy when it boasts a too-confident self-evidence, when it appears easiest to see, its very visibility a trap of Foucauldian proportions: discourse possessing a productive force

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<sup>1884</sup> Fred Johnson in Valentine Pierce, "Interview with Fred Johnson," in *Freedom's Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 75.

<sup>1885</sup> Zada Johnson and Freddi Williams Evans, "Freedom Dances across the Diaspora," 42.

<sup>1886</sup> Fred Johnson in Valentine Pierce, "Interview with Fred Johnson," 77.

<sup>1887</sup> Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 347, 394.

that includes eliding its own generative powers by hiding them inside the creases of an ever-receding horizon of prediscursivity. Such blinding visibility, an example of staring straight into the textual sun in search of retrospectively concocted origins, organizes racial identity's social and cultural power, its sloppily effective work as history and mythology at the same time, a mythology passing itself off as history, its mythologic no less potent once unmasked as biological fiction.<sup>1888</sup>

These “retrospectively concocted origins” and its attendant heuristic blinders have limited interest in class as a meaningful category of analysis in American cultural studies,<sup>1889</sup> help explain the invisibility of Black longshoremen's decidedly class-based struggles in the contemporary historiography on New Orleans's Mardi Gras and brass band cultures. Like the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, whose original name invoked a connection to working-class identity, Fred Johnson demonstrates that New Orleans Black identity could hold both celebrate both African heritage and working-class traditions simultaneously. And Johnson's decision to name the group the “Black Men of Labor” was not his alone, but made by a collective with close ties to early jazz legend Danny Barker (they convened, in fact, to second-line at Danny Barker's funeral).<sup>1890</sup> The

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<sup>1888</sup> John L. Jackson, “In Medias Race (and Class): Post-Jim Crow Ethnographies of Black Middleclassdom,” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 7, no. 1 (2010): 35–36.

<sup>1889</sup> Stuart Hall takes aim at the institutionalization of cultural studies in the American context, and its theoretical proclivities which limit our understanding of power within discourse. He argues that a sweeping theory of textuality and agency of discourse has rendered a physics of power out of reach: “My fear at that moment was that if cultural studies gained an equivalent institutionalization in the American context, it would, in rather the same way, formalize out of existence the critical questions of power, history, and politics... There is no moment now, in American cultural studies, where we are not able, extensively and without end, to theorize power—politics, race, class and gender, subjugation, domination, exclusion, marginality, Otherness, etc. There is hardly anything in cultural studies which isn't so theorized. And yet, there is the nagging doubt that this overwhelming textualization of cultural studies' own discourses somehow constitutes power and politics as exclusively matters of language and textuality itself.” Such a view of politics may help explain why power within economic frameworks, or histories of class and community organizing, have been neglected. For a more recent, and somewhat different, treatment of this phenomenon, see Newitz and Wray, who argue that American cultural studies exists within “a culture where we are often at a loss to explain or understand poverty,” with that result that [T]he U.S. has an extremely impoverished political language of class.” Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 341; Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, eds., *White Trash: Race and Class in America* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1, 8.

<sup>1890</sup> Matt Sakakeeny, “The Representational Power of the New Orleans Brass Band,” in *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making*, ed. S. A. Reily and K. Brucher (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 123–37.

history of the longshoremen's struggle and the LPUBA, even in 1994, was still deeply revered as an important example of Black self-determination and creative communal expression; it was embedded in the representational power of the New Orleans brass band. For, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes,

Workers work much more often than they strike, but the capacity to strike is never fully removed from the condition of workers. In other words, peoples are not always subjects constantly confronting history as some academics would wish, but the capacity upon which they act to become subjects is always part of their condition. This subjective capacity ensures confusion because it makes human beings doubly historical or, more properly, fully historical.<sup>1891</sup>

These funerals can and should be read in an attempt to bridge this “condition of possibility” of striking within the “fully historical” lives of dockworkers. Their consciousness of revolt was especially present and alive during funerals that honored labor leaders and martyred strikers. Two of the funerals mentioned here happening during strikes. Doubtless there were many more. And, even if funerals were entirely disconnected from a strike when they were taking place, they were nonetheless part of the process by which workers “claim[ed] access to...their own voices,” a process by which “their subjectivity [became] an integral part” of the labor movement.<sup>1892</sup> It was a process of finding both one's own voice and a collective voice.

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<sup>1891</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995; Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015), 45.

<sup>1892</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

## 7.4 Longshoremen's Hall: Movement-Based Art Making

While protests manifested the demands of Black organized labor, and funerals embodied a spiritualized political culture, they did not provide a space where the major operational and decision-making aspects of Black waterfront unions could take place. This is what union halls purported to do. Over time, these spaces evolved to serve multiple functions for Black communities. Most importantly for this study, union halls provided space for an interconnected network of activities including church services, blues-based cultural expressions, and political mass meetings, which would all entertain decades of longevity. Indeed, union halls connected each of these types of Black working-class culture under a single roof, creating the opportunity for exchanges between religious, musical, and political leaders. As Rosenberg notes, union halls contributed to Bolden's meteoric rise in New Orleans's Black musical underground. "Performers like Buddy Bolden made their reputations at labor-hosted and union-sponsored social functions in halls."<sup>1893</sup> These were spaces where, for one dollar, one could dance to music "made by your neighbors."<sup>1894</sup>

Attendees at such dances were self-conscious that they were present in the heart of not only organized labor but a special kind of Black cooperative society. Many dance goers may have come earlier in the week to drop off dues, attend a fish fry, or request funds for medical treatment. Unions did not only organize funerals and protests, but also provided medical and life insurance for members and families, organized civil rights commissions that functioned within Republican political circles, held fish fries, took out obituaries in the *Picayune* for deceased members, and

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<sup>1893</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 63.

<sup>1894</sup> Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005).

provided a range of other social services. In this respect, Black waterfront workers organized spaces strikingly similar to benevolent societies more generally, which functioned as kind of counterinstitutional formation against the “white republic,”<sup>1895</sup> and provided a space for participatory democratic life among Black communities when the state refused to do so. Benevolent societies writ large, for instance, were the greatest providers of health care for Black New Orleans residents, one of the strong motivations for fourth-fifths of the local population to join to such groups who had no other means of insurance.<sup>1896</sup> Healthcare was an important issue for Black people and a site of racial discrimination, both in terms of access and in the quality of treatment, and musicians were no exception. The Creole of Color Bassist McNeal Breaux recalled that in the late 1920s his father was killed in a hospital. “He went into the hospital with a perforated lung, and they took out the wrong lung and he died.” Asked if he sued, he responded, “Are you kidding? A black man in Louisiana suing a white doctor?”<sup>1897</sup> Health disparities and Black exclusion from juridical channels made membership in benevolent societies essential for reasons of both health and community.

What distinguished union-owned halls, and Longshoremen’s Hall especially, was their operational power and their ability strongly support working-class Black popular culture. These spaces were prolific programmers of famed dances that lasted until the next morning, featuring the

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<sup>1895</sup> Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America, New Edition* (New York: Verso, 2003).

<sup>1896</sup> Claude F. Jacobs, “Benevolent Societies of New Orleans Blacks during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 29, no. 1 (1988): 21-22; For a look at Alabama, see C. A. Spencer, “Black Benevolent Societies and the Development of Black Insurance Companies in Nineteenth Century Alabama,” *Phylon (1960-)* 46, no. 3 (1985): 251–61; for a connection to parades and brass band traditions, see Leslie Gale Parr, “Sundays in the Streets: The Long History of Benevolence, Self-Help, and Parades in New Orleans,” *Southern Cultures* 22, no. 4 (2016): 8–30.

<sup>1897</sup> Barry Martyn and Nick Gagliano, *The Fabulous George Lewis Band: The Inside Story* (New Orleans: LSU Press, 2010), 62.

new music, “blues for dancing.”<sup>1898</sup> The artist most associated with this cultural movement, Buddy Bolden, played many of his indoor gigs, likely a majority, in union-owned halls.<sup>1899</sup> These performances were sponsored by the Black union community. The operational expenses of the hall, such as garbage collection and electricity fees, were managed by the entire union and its dues. In fact, revenue from balls helped pay taxes and insurance.<sup>1900</sup> Longshoreman’s Hall was located in the heart of the Uptown neighborhoods which “increasingly became the home of Black rural refugees.” As Clyde Woods notes, “They brought their Blues with them. The music emerged from, and was placed at the service of, a growing New Orleans Black working class attempting to impose its social vision upon a region organized around its brutal exploitation.”<sup>1901</sup> It is no coincidence that the institutional heart of the movement to challenge brutal exploitation of the Black working class would embrace this music.

A focus on union halls, as their own distinct social space and as organizers of Black oppositional culture, helps us engage with Lawrence Levine’s call for more audience-centered analysis. Levine lamented that “the audience remains the missing link, the forgotten element, in cultural history,”<sup>1902</sup> and that this is a particular loss for the study of jazz, since “Jazz was openly an interactive, participatory music in which the audience played an important role, to the extent

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<sup>1898</sup> For a discussion of how Bolden was the first to play “blues for dancing,” see Vic Hobson, “New Orleans Jazz and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3–27.

<sup>1899</sup> To my knowledge, no one has made this explicit point, but it can be gleaned by Donald Marquis’ meticulous research as well as the examples I lay out in the following chapters. Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), especially 67-103.

<sup>1900</sup> Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers* 58; see also *Picayune*, September 8, 1908.

<sup>1901</sup> Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 77.

<sup>1902</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, “The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences,” *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (1992): 1379.

that the line between audience and performers was often obscured.”<sup>1903</sup> Charles Hersch has similarly argued that:

A political analysis of the music must take into account the multifaceted interactions among musicians, audience members, and opponents of the music....From the working-class or underclass audiences that early on supported the music’s most innovative forms to white audiences to whom musicians of color tailored performances, ordinary listeners in subtle ways were cocreators of the music, shaping its hybrid form.<sup>1904</sup>

Guided by a deep philosophical and activist legacy that Cedric Robinson has called the Black radical tradition, these working people expanded the meaning and the methods of union organizing by incorporating African American cultures of solidarity and a resistant phenomenology into union life.<sup>1905</sup>

Indeed, union halls were connected to Afrodiasporic projects to recuperate the commons, a legacy which I developed in detail in Chapter 4. Understanding union halls as part of a “rich history of cooperative-driven neighborhood development,” as Anne Gessler describes New Orleans’s history of cooperatives, brings into focus new ways of understanding the union hall model and its genealogy. “Louisianans of color had honed a locally rooted, African diasporic-inspired cooperative model,” she writes, that contributed to members’ “international identities to form a complex, cosmopolitan sense of self and duty to the world. They fused international alternative economic theories, grassroots social movements, and local communal transition to create a neighborhood based cooperative model.”<sup>1906</sup> Unlike many other types of gigs, Black

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<sup>1903</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, “Jazz and American Culture,” in *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>1904</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 208.

<sup>1905</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>1906</sup> Anne Gessler, *Cooperatives in New Orleans: Collective Action and Urban Development* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2020), 4.

musicians were directly connected to the organizers of the dances, who, as I will show in the following pages, were often their neighbors or close friends. As Pops Foster relayed, “No matter what dance hall or affair you were playing in New Orleans you stopped for an hour at midnight and had dinner. Whoever was having the dance fed the musicians. Usually you’d have a big plate of gumbo, rice, and French bread.”<sup>1907</sup> While Foster was speaking about New Orleans more broadly, the exchange of food and conviviality in union halls took on a different meaning in the Union halls than in Tom Roberts’s brothel in Storyville—especially when one was, like Foster, a dockworker. These initiatives reflected the evolving contours of the counter-plantation.<sup>1908</sup>

In the following pages, my research is animated by a desire to understand this link between cooperative economics, blues, and African American working-class identity in turn of the century New Orleans. Why did dockworker organizers work so hard to showcase this blues-based culture? How did this fit into their broader goals? How were musicians affected by their experiences in these spaces? In what ways did Black working-class identity become shaped in these spaces? The following section considers the Black arts movements that unions supported with these questions in mind.

In many ways, the union halls created the spaces that were predecessors to the more-discussed Black Arts Movement. Active in the 1960s and 70s, the Black Arts Movement provides a useful example of a successor movement that mirrored the Black waterfront unions’ syncretic goals of political education and communal development that was at the heart of the benevolent society-union project. Both spaces foregrounded mutual aid work that was connected to a radical critique of existing power structures, undergirded by a commitment to innovative Black popular

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<sup>1907</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster*, 66.

<sup>1908</sup> Jean Casimir, “On the Origins of the Counterplantation System,” in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Laurent Dubois et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

culture. In George Lipsitz's *How Racism Takes Place*, Lipsitz tells the story of Horace Tapscott, a jazz pianist based in Los Angeles who worked to develop a community-centered practice during the 1960s simultaneously with the rise of grassroots-based Black Power movements. Tapscott was disillusioned with playing commercialized music for white audiences, so he formed the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, whose goals, according to Tapscott, were to "preserve, teach, show, and perform the music of Black Americans and Pan-African music...and taking it to the community."<sup>1909</sup> Tapscott and the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra sought to create cultural safe houses, where African Americans could not only express their own vision of art but also had access to legal counseling and a variety of social services. They were also a major support group of the Black Panther Party Watts Branch.<sup>1910</sup> Lipsitz describes their goals and intention elegantly: their work was "not so much community-based art making" as "art-based community making. They experimented with forms of expressive culture that enacted the kind of social relations they envisioned."<sup>1911</sup> The music was remembered as having a distinctive spirit which reflected these reimagined social relations. Saxophonist Arthur Blythe said of the Watts Happening Coffee House, an initiative of the Arkestra, "It was very expressional and it felt according to the time...The music took on that character to me. There was a certain sense of freedom, freedom that I hadn't experienced."<sup>1912</sup>

I bring attention to the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra and the descriptions of their space-based transformative work because the descriptions provided by Lipsitz and Blythe provide powerful and concise ways to understand spaces such as Longshoreman's Hall. As I will

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<sup>1909</sup> George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 133.

<sup>1910</sup> Steve Isoardi, *The Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 95-99.

<sup>1911</sup> George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*, 138.

<sup>1912</sup> Steve Isoardi, *The Dark Tree*, 99.

demonstrate, community-based art making was at the core of the union project, and hall culture was an essential part of this. The Longshoremen's Hall, which was acquired by the Longshoremen Protective Union Benevolent Association in 1890,<sup>1913</sup> Odd Fellow's Hall (where several Black dock locals met), and the Union Sons Hall were all vibrant sites where avant-garde Black working-class music, African American spirituality, and high-stakes political meetings of union members all took place under one roof. On some weekends, these three events might happen within twenty-four hours. Like the Watts Happening Coffee House or the warehouses where the Arkestra rehearsed, these were liberated spaces where music took on a special "expressional" character.

It is important to recognize that Black churches, Black music, and Black people were attacked during the 1890s and early 1900s in much the same way that Ayers described North Carolina antiblack campaigns that linked cultural expressions to political disruption.<sup>1914</sup> The power of organized labor provided an important bulwark between practitioners of the Black culture and the repressive power of the state. Both government ordinances and "grassroots" mobilizations of white "citizens committees" expressed their repulsion with all forms of Black culture. The YMCA was but one organization that called upon "every good man and woman" in New Orleans to find sites of disorder, file affidavits, and go to court to displace such residents and performances from their neighborhoods.<sup>1915</sup> Under the banner of public sanitation, self-styled progressive reformers linked prostitution and Black depravity. As Emily Landau surmises, "All sorts of entertainments

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<sup>1913</sup> Donald M. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005), 68.

<sup>1914</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>1915</sup> *New Orleans Item*, December 30, 1902; quoted in Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 229.

fell under the rubric of ‘disorder’...It seems that any celebratory behavior involving people of color, especially if it involved a group, was perceived as disorderly.”<sup>1916</sup>

A plethora of affidavits and petitions to city council speak to this fact. Paul Capdeville wrote to the city in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “We the white residents beg of your honor not to issue any more permits to negros [*sic*] in the eight hundred block of Adams St. for parties or Fish Frys [*sic*] as they are a nuisance to the neighborhood and keep them until all hours of the morning.”<sup>1917</sup> Fish fries were common sites for Black music, as well as providing important spaces for interracial contact, as described earlier. These spaces were threatening to the operation of white supremacy and public “cleanliness” for their interruption to segregation and their powerful showcasing of Black musical culture.

For similar reasons, Black benevolent societies were attacked. One letter complained of noise at Providence Hall, which was run by the Ladies Providence Benevolent Association, of which Buddy Bolden’s mother was a member. Donald Marquis wrote that “old, old timers in the neighborhood still remember Buddy playing at Providence Hall.”<sup>1918</sup> It was a hall that clarinetist George Lewis recalled standing outside of as a young boy, late at night, where he listened to and absorbed the new music.<sup>1919</sup> Unlike the young Lewis, the reformers detested its late night revelry and attempted to shut it down:

[T]he undersigned commissioners of Philip Park on Clark Place who are also property holders and residents and the residents of the immediate vicinity of the corner Philip and Liberty [streets] do hereby protest against the colored hall at the above corner known as the Ladies Providence Benevolent Association Hall, insofar as the giving of Balls, Parties, Dances and the like in said hall at such

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<sup>1916</sup> Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013), 134, 229.

<sup>1917</sup> Papers of Paul Capdeville, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>1918</sup> Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 69.

<sup>1919</sup> George Lewis and Alice Zeno, Interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

unreasonable hours. The doors of said Hall are opened at about 8:30 P.M., and the music and dancing at 9:30 or 10:00 pm and last until the small hours of the morning and thereby disturbing the public peace and also causing crowds to congregate on the banquette and in the park especially after 10:00 pm.<sup>1920</sup>

As these examples show, music seems to have been especially singled out by self-styled reformers. A resident and property owner wrote to the city council in 1902 to complain about “concerts” in his neighborhood. “My tenants complain that the performances are continued into a late hour of the night that the negroes become drunk and boisterous... in fact, while the performance lasts pandemonium reigns supreme.”<sup>1921</sup> Also in 1902, the *Times Picayune* condemned “the hoodlums and blacks” for “forcing blood” at a concert where “Kid Ory, a heavy footed labourer” was charged with murder.<sup>1922</sup>

In 1905, Dr. T. A. Duggan brought a petition to the mayor “signed by more than one hundred citizens” calling on the Mayor to stop the “issuance [*sic*] of permits to any colored social club to hold festivals in Dixie Park.” In addition to the “disgraceful language” that the men and women of the “colored ‘social clubs’” were said to utter, the ire of their anger was directed at “a very discordant brass band playing indeterminable ‘ragtime’ selections” which played “all day and all night.” The mayor resolved to only issue permits that would allow music until midnight.<sup>1923</sup>

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<sup>1920</sup> Letter, June 5, 1899, City Council Papers, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>1921</sup> City Council Papers, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. See Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 142.

<sup>1922</sup> New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, June 16, 1902.

<sup>1923</sup> *Daily Picayune*, August 25, 1904. Ragtime, of course, was singled out for attack at both local and national levels, including by white musicians. The President of the American Federation of Musicians made a strong denunciation in 1901: “The ragtime crazy has lowered the standard of American music as compared with other countries. We have duty as well as business to look after, and we will not give way to a popular demand that is degrading.” See “War on Ragtime,” *American Musician*, July 1901; quoted in Karl Koenig, *Jazz in Print (1859-1929)* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 63. In July of that year, *American Musician* noted that a “national association of musicians, in convention at Denver solemnly swore to play no ragtime, and to do all in their power to counteract the pernicious influence exerted by *Mr. Johnson, My Ragtime Lady* and others of the Negro school.” The author of the article, however, disagreed with this attitude: “Ragtime is here to stay. It’s the people’s music.” “Suppression of ‘Ragtime,’” *American Musician*, July 1901; quoted in Karl Koenig, *Jazz in Print (1859-1929)* (Hillsdale, NY:

Reformers also attacked sites of Black political activism. From the 1870s onward, the Colored Veterans Benevolent Association, an organization reaching back to the War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans, held their meetings at the Ramon Urbeso Hall, at 322 Marais Street, in the heart of what would become Storyville. In 1899, property owners there claimed that the veterans constituted a nuisance and petitioned the mayor to that effect. The mayor declined to renew the Association's permit, and the historic Black veterans association was uprooted.<sup>1924</sup>

A sampling of complaints to City Council demonstrate the increasing antiblack component of daily life, a process that reflected how “folkways were replaced with stateways”<sup>1925</sup> in the words of the historian J. Morgan Kousser. Longshoremen's Hall, however, was rarely attacked, and was never forced to move its activities, save for one revealing instance, which I will discuss below. Union halls mobilized folkways, giving them a special “expressional” character, to successfully push back against stateways. The spaces had distinct power due to Black waterfront unions' strategic bargaining power in city politics, allowing them to operate with more clout that enabled them to protect and house the culture. Not only able to win concrete gains from capital and place Black activists in prominent positions in public life – the *Times Picayune* often profiled Black labor leaders, as I have shown here – but they were also able to harness those gains and the democratic culture within the union to strengthen Black working-class culture and solidarity.

The story of Mother Anderson is instructive in this regard. Anderson was a renowned medium of the African American Spiritualist Church who was based in Chicago. She was initially

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Pendragon Press, 2002), 63. As James Weldon Johnson noted in 1912, “No one who has traveled can question the world-conquering influence of rag-time.” James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912; New York: Knopf, 1955), 309. Yet, in its incubation days, it met heavy resistance by the likes of the New Orleans YMCA and Dr. Duggan.

<sup>1924</sup> City Council Records (1899), City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>1925</sup> J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 262-263.

hesitant to start a second church in New Orleans because, according to one of her followers, Mary Johnson, she was afraid she would be a victim of police harassment.<sup>1926</sup> She was right to be concerned, as attacks on Black spirituality and religion at the legislative level happened early and fast with the fall of Reconstruction governments. The City Ordinance 13347 against fortune telling and magnetic healing was passed and revised several times between 1879 and 1920. It prohibited, in the words of the act, “fortunetelling, predicting future events, and all the phases of mediumship, clairvoyance, etc.”<sup>1927</sup> The “etc” signaled that the state retained the power to arbitrarily denote Black spiritual practices as illegal. The ordinance was used to attack several upstart Black Baptist churches, of which there was about fifty by in 1900, which were also cited under ordinances for noise complaints.<sup>1928</sup>

Mother Anderson did open a church in 1917, and she chose to do so at Longshoreman’s Hall. Apparently, the LPUBA felt they had the political strength to resist the ordinance that prohibited her form of divination—and they did, as she was not shut down in the space. She may have crossed paths here with Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong, and Kid Ory, who, as Margarita Guillory notes, also performed here.<sup>1929</sup>

Many scholars have noted the profound and interdisciplinary influence of the Baptist influence on early jazz. Drummer Bill Matthews remembered that Bolden played with “a moan in

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<sup>1926</sup> “Extract from Interview with Mary Johnson,” September 19, 1939, folder 28, Federal Writers Project Collection, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University of Louisiana; quoted in Margarita Simon Guillory, *Spiritual and Social Transformation in African American Spiritual Churches: More than Conjurers* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2017), 35.

<sup>1927</sup> City Ordinances, Book 11, Series C.S. (11714-13464), Ordinance 13347 C.S; Kodi Alphonse Roberts, “The Promise of Power: The Racial, Gender, & Economic Politics of Voodoo in New Orleans, 1881–1940” (Ph.D., Illinois, The University of Chicago, 2012), 208.

<sup>1928</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 74.

<sup>1929</sup> Margarita Simon Guillory, *Spiritual and Social Transformation in African American Spiritual Churches: More than Conjurers* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2017), 35.

his cornet that went all though you, just like you were in church or something...make a spiritual feeling go through you. He had a cup, a specially made cup, that made that cornet moan like a Baptist preacher.”<sup>1930</sup> Historian Jason Berry has argued that Baptist performance cultures and spiritual rituals spanned not only blues musicians but the entertainment and cultural infrastructure of New Orleans. “Rural churches released a memory stream in the ring shouts, dancing, and ecstatic worship among many of the 40,000 black folk who fled Louisiana plantation poverty between 1880 and 1910 for dreams in the shambling metropolis. The flowing spirituality in small New Orleans churches hit a countercurrent in the jaunty rags played in taverns, dancehalls, parks, and brass band parades.”<sup>1931</sup> Thomas Brothers argues that 60% of Black Louisianans were Baptist and imagines that these infusions between the music and the religion “must have happened bit by bit, here and there.”<sup>1932</sup> Both Berry and Brothers describe a fluid, flowing, and decentralized process by which Black Baptist aesthetics became felt in early jazz.

However, these connections were more situated and directly interacting than most accounts represent. Kid Ory’s comments suggest that Bolden’s Baptist inheritances were largely based at Longshoreman’s Hall:

Bolden got most of his tunes from the “Holy Roller Church,” the Baptist church on Jackson Avenue and Franklin. I know he used to go to that church, but not for religion, he went there to get ideas on music. He’d hear these songs and he would change them a little. In those Baptist churches, they sometimes had drums and a piano while the people sang and clapped their hands. Sometimes they would have guests and invite a trumpet player or a trombone player to come over and play with them. What we are doing now is about sixty years

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<sup>1930</sup> Quoted in Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 43.

<sup>1931</sup> Jason Berry, *City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 166.

<sup>1932</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 42.

behind what happened then. That's where Buddy got it from and that is how it all started.<sup>1933</sup>

Longshoreman's Hall was located at the corner of Jackson and Franklin. It is quite probably that more than once, Bolden played a show there in Saturday evening, only to stay Sunday morning for the service, where he drew intonations and inspirations for a new sound.<sup>1934</sup> Thus, while many have remarked on the "communally-based practices" of Baptist churches and their particular "musical-kinetic-social interaction,"<sup>1935</sup> there has rarely been a connection to the meaning of these union halls, the actual physical site and institutions that were supporting these endeavors.

Longshoreman's Hall was in the heart of uptown, and within walking distance of Kid Ory's 2135 Jackson Avenue home, where he lived from 1910-1915. Other blues and jazz musicians lived nearby over the years, including Jelly Roll Morton, Johnny Dodds, Mutt Carey, King Oliver, Mamie Desdunes, and Buddy Bolden. According to research done by Kid Ory biographer John McCusker, many of Ory's Black neighbors were "laborers and freight handlers," likely dockworkers. The neighborhood also included many German and Italian working-class immigrants, and many worked on the docks.<sup>1936</sup>

In addition to the Longshoremen's Hall and the Odd Fellows Hall, Bolden was also a frequent feature at the Union Sons Hall, which was located on the corner of Perdido and South Rampart Streets. The building and the dances were organized by the Union Sons Relief Association, which dated back to 1866 in order provide aid to freedpeople migrating to New Orleans. Officers of the organization were laborers in a variety of working-class fields, and their

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<sup>1933</sup> Peter Nissen, "Buddy Bolden," *Storyville Life*, <http://www.storyvillelife.com/buddy-bolden/>, accessed May 11, 2020.

<sup>1934</sup> In addition to Marquis, see also Jason Berry, *City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 171.

<sup>1935</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 46.

<sup>1936</sup> John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), Chapter 6.

work was intimately tied to the union movements.<sup>1937</sup> Bolden played here so frequently that it became known as “funky butt hall,” a tribute to the new forms of moving and grooving that defined a sophisticated and kinetically innovative form of dancing.<sup>1938</sup> ““Buddy Bolden is the first man who played blues for dancing,” noted Papa John Joseph, a bass player who migrated from St. James Parish.<sup>1939</sup> Music was not the only Black cultural form at Union Sons Hall. Saturday night dances, lasting until five in the morning, would be turned over to fulfill a different medium of spiritual need a few hours later. “On Sunday mornings,” writes Marquis, “the hall served as the First Lincoln Baptist Church.”<sup>1940</sup> Bolden was directly connected to the leadership of the Union Sons Relief Association: his sister, Cora, was married to Alex Reed, who was the organization’s third deputy marshall in 1904.<sup>1941</sup> Within twenty-four hours, one might attend a meeting discussing rights and strategies for the Black laborer, an all-night Blues dance, and then a Baptist sermon. The connection between Bolden’s playing and the Baptist church repertoire was particularly important for the development of his unique sound. Bolden also included actual church songs into his repertoire, such as “When the Saints Go Marching In” and “Go Down Moses.” As we will see, the politics of these spaces were also influential, and their location portended to this influence.

How much agency do we give to the Unions that invested in these spaces and had such ambitious programming? Were they personally invested in the events that they organized? One way we can assess this is two revealing articles in the *Picayune*, one of which highlights a

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<sup>1937</sup> Henry C. Dibble, notary public, March 1, 1866, incorporation papers for Union Sons Benevolent Association of Louisiana, in Notarial Archives, Civil District Courts Building, New Orleans. See Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 67.

<sup>1938</sup> See Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 67.

<sup>1939</sup> Quoted in Jason Berry, *City of a Million Dreams: A History of New Orleans at Year 300* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 1671,

<sup>1940</sup> Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 67.

<sup>1941</sup> Edouard Henriques, notary public, February 6, 1907, minutes of a meeting of the Union Sons Benevolent Association that includes a list of officers elected on November 9, 1904, in Notarial Archives, Civil District Courts Building, New Orleans.

shutdown campaign aimed at Longshoreman's Hall, and another which accuses a rival union leader of a shooting at one of the hall's dances. These two articles reveal quite a lot about the union's direct involvement with their late-night dances.

At one point, the Longshoremen's Protective Union Benevolent Association did come under attack by the white citizen's councils. In 1904, the *Picayune* reported that "E.S. Swan [*sic*], President of the Colored Longshoremen's Association, in regard to the petition of residents in the vicinity of Franklin Street and Jackson Avenue, asking the authorities to allow no more balls or entertainments at the Longshoremen's Hall, states that he would like the public to give a chance."<sup>1942</sup> Apparently, a shooting took place that alarmed neighbors, who then brought a petition to the city government for the hall to cease its musical activities. Unlike other such shut down campaigns, however, in this case the *Picayune* published a voice of the Black community, which contributed to the campaign's victory. The *Picayune*, in fact, lavished Swann with praise a month later, and even published a full column picture of him in their article on the 1904 Labor Day parade, which was extremely rare for the Black leadership of any movement. Apparently, the paper appreciated that "Swan [*sic*] is prominent on the levee, and was the means of putting down the radicals in his society and keeping peace between the two races on the river front."<sup>1943</sup> His actual political position is rather complicated to discern from existing documentation, but perhaps the paper appreciated his leadership in the near-breakdown in race relations that took place in 1904.

Another article suggests that Union leaders themselves attended dances at Longshoreman's Hall. This is revealed when Swann's leadership was challenged by John B. Williams in 1905, in an open debate published in the *Picayune*. Williams accused Swann on mismanaging funds,

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<sup>1942</sup> *Times Picayune*, July 30, 1904.

<sup>1943</sup> *Times Picayune*, September 6, 1904. I have neither time in this chapter nor sufficient clarity to understand if Swann was "radical" or "conservative," and neither, it seems, do Eric Arnesen or Daniel Rosenberg in their volumes.

consolidating power in the organization, and undermining democratic norms. Swann countered that Williams and his friends were responsible for the 1904 shooting during a dance at Longshoremen's Hall, which led to a temporary cessation of musical activities. Williams, interviewed by the *Picayune*, defended himself against these allegations: "I wish to deny most emphatically that the shooting at the Longshoremen's Hall can possibly be traced to our faction... We are peaceable men and it is not right that the public be led to believe that Longshore Hall [*sic*] was closed on account of our doings." Williams denies responsibility for the violence, but he does not deny his presence, which would have been a logical way to clear his name. While this is not confirmation that Williams was there, it is clear that he was associated with dance spaces enough to be tied to the shooting, either for opportunistic reasons on the part of Swann or a valid perception that his "faction" was behind the violence. Either way, both Swann and Williams found the social dances to be of critical importance to the functioning of the organization, to their reputation as Union leadership, and to their presence in the community.

### **7.5 Movements and Meanings as Contextual in the Work of Buddy Bolden**

The immense amount of programming that union halls provided for early jazz points to a synergy between working-class political and the popular culture of the rural to urban migrants. Did the organizers consider blues to be a part of their community's political development? Paul Garon's *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* argues that "the revolutionary nature of the blues" lies in its "fidelity to fantasy and desire." Therefore, "the blues generates an irreducible and, so to speak, habit-forming demand for freedom." Garon explains:

The black working-class blues singer rejects and even ridicules the repressive norms of the white bourgeoisie, negating bourgeois ideology by the mere act of non-acceptance. Although this form of rejection/negation does not necessarily comprise an effort to change society's structure, it was, historically, the principle vehicle of the poetic revolt for blacks throughout roughly the first third of this century. Other forms of revolt, although existent, did not relate to the black working class on the same level that blues did...It is certainly worth asking why it was that no ostensibly revolutionary organization that period "adopted" the blues or jazz in any way, or even considered them sympathetically.<sup>1944</sup>

The Black dockworkers unions did just what Garon suggests was left undone. Blues was so much a part of the union's cultural and political work that they publicly appealed to keep their social dances operating. Understanding how music helped shape a common identity for organizers, members, family members, and the community helps us expand our notion of class formation and our nation of agency.

For labor historian E.P. Thompson, class is not as a static category but "a social and cultural formation, arising out of processes which can be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable period."<sup>1945</sup> Thompson places considerable emphasis on how classes construct themselves, and fight in order to construct themselves, rather than "being" constructed by material forces. These constructions require time, resources, and creativity. "Labor solidarity, of course," writes Rosenberg, "did not follow inevitably from the nature of the work or the pressure of the movement. It was hammered out through experience."<sup>1946</sup> Music was not only found in the social dances or the parades—it was built into the very fabric of the organizational culture, as demonstrated in the earlier discussions of the musicality of mass meetings.

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<sup>1944</sup> Paul Garon, *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* (1975; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1996), 54; see also Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 163-164.

<sup>1945</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 11.

<sup>1946</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 68.

Of course, Black musicians themselves did not need to be “convinced” by union organizers of the oppressive nature of state power and capital in turn of the century New Orleans. Musicians brought their own form of critique, their own imaginative and kinetic popular culture, and their own tradition of a dissident consciousness. Some of Buddy Bolden’s repertoire speaks to this. Donald Marquis has shown through his checking the New Orleans Police Department Arrest Records that the lyrics of Jelly Roll Morton’s 1940 recording of “Buddy Bolden’s Blues” reference an actual historic arrest of a friend of Buddy Bolden’s. Frankie Dusen, in 1904, was arrested for “loitering,” and was sentenced to jail by judge J. J. Fogarty. Morton was reproducing lyrics that Bolden, or his bandmembers, had adapted to the song. Marquis also notes that others in Bolden’s circle were arrested for petty offenses, such as Cornelius Tillman, who was arrested from being drunk in Lincoln Park in 1904, and Henry Zeno, a dockworker and cotton teamster (like Pops Foster) who was arrested “failure to straddle the car tracks” with his wagon. Such alleged crimes were aspects of racial profiling, and Bolden was not afraid to narrate these in his work.<sup>1947</sup> Police brutality was a major concern for Black residents and Black musicians in New Orleans”<sup>1948</sup> The Robert Charles ballad, which commemorated the Black revolutionary of the same name who attacked white police officers who were harassing him and led to an explosion of indiscriminate white mob violence against New Orleans’s Black citizens, continued to resonate in popular musical circles during this time.<sup>1949</sup>

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<sup>1947</sup> Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 110.

<sup>1948</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster: New Orleans Jazzman, as Told to Tom Stoddard*, ed. Tom Stoddard and Ross Russell (Berkeley, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 40.

<sup>1949</sup> K. Stephen Prince, “Remembering Robert Charles: Violence and Memory in Jim Crow New Orleans,” *Journal of Southern History* 83, no. 2 (2017): 297–328.

These songs were recognized as subversive, and were directly repressed by law enforcement. Sidney Bechet's recollection of performing Bolden's music in the Eagle Band is one example of this:

When we started playing Buddy's theme song, 'I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say,' the police put you in jail if they heard you singing that song. I was just starting out on clarinet, six or seven years old, Bolden had a tailgate contest with the Imperial Band. Bolden started his theme song, people started singing, policemen began whipping heads.<sup>1950</sup>

These were some of the insurgent forms of commentary that early jazz produced. That its lyrics themselves were prohibited from being uttered in public spaces signified they disturbed the "peace," and forced Black musicians to find new ways to encode and transmit the meanings of such songs. One of the simplest, of course, was to render them purely instrumental and remove the voice altogether. As Bechet recalled, after that instance, "The Eagle Band was good for the blues, they played every Saturday night. They played Bolden's theme song, but they did not sing any words to it." But surely, the words were not forgotten, and likely the performance of the song would summon, like a mnemonic device, the silenced lyrics and recall the spirit of dignified refusal in this substitutive process.<sup>1951</sup>

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<sup>1950</sup> Sidney Bechet, "Buddy Bolden Stomp," *The Grand Master of the Soprano Sax and Clarinet*, Columbia Record, CL 836, side 1, no 4; Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 111.

<sup>1951</sup> Bolden's anthem and its intersection with Black resistance to police violence had rural precedents. In Pedee county, South Carolina, the following song was sung:

Yonder come be high sheriff.

Comin' atter me,

Comin' atter me,

Comin' atter me;

Yonder come de high sheriff

Comin' atter me

An' no one to stan' my bond.

Robert Duncan Bass, "Negro Songs from the Pedee Country," *Journal of American Folklore* 44, no. 174 (December 1931): 423. See also Cecelia Conway, "The Banjo-Song Genre: A Study of 'High Sheriff,' Dink Roberts's Man-against-the-Law Song," in *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*, ed. Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zugg III (Duke University Press Books, 1989), 135.

It was precisely musicians' ability to organize popular dissent and communal pride that made them effective partners for unions. The popular, dissident consciousness that they transmitted was exactly the type of base building union organizers needed to develop if they were to be successful in resisting the hegemony of capital and white supremacy on the docks. Such linkages between organized dock labor and the blues support radical economist and political theorist Clyde Woods' analysis of jazz: "Later labeled Jazz, the right of individual and community self-defense, the ethic of social justice, the critique of plantation relations, the desire to create sustainable communities, and the sound of rebellion against fascism were deeply embedded in the Blues movement led by 'King Bolden.'"<sup>1952</sup>

Bolden's proximity to working-class politics influenced the themes of his own musical output. The 1906 song, "Don't Go Way Nobody"—a song by Percy Cahill which was often performed by Bolden's band—was explicitly connected to the exploitation of dockworkers. The song's lyrics are as follows:

I've worked on the levee front  
Right in the broiling sun;  
I've worked on every steamboat too  
That ever dare to run  
Worked at the docks  
From morn till night,  
And burnt out lots of men;  
When the whistle blew to knock off  
The boss would yell out then;

(Chorus)  
Don't go way nobody  
Don't nobody leave,  
Cause I need somebody  
To help me I believe,  
Stay right here, and be nice,  
I don't want to tell you twice

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<sup>1952</sup> Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Laura Pulido (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 77.

Don't go way nobody  
Don't nobody leave.

The piece is not particularly ambiguous in its portrayal of the exploitative conditions of levee work. Despite the long hours and high levels of burnout described by the narrator, an ungrateful boss would still use the whistle, mobilizing sound as a social discipline, in order to squeeze some more value out of his workforce. The next verse depicts the dangers of railroad travel, and connects this labor extraction to everyday theft:

I used to be a railroad man,  
Had wrecks most every night;  
The reason that I quit the job,  
Was getting too much fight.  
I saw a man, hold up a train,  
Passengers were in dread;  
He held a big gun in his hand,  
And this is all he said.

(Chorus)  
Don't go way nobody  
Don't nobody leave,  
Cause I need somebody  
To help me I believe,  
Stay right here, and be nice,  
I don't want to tell you twice  
Don't go way nobody  
Don't nobody leave.

Fascinatingly, the words of the boss, “Don't go way nobody,” reappear in the mouth of a thief, perhaps suggesting that the levee foreman and the railroad robber both create their wealth through expropriation of the Black working class. Looking at the sheet music cover art, the association with bosses and criminality is even more apparent when one sees a mysterious, off-screen white hand both choking and grabbing a dizzy person of color. The song is interesting not only for its political message, but also because it inverts the celebration of the outlaw that was common in African American culture at the time. As Lawrence Levine notes, the trope of the

“hard, merciless toughs and killers [who] confronted and generally vanquish[ed] their adversaries without hesitation and without remorse” was often weaved into lore and songs in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Black America.<sup>1953</sup> K. Stephen Prince similarly suggests in his study of the stories of Robert Charles that “The archetype of the bad man provided a convenient, prefabricated narrative frame,” which allowed revolutionaries such as Robert Charles to be quickly embraced.<sup>1954</sup> Not so in this example: from the point of view of the Black working-class, the common thief takes on a highly politicized nature in its equalization with the boss at the docks, and the nature of value and power of elites to define what constitutes crime and theft is called into question. Resistance cannot be accomplished through petty theft but by directly challenging the organization of the labor process and its management of time.

Bolden’s frequent performance of this song suggests it resonated with his dockworking audiences. Rather than, or in addition to, considering how Bolden may have been radicalized by his experiences with organize labor, we can also consider how Bolden was giving these audiences at Longshoremen’s Hall a political education. In “Don’t Go Way Nobody,” what links the two figures is the command to stay. One commands with a whistle, another with a gun, as if to say that the sovereignty of the foreman’s whistle was backed up with violence. This song critiqued the whistle using a different language and medium than Michel Foucault, but with arrived at a similar conclusion: “[T]he rhythm imposed by signals, whistles,” explains Foucault, contained “orders imposed on everyone [as] temporal norms that were intended both to accelerate the process of

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<sup>1953</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1977), 407-8.

<sup>1954</sup> K. Stephen Prince, “Remembering Robert Charles: Violence and Memory in Jim Crow New Orleans,” *Journal of Southern History* 83, no. 2 (2017): 297–328.

learning and to teach speed as a virtue.”<sup>1955</sup> The lyrics of working class blues songs played by Buddy Bolden also contested this sonic language of whistles and signals tied to capitalist work rhythms. Instead of Bolden learning from union organizers, like his neighbor Swann, his performance of this song indicates that he was teaching Swann and other attendees at Longshoreman’s Hall the psychological modalities of capitalism that were articulated in its sonic regime.

If blues and jazz was thus “already” radical, with their own expressions of dissent and nuanced forms of critique, it is still true that dockworker unions provided a very specific and highly politicized context. Black union leadership in New Orleans understood their work as a task that transcended local politics. They recognized they were battling the largest shipping companies of the world. They resisted them and negotiated with these forces’ local representatives among New Orleans’s political and economic elites. In these struggles, they were partially subduing the racism of their white counterparts in order to form a historic alliance that complicates the dominant assumptions about the Jim Crow south. Kelley suggests that Black workers “participated in or witnessed oppositional politics—whether in community institutions or households—before they entered the workplace or the labor movement. Average black workers probably experienced greater participatory democracy in community- and neighborhood-based institutions than in the interracial trade unions that claimed to speak for them.”<sup>1956</sup> Within the Longshoremen Union Protective Benevolent Association and the Black dockworkers movement at large, an institution

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<sup>1955</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 381.

<sup>1956</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 75–112.

and a movement shows that early jazz lived at the intersection of both worlds, and perhaps this fusion helps explain the creative renaissance that its practitioners and its audiences participated in.

The various renditions of “Buddy Bolden’s Blues,” and Bolden’s performances of “Don’t Go Way ‘Nobody,” (as discussed in Chapter 4, one rendition of the song addressed the unfulfilled promise of land reform), point to how its lyrics could articulate freedom dreams, contemporary news of police brutality or excessive punishment, or the hypocrisy of elected officials who only gave lip-service to Black emancipation but worked against its realization. Such announcements were also denouncements, expressing a counterpublic sphere operating through Black music and with the participation of Black musicians. Shana Redmond argues that “Black diasporic publics grew in presence to their radical exclusion...and communicated with one another through music...musico-political counterpublics were composed of members of Black and interracial social justice organizations, radical of-color intellectual and cultural workers, and allied actors from myriad class and national backgrounds.”<sup>1957</sup> Michael C. Dawson describes Black counterpublics as “the institution and political base...[that] facilitate communication and criticism across...diverse elements.”<sup>1958</sup> In this way, “those who are socially evicted” were able to “build power, below the radar” in Black New Orleans.<sup>1959</sup> These constellations of movement participants would announce their presence, and realize their social visions, most powerfully in the Labor Day parades.

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<sup>1957</sup> Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 9.

<sup>1958</sup> Michael C. Dawson, “A Black Counterpublic? Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s) and Black Politics,” *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 217.

<sup>1959</sup> Rachel Brahinsky, “Leaning into the Blues Epistemology,” *Antipode Online* (blog), April 30, 2012, <https://antipodeonline.org/2012/04/30/leaning-into-the-blues-epistemology/>.

## 7.6 Labor Day Parades and Gender in Brass Bands and Union Life

As noted above, Labor Day parades were massive, and they became an important part of Black New Orleans's oral histories of brass band culture. In 1906, glowing words from the otherwise conservative *Picayune* were written about the Black revelers who, under the banner of labor solidarity, played music to bring light to the workers' cause. "[T]here was something fine, something proud about watching those men, transformed from draymen and porters, barbers and stevedores, into bandsmen who could *play* that music, who wore uniforms that sported three rows of brass buttons."<sup>1960</sup> The article captures the magic of everyday life, the surreal eruption of collective improvisation against the quotidian rhythms of backbreaking labor. Labor Day activities lasted long after the parade, and following the march, dances, food, and drink combined in a full day's worth of activities, usually at the Longshoremen's Hall. Dock locals stood at the head of these parades: they made up the Black parade's first six contingents, and bands were connected to each of these.<sup>1961</sup>

Bolden was so associated with the balls sponsored by organized labor (and those at Longshoreman's Hall in particular) that he was frequently contracted for Labor Day parades by the dockworker unions. It was performing at one of these that Bolden fulfilled his last professional job before, as Pops Foster puts it, "he blew his top."<sup>1962</sup> On Labor Day in 1906, Bolden played in the parade band for the Black Central Labor Council, the composite of Black unions that spanned every organized industry in the whole city. Sadly, this particular parade would be Bolden's last; he had a nervous breakdown and would not play in public again. His absence would have surely

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<sup>1960</sup> *Picayune*, September 4, 1906; quoted in Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 64. Emphasis in original.

<sup>1961</sup> *Picayune*, September 6, 1903; quoted in Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 64.

<sup>1962</sup> Pops Foster, *The Autobiography of Pops Foster*, 46.

been noted by Longshoremen Union President at the time, E.S. Swann, who had been Buddy Bolden's next-door neighbor when the latter was growing up at 2309 First Street. Buddy Bolden's brother-in-law, Alex Reed of the Union Sons Relief Association, would have also noticed and likely mourned his absence; or that of his drummer, Henry Zeno (and husband of George Lewis's mother, Alice Zeno)<sup>1963</sup> who was a teamster who used mules to transport cotton on the docks. Each of these parades would have remembered Bolden's sound as they marched down the street, transforming the vision of the docks into a sublime scene of Afrodiasporic ritualized celebration that looked to the past and future simultaneously.

I argue that the collective improvisation that characterized these parades reproduced the collectivity of the union movement, and the cooperative functioning and ethos of union halls in particular. As Michael Denning argues, "The work of music is not only the performance of a social order; its very forms present an abstract model of the social order."<sup>1964</sup> Clarinetist Michael G. White suggests this style of improvisation was unique to New Orleans' parade culture. "Where else could you be a Jazz musician for years and never play a solo? Every song was done in the New Orleans ensemble improvisation style," with each musician fulfilling different dialogical functions, with White's clarinet "filling in empty spaces" and "dancing and weaving in response to the trumpets' lead."<sup>1965</sup> Thomas Brothers argues that this polyphony should be specifically understood in the context of the Black church. "The clarinet, especially, often seems like a one-man effort to reproduce the heterophonic richness of a congregation, even though it also

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<sup>1963</sup> Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 84.

<sup>1964</sup> Michael Denning, *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (New York: Verso Books, 2015), location 262 (kindle version).

<sup>1965</sup> Michael G. White, "A Musician's Life in the Second Line," in *Freedom's Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 121.

foregrounded instrumental virtuosity so fiercely that the resemblance to vocal practice gets covered up. Collective improvisation may thus be read a...transformation of church heterophony.”<sup>1966</sup> Longshoremen’s Hall was an important space where the heterophonic richness of the congregation, the open and creative ears of Black musicians, and the determined and calculating organizational energy of union leadership could all congregate.

This section considers the Labor Day parade as a sort of exteriorization of the union hall. It was another instance where art-based community making was woven into the transformation of everyday life. Labor Day parades exteriorized the politicized spirituality of the union halls. These activities were part of a praxis that Gregory Katsiaficas has called the “decolonization of everyday life,” allowing for and relying on the “conscious spontaneity” of improvisors,<sup>1967</sup> but predicated on long-term planning and organization. Labor Day parades required months of meticulous planning and were sites of struggle over race, representation, and communal self-affirmation. The parades were also, literally, hard work. Hours-long routes required that musicians and marshals engage in collective listening and coordinated action, often in blistering heat. Like union halls, these manifestations of communal performance connected the various cultural and ideological fibers of the Black working-class identity, simultaneously projecting spiritual, aesthetic, and political dimensions.

For some participants, the synchronous activity of parades with brass bands had the potential to transform the Earthly realm, perhaps even briefly displacing Louisiana’s administrative state within the psyche of those assembled. While Michael G. White was describing

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<sup>1966</sup> Thomas David Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 45.

<sup>1967</sup> George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006),

a contemporary social club parade, not longshoremen Labor Day parades, his words resonate with descriptions of parading musicians in the early 1900s.

[T]o survive in Doc Paulin's band was almost like being in the military, You had to be disciplined and tough. You were thrown into a situation in which you had to learn how to listen, improvise, and contribute by following the basic role of your instruments. You had to develop a strong body and lips to endure the long, hot, and sometimes grueling six-hour plus Social Club parades.<sup>1968</sup>

Yet the intense labor of these moments generated the potential to “transform earthy reality” through collective social action. “[T]he crowd grew larger and the music and the dancing increased in intensity, the entire scene was converted into a kind of spiritual dimension in which there was total freedom, a uniting of souls, and a constant reinterpretation of earthly reality.”<sup>1969</sup> The hard work paid off through the summoning of the multitude, as the sound of individuals became subsumed into the soulful movement of a collective.

The cultural work of these parades produced a distinct phenomenology which returns us to a concept raised early in this chapter: the contestation of time in the struggle between capital and its dissidents. Charles Hersch has argued that the kinetic properties of Black brass bands parades spoke to their hopes to reverse the traditional hierarchies of power and value, expressed through unique fusions of physicality and displacements of time. For Hersch, the downbeat, especially “in the case of a march,” impels the listener to “militarily...put one foot in front of another.” Black Labor Day parades, imbued with the values of the sanctified church, reversed this. “Where the downbeat represents obedience and uniformity, the upbeat, and even downbeats two and four, is a surprise, a deviation, an interruption.” He suggests that these Black “Musicians discovered and

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<sup>1968</sup> Michael G. White, “A Musician’s Life in the Second Line,” in *Freedom’s Dance: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans*, ed. Karen Celestan and Eric Waters (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), 121.

<sup>1969</sup> *Ibid.*

created a new species of time of themselves and listeners” in response to proletarianization and the embedding of industrial work cycles on the docks. As he notes more generally, “tempos also carried racial and class connotations,” and in the case of the New Orleans Black underclass, these associations expressed an alternative epistemology to the dominant order. Breakthroughs in time, then, invited “listeners to cast off their established identities and try on new modes of being.”<sup>1970</sup> The importance of the musicians cannot be overstated; as Paul Gilroy suggested, they represented a “priestly caste of organic intellectuals” for precisely their ability to transmit this “distinct and embattled cultural sensibility which has also operated as a political and philosophical resource.”<sup>1971</sup>

Michel Foucault has also noted the importance of time as a function of epistemology and subject-formation, especially in its conjunction with industrial and militaristic rhythms. “[T]he more time is broken down,” he writes, “the more its subdivisions multiply, the better one disarticulates it by deploying its internal elements under a gaze that supervises them, the more one can accelerate an operation, or at least regulate it according to an optimum speed; hence this regulation of the time of an action that was so important in the army and which was to be so throughout the entire technology of human activity.” Foucault is especially concerned with the intersection of the human body with power and knowledge, mediated through imposed time. “In becoming the target for new mechanisms of power, the body is offered up to new forms of knowledge. It is the body of exercise, rather than of speculative physics; a body manipulated by

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<sup>1970</sup> Charles B. Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 46-47.

<sup>1971</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 76.

authority, rather than imbued with animal spirits; a body of useful training and not of rational mechanics.”<sup>1972</sup>

Thus, the “counter-rhythms,” “counter-time,” or what one might call an Afrodiasporic “calendar from below” that was embedded and reproduced within Black mass culture was essential. New forms of “power” and “knowledge” were mobilized from below, in order to service their own political goals and spiritual well-being, in order to contest the imposition of capitalist time-cycles. In this, musicians and organizers’ goals were linked, articulating similar responses at different levels. As Black screwmen union president A.J. Ellis noted, “our job [as organizers] is fight for the highest possible wages for the lowest possible amount of work.”<sup>1973</sup> This refusal of the “accelerate” directive was a refusal of the demands of capitalism writ large, and in particular its destruction and manipulation of human bodies, which was so evident in dock labor’s tendency to mangle bodies in its demand for rapid commodity distribution to markets near and far. As Hersh notes, “[R]outinizing industrial labor monopolized time in a particularly dehumanizing way. Improvising musicians controlled time and how it felt—for what is music but sound unfolded in time?”<sup>1974</sup>

Speed was an important variable in this quest for phenomenological self-determination: “Black lower class audiences rejected the popular dance forms....in favor of “the slow drag,” a languidly paced bluesy music to which “couples would hang on to each other and just grind back and forth in one spot all night.”<sup>1975</sup> Pleasure was an immediate and immensely powerful way to recuperate one’s body, and unashamed connections with sexuality were powerful affirmations of

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<sup>1972</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 380, 382.

<sup>1973</sup> Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken*, 65.

<sup>1974</sup> Hersh, *Subversive Sounds*, 47.

<sup>1975</sup> Hersh, *Subversive Sounds*, 46.

the collective body. Often the slow songs had suggestive lyrics; typical titles included “If You Don’t Like My Potatoes, Why do you Dig so Deep?”<sup>1976</sup>

If these slow drags in the Longshoreman’s Hall were geared towards working-class adults, the Labor Day parades were distinguished by the participation of all age groups. These new rhythms, incubated and developed in the union halls, became communally felt and projected into the public. As jazz saxophonist Fred Ho has suggested, the phenomenology of swing felt in these marches is “a multiple rhythm perspective, a shared communal bond of time, motion and energy.” Like Hersch, Ho suggests this emerged in New Orleans at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of a Black response to capitalist reorganization of time and space.

“Jazz” is the music of the emerging African American proletariat or urban, industrial working class. Its predecessor, blues, was the music of post-Reconstruction. Just as old socioeconomic formations persist while new ones supplant them, so also do musical forms overlap. A new music arose with a new class of urban workers, grafting the rich and unique African American music of formerly enslaved plantation laborers, rural tenant farmers, and migratory workers onto a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, industrial, and multiethnic urban culture of growing capitalist America...Its entire history has been the freeing of time, pitch, and harmony from fixed, regulated, predictable standards. Every major innovation in the history of the music has been from the struggle of musicians to attain greater and greater levels of expressive freedom through liberating the two basic fundamentals of music: time (meter) and sound (pitch/temperament/harmony).<sup>1977</sup>

Ho suggests that the fusion of transition of blues to jazz occurs in the process of proletarianization of a distinct blues epistemology with ties to Reconstruction and its aftermath. I supplement his thinking with the observation that Reconstruction activists turned their energies and activism to Black dockworkers’ movements, which assumed a leading role in New Orleans’s Black politics at

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<sup>1976</sup> Barker, *Buddy Bolden*, 20.

<sup>1977</sup> Fred Ho, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader*, ed. Diane Fujino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 99. Ho has serious reservations about the word “jazz.”

the end of the nineteenth century. If there was any neat or clean transition from blues to jazz, it was deeply informed by the social spaces that parades both represented and actualized, a performance that was both rehearsed and also improvisatory.

In addition to Hersch, Ho, and Foucault, the philosopher Henri Lefebvre has located social change as a rhythmic phenomenon. “Disruptions and crises always have origins in and effects on rhythms: those of institutions, of growth, of the population, of exchanges, of work, therefore those which make or express the complexity of present societies. One could study from this perspective the rhythmic changes that follow revolutions.”<sup>1978</sup> The new rhythms of Labor Day brass bands reflected a change that took place during Reconstruction and its aftermaths. What new forms rose in response to Jim Crow capitalism?

An account by George Lewis and Alice Zeno reveals an interesting detail which may fill in our chronology. In an interview in 1958, Lewis and Zeno suggest that the polyrhythmic congregations associated with the Black Baptist church were not “always there,” they emerged during their lifetimes. George Lewis remembers that “when I was a kid...I used to fellow the parades and the funerals and the music in the church—[it] was different then it is now. Because now, you can almost dance by the music in the church.” Alice Zeno adds, “Oh, sure, they dance by the music in the church now.” When interviewer Bill Russell asks if they had “all that hand clapping and foot[work],” Lewis interrupts, “No, they didn’t have that at all,” to which Alice Zeno agrees: “No, they didn’t have hand clapping in the church—not at all.”<sup>1979</sup> Independent churches were a legacy of Reconstruction, and unlike the vote, public schools, or land reform, the Black church was able to develop relatively independently during both military and radical

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<sup>1978</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: A&C Black, 2004). 44.

<sup>1979</sup> George Lewis and Alice Zeno, Interview, November 14, 1958, Hogan Jazz Archive.

Reconstruction. As Behrend has shown in his study of Reconstruction Black social movements, churches organized mass meetings, social aid, and education in many areas of the rural south. The development of new forms of feeling time and rhythm in such spaces may have been a response to the zeitgeist of Reconstruction, or its collapse. It could have been that these rhythmic changes in the Black church followed revolution, or were produced in the long revolution of Reconstruction, or responded to their fusion and protection by dockworkers' union halls such as the LPUBA.<sup>1980</sup>

Black musical culture—these ways of listening and gathering—were built in these spaces. But so too was the very technical foundations of their playing, its “material reality,” of hundreds of musicians: their embouchures, their wrist strength, their use of diaphragm, all being trained and finessed in dialogue with one another and their dancing and marching co-participants. Bodies were “re-disciplined” for the needs of community, and not for packing cotton bales aboard cargo ships. These mobile schools, a kind of collective practicing, meant that techniques could pass hands, mouths, and ears quickly. And the long periods of strenuous labor undertaking ceremonial work deeply strengthened the collective technique of practitioners. Danny Barker held that a true practitioner of the new music had “to be a working-class man, out in the open all the time, healthy and strong.”<sup>1981</sup> Similarly, Johnny St. Cyr once said that a “working man” had “the power to play hot”: “You see, the average working man is very musical.”<sup>1982</sup> In St. Cyr’s analysis, jazz was

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<sup>1980</sup> Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>1981</sup> Danny Barker in Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin’ to Ya* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), 14.

<sup>1982</sup> Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 101.

explicitly working class—and depended on this association for its technique, authenticity, and masculinity.

Just as “race is the modality by which class is lived,” a discussion of masculinity is in order to understand the ways in which “Gender is the modality in which race is lived,” as Paul Gilroy wrote. “An amplified and exaggerated masculinity has become the boastful centerpiece of a culture of compensation that self-consciously salves the misery of the disempowered and subordinated.”<sup>1983</sup> Masculinity, like race and class, means different things in different historical moments, informed by a matrix of historical conditions and discourses by dominant powers, and its mobilization by oppressed groups often had their basis in imposed discourses stemming from the particularities of the Western colonial project. Historian Mrinalini Sinha has deftly show that British colonizers portrayed their South Asian colonial subjects as childlike and effeminate. Employing the Orientalist trope of the “effeminate babu,” British colonizers rendered South Asians unfit for self-rule, and thus South Asian activists both in their countries of origin and in the diaspora appropriated the language of manhood to fight imperialism and colonialism.<sup>1984</sup> Black men, too, were defined as childlike and unfit for self-governance.<sup>1985</sup> These discourses, in fact, had global implications. In his study of cultural construction of “revolutionary and radical manhood” of South Asian and IWW anticolonial activists in Victoria, British Columbia, Kornel Chang argues that though “representations of radical and revolutionary manhood were critical to mobilizing a

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<sup>1983</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 85.

<sup>1984</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>1985</sup> William R. Black, “How Watermelons Became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 1 (2018): 64–86.

militant subaltern politics, they also performed complex and contradictory work that reproduced dominant systems of meaning underpinning capitalist relations and imperial rule.”<sup>1986</sup>

These contradictions are apparent in New Orleans because the emphasis on masculinity by some New Orleans jazz musicians marginalized the women musicians who second-lined during New Orleans’s early jazz days. “While it is true that women were less likely than men to play brass instruments in New Orleans marching bands,” notes Sherrie Tucker, “nonetheless some did.”<sup>1987</sup> Tucker cites several examples. While little is known about them, four women appear in a 1928 photo of the Tonic Triad Band, an African American New Orleans brass band.<sup>1988</sup> Tucker also cites the work of New Orleans jazz historian Karl Koenig, who found in Houma, Louisiana the town band included a number of women.<sup>1989</sup> Tucker asks, “when and where will women enter our common-sense pool of knowledge about jazz history and culture?”<sup>1990</sup>

The union movement, and Labor Day celebrations in particular, can help as fill in some of this picture. Women were a critical part of both formations. As Rosenberg notes, “Women attended Labor Day events as trade unionists, in the garment, shirtwaist, and domestic helpers (Black) unions as members of auxiliaries, such as Ladies Longshoremen Benevolent Association and Cotton Yardmen’s Aid (both Black) and others; and as community as family members.”<sup>1991</sup>

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<sup>1986</sup> Kornel Chang, “Mobilizing Revolutionary Manhood: Race, Gender, and Resistance in the Pacific Northwest Borderlands,” in *The Rising Tide of Color: Race, State Violence, and Radical Movements across the Pacific*, ed. Moon-Ho Jung (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 96.

<sup>1987</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Jazz History Remix: Black Women from ‘Enter’ to ‘Center,’” in *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation*, ed. Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 131.

<sup>1988</sup> Antoinette D. Handy, *The International Sweethearts of Rhythm: The Ladies’ Jazz Band from Piney Woods Country Life School* (Landham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998); The photograph appears in Al Rose and Edmond Souchon, *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 194.

<sup>1989</sup> Karl Koenig, “Women Pianists in Early New Orleans Jazz,” in *The Jazz Lectures* (Running Springs, CA: Basin Street Press, 1996), 18.

<sup>1990</sup> Tucker, “Jazz History Remix: Black Women from ‘Enter’ to ‘Center.’”

<sup>1991</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Rosenberg cites the Allen T. Woods, *Woods Directory: A Classified Colored Business, Professional and Trade Directory* (New Orleans: Allen T. Woods, 1912).

During the 1907 strike, wives and mothers of strikers furnished food supplies to their families through any means necessary. “Many of them worked in white men’s kitchens, and supplies they carried home at night under their aprons contributed greatly toward holding out,” remembered Oscar Armiger.<sup>1992</sup> Perhaps they would have agreed with the words of contemporary hip-hop artist Immortal Technique: “You call it the five fingered discount, I call it the transition to socialism.”<sup>1993</sup>

Indeed, women saw their role as not only keeping their families fed but ensuring that the strike was successful. One mother of a strikebreaking son attacked him for his scabbing. “A son ob mine take de place ob a union man!” she yelled out to her neighbors, justifying the public beating she administered in the street near their Irish Channel home. In another neighborhood, a nonunion teamster driving with his mules and wagon was attacked by a group of Black women. After the scab fled, the women destroyed the wagon. “[B]y sheer strength [they] lifted the float from the muddy street and held it suspended, while others of the band, skillfully using wrenches, removed the wheels. The float was left a wreck in the middle of the street.”<sup>1994</sup> Such incidents repeated themselves all around New Orleans, and they were often led by Black women, causing boss draymen to give up the transportation of cotton to the docks.<sup>1995</sup> Nor was such activism unprecedented: during a 1902 strike, the union president noted that “Two...scab drivers were run off their floats at the corner of Poydras and Liberty Streets this forenoon by women and children.

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<sup>1992</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005).

<sup>1993</sup> Immortal Technique, “Harlem Streets.”

<sup>1994</sup> *Picayune*, October 16, 1907; quoted in Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 152.

<sup>1995</sup> Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 153.

No men took part.”<sup>1996</sup> Thus, while Ameringer was correct that dockworkers “hated scabs like poison,” he was incorrect when he said there is nothing “ladylike about dock wallopers.”<sup>1997</sup>

Clearly, these examples do not answer Sherrie Tucker’s challenge to jazz scholarship. Disrupting a cotton wagon is the not same act as playing trumpet. But my argument is that both were activities seen in the larger context of building and sustaining a new movement, a new path to liberation. Black women demonstrated their foundational role in supporting and sustaining strikes in much the same way that Black women were critical organizers of Black voting efforts during Reconstruction, compelling husbands and other men to vote for Republican politicians who represented their interests and socially shunning them when they failed to do so.<sup>1998</sup> Their critical leadership in challenging strikebreakers points to deep communal structures that animated the culture of militancy, of which Labor Day parades were such an important part. These were “rehearsals for revolution” which taught musicians, organizers, and paraders what the society they hoped to build could feel like and sound like.<sup>1999</sup>

## 7.7 Conclusion

The contributions of labor organizers to Black New Orleans far exceeded the workplace. Dockworker unions were a bulwark against the fascist creep of white supremacy in the everyday

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<sup>1996</sup> *Picayune*, December 16, 1902; Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 207.

<sup>1997</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 204.

<sup>1998</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” in *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, ed. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>1999</sup> Dani Snyder-Young, “Rehearsals for Revolution? Theatre of the Oppressed, Dominant Discourses, and Democratic Tensions,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 29–45.

life of the city, protecting Black culture from state and civilian repression. They maintained a legitimacy, even among the white conservative press, that individual Baptist churches or Storyville brothels could not have. They had a power that mayors and industry owners were forced to recognize. They brought racist senators to the negotiating table even when it threatened their “honor” as white men. This is not to suggest that they were somehow more legitimate or credible than other Black spaces. It does suggest, however, that Black dockworkers’ unions were aware of their unique power, and mobilized this power to provide safe spaces for different forms of Black working-class culture.

In addition, militancy on the docks fueled a globally-rooted analysis of power and oppression, and taught working people that applying pressure on the weak points in the capitalist supply chain could result in significant material and socio-political gains for their community and impoverished peoples more broadly. This took effort and conscious decision making on the part of activists. While Black popular resistance to Jim Crow and Redemption was powerful, its unity with working-class and anti-capitalist politics was not “inevitable.” Union organizers worked overtime to link these forms of expression, to connect local hierarchies of race and class to global historical forces, and Black community structures to the newest confrontation with capital. William H. Penn united brass bands, benevolent societies, readings clubs, and organized labor in the very activities of his life.

These formations profoundly affected musicians and contributed to the zeitgeist of the time. Their lessons informed the values of community members and compelled them to fight for a deeper cause linked to a whole world in struggle. It is why Black women would attack strikebreakers, even when these strikebreakers were their own sons, to preserve the strength of a strike; it is why Willie Parker would say, so matter-of-factly, that scabs should be killed for defying

labor solidarity on the docks; it is what Oscar Ameringer recognized when he said that he heard in Black chants he heard that “Their unionism was far more than a matter of hours and wages. It was a religion, and their only hope of rising from the depths of slavery [that was] more cruel in many respects than chattel slavery.”<sup>2000</sup>

Black waterfront unions do not only represent a breakthrough in the United States South. They represent a breakthrough in the history of the United States labor movement. They show us what a labor union could be, what a labor movement in the United States with independent Black leadership might have looked like and felt like. In this sense, Black waterfront unions belonged to a tradition of Black working-class appropriation of other organizational forms and making them their own. In the antebellum era, Caribbean carnival celebrations, Catholicism and Protestantism, and freemasonry were all subject to Afro-Atlantic appropriation and reinvention. In a similar sense, Kelley’s description of Black communists in Alabama during the great depression can help us appreciate how trade unionism in New Orleans’s docks was animated by its strong linkages to Black culture:

Alabama's black cadre interpreted Communism through the lenses of their own cultural world and the international movement of which they were now a part. Far from being a slumbering mass waiting for Communist direction, black working people entered the movement with a rich culture of opposition that sometimes contradicted, sometimes reinforced the Left's vision of class struggle....The presumed objects of Communist machinations became subjects and agents in making their own history.<sup>2001</sup>

One of Kelley’s brilliant and revealing observations relates how Black spirituals became adapted to integrate communist-inflected struggles for land and labor. Despite the official

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<sup>2000</sup> Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 199.

<sup>2001</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (1990; Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 333. 19.

Communist Party line which assigned a counter-revolutionary meaning to organized religion, Black communists used spirituals such as “We Shall Not Be Moved” as musical forms to create new Party songs that reflected concrete struggles over labor and land. The Share Croppers Delegation from Alabama at the Farmers 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference in 1933 sang “We shall not be moved,” and they adapted its lyrics to reflect evictions and anti-communist terror:

Just like a tree that’s planted by the water—  
We shall not be moved.  
We fight against evictions, etc.;  
We fight against the terror, etc.<sup>2002</sup>

Perhaps we can consider Buddy Bolden’s appropriation of spirituals, or Percy Cahill’s “Don’t Nobody Move From Here,” in this context. The “40 cents an hour song” mentioned in the 1880 protest on the docks may have adapted hymnals or melodies from spirituals to communicate earthly demands. Struggles over the control of the labor process transformed not only the lyrical content of songs, but also politicized and contributed to new phenomenologies of time and groove that were emerging in late 19<sup>th</sup> century New Orleans.

Music thus became an arena of cooperation that existed alongside, independent to, and, paradoxically, dependent on the strength of organized labor. I have tried to capture this duality, a duality that connects the autonomy of Black resistance from below, an “organic” tradition that did not need the validation of organized labor to give it coherence and explanatory power. Yet, it is clear that the organized labor movements of the levees did provide Black musicians with years of income, audiences, and institutional protection from “progressive” reformers. In the most conservative assessment, Black labor movements at least provided an invested, politicized audience that contextualized Black celebration in the rising tide of their strength on the docks, and

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<sup>2002</sup> Rose Bradley, “41-42-43!” *Labor Defender* 9 (December 1933): 80.

not with a receding horizon of justice that some scholars have argued was the dominant zeitgeist for the Black urban poor in 1890s and early 1900s New Orleans.

In my analysis, the docks were a site of Black working-class mobilization and constructed novel forms of postbellum solidarity primarily because they were supported by, and they harnessed, a particularly mobile form of communication that was able to integrate pleasure, community, and cultural diversity: Black music. Thinking through E.P. Thompson's theories of class formation and foregrounding recent literature on New Orleans's polyglot mobile working class, and utilizing unpublished and less-researched testimonies from jazz musicians, newspapers, and archeological studies, I have shown how music was shaped by this motley crew to help explain working-class social solidarity, deep in the deep south, deep into the Jim Crow years. My highlighting of these moments is not an attempt to negate, overshadow, or explain away the very real existence of deadly racism on the part of both elite and lower-class whites. It was, however, a way to explain why New Orleans was able to sustain an interracial labor movement on the docks in ways that Mobile, Galveston, and other port cities were unable to achieve to the same degree.

In some ways, the findings from this chapter might seem new or strange because they complicate axioms dominant in the humanities which resist grand narratives or theories that centralize power and resistance in a single location. In centering dockworkers or union-centered analysis, I am aiming to complicate such axioms. In *the History of Sexuality*, Foucault makes the following argument:

Points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence, there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances....[M]ore often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings,

furrowing across individuals themselves...marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.<sup>2003</sup>

A port, however, especially one like New Orleans, *was* emerging as nodal point of a highly sophisticated and potentially vulnerable supply chain, is a single locus within a plurality. This does not mean its forms are more or less important than more decentralized resistance, perhaps in the sharecropping Black Belt or the stealing of food by female domestic servants. But such nodal points can provide organizational possibilities that other spaces may not be able to sustain. In fact, the alliance of dockworkers' power with the mobile and transitory resistance of the blues suggests that different "diffusions" of power and resistance can come together in ways that suggest the coexistence of multiple "levels" simultaneously, of centralized and decentralized power. When these act in tandem, new formations erupt that challenge our assumptions about history.

I believe that this model of a dialogical and dialectical materialism offers an important and viable analysis into the nature of resistance, power, and the mechanisms of social change, and one which does not negate forms of participatory, democratic resistance. If anything, the latter—the blues tradition and exceptionally powerful legacies of plantation dissidents which have been discussed extensively in the previous four chapters—created the condition for, a brief time, a locus of resistance to emerge. I believe this is critical to emphasize: that there was leadership, there was a physics of power, which responded powerfully to the structure of global capitalism. Such a resistance physics could not be activated, however, without the transductive properties of the jazz-blues continuum. Jazz did not gain power because it was delinked from organized political movements. It was given space to incubate precisely because of the power and innovative initiatives of Black organized labor.

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<sup>2003</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 95-96.

## 8.0 Conclusion

*Beautiful Cuba and its beatifical landscapes  
those that the foreigners admires, are dying  
Today they are covered in shadows  
They seem sad, covered in flames  
Your large sugar plantations  
Their immense tobacco fields  
Their precious café farms  
Are showered in blood*

*Ese Cuba bulliciosa la de los lindos paisajes  
La que admira el extranjero esta muriendo  
Hoy envuelta en penumbra  
Se ve triste la alborada, cubierta en llamas  
Tus grandes cañaberales  
Sus inmensos tabacales  
Sus preciosos cafetales  
Son bañados en sangre*

- Arsenio Rodriguez, "Cuba llora"

I recently participated in a musicians' march in Pittsburgh where jazz was used to honor the dead assassinated by police brutality. Jazz's centrality to new movements of resistance reflects the prominence of Afro-Louisianan music in relation to resisting what Marcus Rediker calls the "four violences": the expropriation of the commons both in Europe and in the Americas; African slavery and the Middle Passage; the exploitation and the institution of wage labor; and the repression organized through prisons and the criminal justice system.<sup>2004</sup> Black Atlantic musicianers fought back against the expropriation of the commons by building new ones, whether in the Eureka commune in Tampico, the maroon communities on the US-Mexican border, or in

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<sup>2004</sup> Marcus Rediker, "The Red Atlantic, or, 'a Terrible Blast Swept over the Heaving Sea,'" in *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, ed. Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun (New York: Routledge, 2003), 111–30.

communal aid organizations with music education at their core, such as the Bulbs Orphanage in Plaquemines Parish or the Boys Town orphanage in Omaha. Their music challenged the scope and scale of slavery, helping to expand the gardening complex and honoring communal labor relations. In rare but essential cases, music accompanied and imagined the wholesale burning of cane and slavery's social relations entirely. Black musicians built counter-structures to wage labor and the hegemony of capital through the cooperative solidarity economy of sex workers and musicians in Storyville, and in their symbiotic relationship with New Orleans's powerful dockworkers' union. And, although this topic is outside the scope of this dissertation, Black music commented upon and challenged the dehumanization of the prison-industrial complex.<sup>2005</sup> Indeed, the musical resistance of expropriated African workers and their descendants evolved in direct relationship to the evolving system of dispossession. One could say that the subsistence struggles during slavery moved from *local defensive* actions, to a *regional and national resistance*, to a *global 'movement of social movements'* focused on defending and extending life-centred subsistence social relations. Black music was the doppelganger, the shadow, of capitalism's dispossession, expanding its world-historic role by forming a socializing alternative even as it was expropriated and exploited as a commodity itself—a dynamic not lost on the musicians who formed collectives, innovated new structures of musical communication, and used music to increasingly speak out against injustice and colonization as social movements waxed and waned.<sup>2006</sup> As Salim Washington said,

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<sup>2005</sup> Anthony Nocella and Kim Socha, "Old School, New School, No School: Hip Hop's Dismantling of School and Prison Industrial Complexes," *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 4, no. 3 (September 24, 2013).

<sup>2006</sup> Michael C. Heller, *Loft Jazz: Improvising New York in the 1970s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 73.

“the music is the antidote to the existential crisis,” the existential, and now ecocidal, crisis of slavery and capitalism.<sup>2007</sup>

This dissertation is also intended as a challenge, maybe even a provocation, to historians. Perhaps because of its aural nature, its lack of hard archival remnants (especially before recordings), rare is the historian who centers musical performance within their arguments. Yet perhaps this is because of the perceived specialization that musical analysis requires. Such “training,” however, can be a poison pill. As Susan McClary writes:

Now it is quite clear to most listeners that music moves them, that they respond deeply to music in a variety of ways, even though in our society they are told that they cannot know anything about music without having absorbed the whole theoretical apparatus necessary for music specialization. But to learn this apparatus is to learn to renounce one's responses, to discover that the musical phenomenon is to be understood mechanistically, mathematically. Thus nontrained listeners are prevented from talking about social and expressive dimensions of music (for they lack the vocabulary to refer to its parts) and so are trained musicians (for they have been taught, in learning the proper vocabulary, that music is strictly self-contained structure). Silence in the midst of sound.<sup>2008</sup>

I encourage historians to resist this false conceit. Yes, learning tonal relationships, understanding the mechanics of music, appreciating a well-constructed song or solo, identifying time signature and rhythms—these are lifelong skills that deserve to be cultivated alongside a knowledge of Spanish, French, and Kreyol. Historians, like all human beings, should challenge themselves to develop these skills if they have the means to do so. But if is someone unequipped with these, should they systematically ignore music’s role in social movements critically? Are they suddenly “unequipped” to handle these questions? Hardly. If anything, as McClary points out, the opposite

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<sup>2007</sup> Salim Washington, Interview with Author, also in “Black Red and Green Revolutionary Eco-Music Tour,” Barnard Vermont, February, 2014, 15:06-16:14, <https://vimeo.com/91707067>

<sup>2008</sup> Susan McClary, “Afterword: The Politics of Silence and Sound,” in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, by Jacques Attali, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 161–70.

is true: the entire apparatus of music theory is aimed at reorganizing one's entire sensorial relationship and their understanding of music into an extremely specific and "universalizable" unit: the musical moment passing "through a homogenous and empty time."<sup>2009</sup>

The abdication of the all-important music of New Orleans and Afro-Louisiana during the long nineteenth century to either music theorists or positivist music encyclopedists has severed the most communal of art forms from the epic drama of the plantation and the counter-plantation. Yet as I have endeavored to demonstrate, it is impossible to separate what Rebecca Scott describes as Louisiana's Reconstruction "alliance of urban activists and rural voters" from the work of musical instructors such as James Humphrey;<sup>2010</sup> nor can we fully understand what Max Flomen calls the "alternative emancipations" on the U.S.-Mexican border without hearing the maroon Afro-Latin significations of the blues-corrado matrix or the influence of Mexican brass in New Orleanian ears.<sup>2011</sup> We certainly cannot comprehend how "inseparable were union activities and the larger world of black social and political life" without foregrounding how musicians made up the Black rank and file of dockworkers.<sup>2012</sup>

Yet the methodologies and attention to recovering microhistory that these social historians have provided is something essential for jazz studies. For example, the historian of Jamaican slavery, Vincent Brown, took issue with Orlando Patterson's idea of "social death" during slavery. "[S]ocial death has become a handy general definition of slavery, for many historians and non-historians alike," one he calls an "agentless abstraction" that

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<sup>2009</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 395.

<sup>2010</sup> Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 42;

<sup>2011</sup> Max Flomen, "The Long War for Texas: Maroons, Renegades, Warriors, and Alternative Emancipations in the Southwest Borderlands, 1835-1845," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2021), 1-17.

<sup>2012</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

provides a neat cultural logic but ultimately does little to illuminate the social and political experience of enslavement and the struggles that produce historic transformations. Indeed, it is difficult to use such a distillation to explain the actual behavior of slaves, and yet in much of the scholarship that followed in the wake of *Slavery and Social Death*, Patterson's abstract distillates have been used to explain the existential condition of the enslaved.

In contrast, Brown examines a funeral rite of a popular “oracle of literature” and “songstress” on the slave ship *Hudibras* to explore the expression of an Afro-Atlantic “politics of history, which connects the politics of the enslaved to the politics of their descendants.”<sup>2013</sup>

These are debates that are seldom entertained in music and cultural studies. But they are sorely needed. Music history from below provides bridges across the abysses of postcolonial melancholy or history that privileges the “agentless abstraction” of discourse and textuality as an all-encompassing explanatory device. For instance, in *Segregating Sound*, Karl Hagstrom Miller explores the “sonic demarcation that corresponded to the corporeal distinctions emerging under Jim Crow.” Miller argues that “people’s music worlds were less defined by who they were—in terms of racial, class, or regional identity—than by what music they had the opportunity to hear.” Ignoring Black performance practices such as improvisation, call and response, or really, any sense of performance, Miller focuses on repertoire, and argues that Black musicians performed the same repertoire as white artists by virtue of their assimilation of Tin Pan Alley tunes. Miller foregrounds the cadre of folklorists like John Lomax or the American Folklore Society as defining Black or blues music as separate from white music, yet in doing so with comparatively few interviews or ethnographies of Black performance, Miller manages to deftly erase the meanings Black musicians

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<sup>2013</sup> Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1233.

assigned to their own work.<sup>2014</sup> Miller is committed to challenging the pernicious effects of racial categorization on Black artists; but I feel that his focus on these classificatory systems and their administration of race can sometimes overlook Black agency and their own cultural meanings about their work. Miller's work is not intended as a strawman. This paradigm is observable in several recent works, and the idea that music is "saying something" has been replaced with the paradigm that foregrounds how white music has been made to stand in for racial difference, as a means to connote Black inferiority and to consolidate both whiteness and white anxieties of modernity.

In its most extreme articulation, the idea that Black musical difference is a function of racialization from without takes the form of a white writer, Ronald M. Radano, attacking the Black musicologist Samuel Floyd for "reduc[ing] black music to a single, performative function." Radano seemingly takes issue with the "structuralist" elements of Floyd's argument. But it is also the idea that the music is "saying something" which seems to bother him. Radano criticizes with narratives of Black music that emphasize community and resilience. He argues that this "black musical metaphysic emerg[es] from America's own racial imagination," thus undermining "black music's more fundamental insurgencies, particularly with reference to the undermining of racial categories." He contents the idea of "black music play[ing] by a different set of rules [than white music]...brings us dangerously close to arguing that black music is something...outside realm of American experience overall."<sup>2015</sup>

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<sup>2014</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 4, 7, 122.

<sup>2015</sup> Ronald M. Radano, *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 47. See also Samuel A. Floyd and Ronald Radano, "Interpreting the African-American Musical Past: A Dialogue," *Black Music Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (2009): 1–10.

Radano, with this American-centric, or rather, United-States centric, gesture, does immense violence to the kinds of histories I have been foregrounding here. What he fears is implied by Black music is exactly what I posit: it was something “outside” the United States; it was deeply tied to an Afro-Atlantic and Caribbean counter-plantation movement; it was created in a cultural matrix skeptical of and hostile to the philosophical and political history of settler-colonial genocide and plantation slavery, even as it was created within that very history. What makes the concept of Black Atlantic counter-plantation the source of a distinct, alternative political and musical tradition that interacts with, but transcends, the nation state? Consider the words of Jean Casimir. He describes the intervention of the Haitian Revolution as truly distinct from any other that had preceded it. The people who would become Haitians were made up of:

...ibos, kongos, mandingas, toucouleurs, peuls, haousas ..., of at least 24 different groups that use their own criteria to identify themselves. These people have life projects totally unrelated to the plantation, although they cannot carry them out while the dominant system remains in force. These are the people are in Saint-Domingue; social actors who see their neighbors beyond any assessment based on their intended essence or within their pigmentation.

This vision of the human person that is imputed to the captive workers as a minimum common denominator supposes a shared history. That logical requirement encapsulates perhaps the most important difference between Haitians and the original populations of America, Asia, and Africa. These latter human groups coexist centuries and centuries before meeting the West, while Haitians are born in the process of resisting genocide and ethnocide. They are invented within the West and never exist on their own. Its link with the French metropolis is constitutive and significant minorities cannot imagine without this alter ego. The identity that Haitians build on a daily basis moves away from the West, without ever ending cutting the umbilical cord. More than at a crossroads, everything indicates for now that an identity and loneliness are manufactured in a dead end.

It is not about considering such circumstances as an advantage or a disadvantage; simply to appreciate the peculiarity and complexity of

Haitian history and the innovations constituting the human group. In the process of fighting colonial empires infinitely more powerful than themselves, the motley variety of ethnic groups eventually came together.<sup>2016</sup>

This dynamic identity emerged from perhaps one of the most diverse plantation worksites in existence at that time, and as Casimir notes, their constitution as a “motley crew” was predicated on the construction of values that were hostile to the plantation complex—a system of thought, production, community, and being that Casimir refers to as the “counter[-]plantation.”<sup>2017</sup> I have argued that these counter-plantation values “existed in a latent state” among the enslaved in Louisiana, were “revitalized”<sup>2018</sup> by the arrivals from Saint-Domingue, and continued to activate the imaginations and social practices of their decedences. Even those not directly enslaved, such as radical free people of color, shared an intense internationalism that understood counter-plantation institutions abroad and which framed their understanding of their Louisiana home. They had travelled the world and seen the extent to which the socially-defined vagaries of a slave system

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<sup>2016</sup> “ibos, kongos, mandingas, toucouleurs, peuls, haousas..., de por lo menos 24 diferentes grupos que utilizan sus propios criterios para identificarse. Estas personas tienen proyectos de vida totalmente ajenos a la plantación,12 aunque no los pueden realizar mientras el sistema dominante conserva su vigencia. Los hay en Saint-Domingue; actores sociales que ven a sus prójimos más allá de cualquier evaluación basada sobre su pretendida esencia o sobre su pigmentación. Esta visión de la persona humana que se imputa a los trabajadores cautivos como un mínimo denominador común supone una historia compartida. Esa exigencia lógica encapsula tal vez la más importante diferencia entre los haitianos y las poblaciones originales de América, de Asia y de África. Estos últimos grupos humanos conviven siglos y siglos antes de encontrarse con el Occidente, mientras que los haitianos nacen en el proceso de resistir el genocidio y el etnocidio. Se inventan en el seno del Occidente y jamás existen por sí solos. Su vínculo con la metrópoli francesa es constitutivo y minorías significativas no logran imaginarse sin este alter ego. La identidad que se construyen los haitianos a diario se aleja del Occidente, sin jamás terminar de cortarse el cordón umbilical. Más que en un cruce de caminos todo indica por ahora que se fabrican una identidad y una soledad en un callejón sin salida. No se trata de considerar tales circunstancias como una ventaja o una desventaja; simplemente de apreciar la peculiaridad y la complejidad de la historia haitiana y las innovaciones constitutivas del grupo humano. En el proceso de luchar contra imperios coloniales infinitamente más poderosos que ellos, la abigarrada variedad de grupos étnicos acaba por cohesionarse.” Jean Casimir, “Haití y Sus Élités: El Interminable Diálogo de Sordos,” *Foro Internacional* 194, no. XLVIII (2008): 807–41.

<sup>2017</sup> Jean Casimir, *The Caribbean: One and Divisible* (New York: United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1992).

<sup>2018</sup> Nathalie Dessens, “St Domingue Refugees in New Orleans: Identity and Cultural Influences,” in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004*, ed. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2008), 29-30.

were rather arbitrary, based on local custom and calculations of power and hegemony. No longer could such custom be presented as firm as the land it was on. First-hand experiences with liberative alternatives and revolution informed these migrants' engagement with the politics of Louisiana.

But perhaps something even more profound is at stake than Black historiography in these conversations: the possibility or the ethics of a scholarship that highlights Black resistance. At what point in these texts on racialization from above do we lose the agency of Black musicians and communities themselves? In this, we have a foundational text as a powerful avatar of an informed skepticism of any notion of a "resistant subject." In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that "Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West." By subject, Spivak refers to a "first-world social formation where the proliferation of communication in an internationally hegemonic language." Spivak argues that such creation of "subjects" is tied to an entire civilizational and, indeed, colonial project: "The question is how to keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other—This is not a program for the Subject as such; rather, it is a program for the benevolent Western intellectual." Spivak concludes, based on extensive case studies of South Asian women's' relationship to the British colonial occupation that "The subaltern cannot speak...Representation has not withered away."<sup>2019</sup>

Yet the idea that the subaltern cannot speak, or at least cannot speak in a way that the Western intellectual can perceive, is at odds with jazz practice in which "Saying something" is of utmost importance—as is the notion of a radical act of hearing the Other as a practice of

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<sup>2019</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 69, 89, 104, 108, n 57.

intersubjective recognition.<sup>2020</sup> Like “social death,” Spivak’s powerful insight about South Asian and radical historiography has become a tool to evacuate Black agency and consciousness in the musical forms we purport to study. But it ignores a Black Atlantic historiography that tells social movement history from below, such as that of Mumia Abu-Jamal or Angela Davis, both of whom argue that a Black subject or a Black female subject did indeed exist, and that it often constructed itself with emotional, psychological, and artistic labor.<sup>2021</sup> Michelle Wright challenges Spivak’s silencing of Black voices most succinctly in *Becoming Black* when she notes that “while prominent postcolonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha have offered numerous possibilities for a postcolonial subject, their derivations ignore all but those of South Asian diasporic descent, often ‘reinventing the wheel’ by bypassing those African diasporic works of theoretical significance in favor of dialoguing with their colleagues in poststructuralism.”<sup>2022</sup>

The legacy of poststructuralism in jazz studies has been a complicated one, and Spivak need not take responsibility for it. But the renaissance of a “subjectless study” in jazz, which sometimes substitutes (white) discourse as a primary agent of social change and meaning, has been an unwelcome development as far as the present author is concerned.<sup>2023</sup> Distinct from New Orleans positivists, in my opinion, such methodologies make little attempt to tell the vital story of Black resistance in the unending tragedy called modernity. In an age that attempts to foreclose alternatives to ecocidal capitalism with the deafening weight of revisionist narratives which

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<sup>2020</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>2021</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001); Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

<sup>2022</sup> Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2004), 26. For a discussion of poststructuralism

<sup>2023</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Deconstructing the Jazz Tradition: The ‘Subjectless Subject’ of New Jazz Studies,” in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, ed. David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Ira Goldmark (University of California Press, 2012), 264-284.

foreclose resistance to capitalism, jazz scholarship avoids the fine-grained analysis of social movements needed to unpack the multiple counterhegemonic meanings with which the music was heard. It is as if history was someone else's job. There are, of course, some incredible exceptions to this trend.<sup>2024</sup> Burdened by the weight of an un-exorcised postcolonial melancholy,<sup>2025</sup> the United States enters a barely masked fascism to protect its unipower status while a professional class of knowledge producers abdicate a world-historical responsibility to highlight the resistance that did, will, and currently does exist.

In this piece, I have hoped to show that the subaltern did speak. They also sang, danced, created symbolic orders powerful enough to martial the will of thousands of unarmed women and men to confront one of humankind's most genocidal institutions. This is the contribution of the Black subalterns of the Caribbean basin. And if we hear their worlds that made swing, then we can begin to outline the contours of a resource that has, like the "last angel of history," slowed the train of destruction called progress. This music still offers a model and resource for reimagining the 21<sup>st</sup> century as one of hope within a slowly unfolding apocalypse.<sup>2026</sup>

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<sup>2024</sup> Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Robin Kelley, *TheLonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (New York: Free Press, 2010).

<sup>2025</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>2026</sup> Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 395.

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