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THE AFRO-AMERICAN SLAVE MUSIC PROJECT:
BUILDING A CASE FOR DIGITAL HISTORY

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of History
in the Department of History
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ABSTRACT

This public history thesis project experimented with the application of new technology in creating an educational resource aimed at twenty-first century public audiences. The project presents the history, musicology, and historiography of Afro-American slave music in the United States. In doing so, the project utilizes two digital media tools: VuVox, to create interactive collages; and VisualEyes, to create digital visualizations. The purpose of this thesis is to assess how the project balances the goals of digital history, public history, and academic history.

During the production of the Afro-American Slave Music Project, a number of the promises of digital history were highlighted, along with several of the potential challenges of digital history. In designing the project, compensations had to be made in order to minimize the challenges while maximizing the benefits. In effect, this thesis argues for the utility of digital history in a public setting as an alternative to traditional, prose-based academic history.

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CHAPTER ONE:

PROMISE AND PERIL

In a society where computer and digital technology is rapidly expanding, the study of history has been slow to adapt. Though many scholars and organizations have made great strides in the advancement of digital history, the vast majority of historians are either involved in the most elementary forms of digital media (i.e. online articles, digitized archives, etc.) or do not take part at all.¹ This is due partially to the resistance of a traditionally prose-centered profession, but this issue also has to do with the perceived difficulty of computer technologies and standards, the time-consuming nature of managing a technique outside of one's area of expertise, and the lack of credibility afforded to many digital history projects. Despite these deterrents, a 2011-2012 study by Ithaka S+R has reported that the historical profession is already in transition towards digital research practices and communications mechanisms.² The study also noted that many of the scholars that are already using digital methods were self-taught and also use a network of collaborators to provide guidance.³ This finding challenges the misconception amongst historians that computer technology is too difficult or time-consuming. This chapter will introduce the subfield of digital history, outline the research agenda of this public history project, discuss the historiography of digital history, and finally outline the Afro-American Slave Music Project.

¹ Jennifer Rutner and Roger C. Schonfeld, "Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Historians," Ithaka S+R, December 10, 2012, 29. <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/research-publications/supporting-changing-research-practices-historians>.

² *Ibid.* 4.

³ *Ibid.* 29.

An Introduction to Digital History

New methods and formats are rapidly developing as computer technology changes, making digital history difficult to define. In a most basic definition, digital history is the use of digital media and tools for the practice, presentation, analysis, and research of history. Generally speaking, digital history involves the democratization of history by allowing essentially anyone with Internet access a voice.⁴ It also tends to encourage user participation and engagement by being non-linear and interactive.⁵

Digital history initially began with a focus on software, but the commercialization of the Internet shifted the focus to online networks. In 1992, the Library of Congress began offering online exhibits with its *Selected Civil War Photographs*.⁶ The following year, Roy Rosenzweig, Steve Brier, and Josh Brown produced the award-winning *Who Built America? From the Centennial Exposition of 1876 to the Great War of 1914* CD-ROM, which interweaved images, text, audio recordings, and videos in a visual interface with a text narrative. Also in 1993, the University of Virginia launched *The Valley of the Shadow*, a digital history project that entailed the digitization of primary historical documents.⁷ The Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University was founded in 1994 and has developed numerous digital

⁴ Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>.

⁵ William G. Thomas III, "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," in *Journal of American History* 95(2), <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/issues/952/interchange/index.html>.

⁶ "Selected Civil War Photographs," Library of Congress, American Memory, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>.

⁷ "The Valley of the Shadow," University of Virginia, Virginia Center for Digital History, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/>.

tools available to historians, such as Zotero⁸ and Omeka.⁹ In 1997, the University of Virginia founded the Virginia Center for Digital History (VCDH), the first digital humanities center devoted exclusively to history.

Although digital history has grown over the past two decades, a number of challenges have deterred widespread adoption. Some of these challenges include: developing efficient ways to determine the quality and authenticity of digital content; transitioning from archival preservation systems designed for non-digital media formats to digital preservation formats and standards that are relatively unstable; and increasing accessibility for users who lack access to technology due to demographic disadvantage.¹⁰ In addition, there have been institutional challenges to attracting academic historians to the subfield. With the nature of digital history comes the assumption that one must be an expert in digital technology and standards (i.e. coding and web design) in order to successfully create a project.

Over the course of the past decade, a number of tools have been developed that have made the practice of digital history more manageable for scholars who do not have a background in computer technology. The Center for History and New Media (CHNM), founded by Roy Rosenzweig in 1994, has been a leader in designing several digital tools that allow historians to arrange information and promote analysis, while presenting and allowing access to historical knowledge online. For example, the free, open-source content management system Omeka is

⁸ "Zotero," George Mason University, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www.zotero.org/>.

⁹ "Omeka," George Mason University, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://omeka.org/>.

¹⁰ John Frow, "The Archive under Threat," in *Memory, Monuments, and Museums: The Past in the Present*, ed. M. Lake (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press/Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2006): 137.

being increasingly used for online digital collections. Omeka allows users to publish and exhibit archival items. Omeka also allows user to present their collections in multidimensional ways, such as the GeoChron plugin developed by the University of Central Florida's Department of History to allow users to map items spatially and temporally.

Research Agenda

The Afro-American Slave Music Project

(<http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/home.html>) presents the public with a series of digital visualizations chronicling the development and dissemination of Afro-American music during slavery. Beginning with work songs, field hollers, Spirituals, and blues songs performed by slaves, African Americans have facilitated a unique blend of traditional African music with traditional European-American music to create a variety of distinct genres that have spread across the nation via migration and technological advances (i.e. records, radio, etc.). Because the music itself is not solely African but a unique American creation, the music is referred to as “Afro-American” throughout the project. This term distinguishes it from the term “African-American” music, which may imply that the genres were created by and enjoyed by African Americans exclusively; this is not the case, as these genres of music have European and American influences as well and are enjoyed by all regardless of race.

However, the content of the project is only secondary in its overall goal; these visualizations demonstrate the promises and challenges of digital history and how digital history can be incorporated in a public history setting. The project also demonstrates that a historian, with little knowledge of the technical aspects of computer technology, can utilize digital media

to present a historical topic that has traditionally been presented with prose. In doing so, the project is able to add spatial and temporal dimensions to the subject of Afro-American slave music and how it relates to the migration of people over time. Overall, the project combines the ability of a traditional thesis to analyze concepts in a simplified form with the added value of a visualization's ability to synthesize information.

The Afro-American Slave Music Project is designed to contribute to the field of public history and digital history rather than traditional, academic history. With the aid of digital media, a historian can present information in a clear, meaningful way that is comprehensible to the public. The benefits of using a presentation that is digital and visual, especially when dealing with a topic that maintains a close connection to time and space, as opposed to a traditional, prose document, will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 2. When discussing the topic of slave music, the role of the Great Migrations is absolutely essential in not only the dissemination of Afro-American musical styles but also in the evolution of musical genres that developed as a result of this change of context.

One of the major issues of the project is how public historians can mold a history that is not well-known and quite complex for a public audience. Related digital history issues arise in conjunction with this goal: developing visualizations for a history that is traditionally presented by text, creating interactive digital exhibits to increase interest and understanding, and managing the technical problems that arise while using computer technology and the Internet. Additionally, several public history obstacles become apparent: making history relevant to public

interest and presenting a dark and difficult history (i.e. slavery, racism, segregation, etc.) to public audiences.

During its development, the Afro-American Slave Music Project has addressed a number of research questions. Though digital platforms such as VisualEyes included many benefits, a number of pitfalls arose while implementing the project that drastically changed the visualization's scope, content, and organization (see Chapter 4). Additionally, one had to consider how to translate academic history into public history, especially in terms of purpose, audience, approach, and methods. Furthermore, it is important to determine how to incorporate the historiographical debates of acculturation and creolization into a public history project, as well as how to present these debates in a way that is interesting and easily understood by a public audience. Finally, one must consider how to address sensitive subjects, such as slavery and racism. Many of these research questions were anticipated, although several more arose as production progressed.

Historiography

Since the early 1990s, there has been considerable number of debates regarding the use of digital tools for the study of history. Some historians have been greatly enthusiastic about the prospect of using computers for history, while others have foreseen a lack of credibility and authenticity.¹¹ In *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on*

¹¹ Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University, CHNM, 2006).
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction>.

the Web (2006), Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig argue that there are several promises of digital history, listed as follows:

- Capacity – the availability of and capacity for space in digital mediums.
- Accessibility – the ability to reach wider audiences easier, faster, and cheaper.
- Flexibility – the availability of multiple forms of presentation, such as text, images, sounds, and videos.
- Diversity - the increased range of both audiences and authors.
- Manipulability – the ability to locate and track information quickly and efficiently.
- Interactivity – the ability of the user to have a more active role in history by enabling multiple forms of dialogue.
- Hypertextuality (or nonlinearity) – the option of navigating narratives and data in undirected and multiple ways.¹²

Likewise, they have acknowledged a number of potential hazards:

- Quality – the poor quality and lack of authenticity of information on the Internet.
- Durability – the deterioration of digital formats, software, and hardware.
- Readability – the lack of linear sequence in a narrative, making it difficult for the user to determine the beginning, middle, and end.
- Passivity – the failure to provide the user with the experience of understanding the lives of others.

¹² *Ibid.*

- Inaccessibility – the inequality of computer ownership and Internet access among different socioeconomic classes and countries.¹³

Like Cohen and Rosenzweig, recent scholars have become increasingly more accepting of the use of digital history. This is especially true in regards to education; for example, Randy Bass has concluded that using digital technology for educational purposes has been quite successful for inquiry-based learning, bridging reading and writing through online interaction, and making students' work public in new media formats.¹⁴ The arguments in favor of using digital media for history will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter.

Another subfield of public history that has emerged in recent decades is spatial history. Historian Richard White defines this new study as one that centers primarily on spatial analysis as opposed to temporal analysis, which is traditionally the "heart of the profession."¹⁵ *The Spatial History Project* outlines five ways in which spatial history operates outside of normal historical practice. Spatial history projects are collaborative, use visualization, require computer technology, are open-ended, and conceptually focus on space.¹⁶ This subfield typically uses "Geographic Information Systems (GIS), spatial analysis, and visualization graphical

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Randy Bass, "Rewiring the History and Social Studies Classroom: Needs, Frameworks, Dangers, and Proposals," in *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age*, ed. Roy Rosenzweig. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 96.

¹⁵ Richard White, "What is Spatial History?," Spatial History Lab (February 1, 2010). Accessed April 14, 2012. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>.

¹⁶ "About Us: About the Project," The Spatial History Project, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/page.php?id=1>.

representation algorithms to visually manipulate maps and graphics.”¹⁷ The Afro-American Slave Music Project is influenced by spatial history in that the goal is to present information geographically to show patterns in the migration and movement of slaves, freedmen, and music.

As David J. Staley argues in *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform Our Understanding of the Past* (2003), written prose has the “ability to reduce and simplify multidimensionality into one-dimensional chains... [enabling] analysis, the ability to see parts before wholes,” while visualizations have the “ability to expand to fill the multidimensional reality in which we live, allowing for synthesis, the understanding of wholes before parts.”¹⁸ In other words, this public history project will take the ability of a traditional thesis to explain concepts in a simplified form and combine it with the added value of a visualization’s ability to synthesize that information for greater understanding and public consumption.

The Afro-American Slave Music Project

The Afro-American Slave Music Project seeks to apply interdisciplinary methods in order to create a well-rounded, accurate depiction of the history and the influence of early Afro-American music in the United States. The goal of the visualization itself will be analysis of not only the historical and cultural implications of Afro-American music, but also the political and cultural repercussions of said musical movements. In doing so, the project will naturally address

¹⁷ David Zax, “Visualizing Historical Data, And the Rise of ‘Digital Humanities,’” Fast Company, June 8, 2011, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.fastcompany.com/1758538/visualizing-historical-data-and-rise-digital-humanities>.

¹⁸ David J. Staley, *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform Our Understanding of the Past* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 150.

the social conditions of African Americans, in effect presenting the struggles of this group over the span of a century or more. There will also be a great deal of considerations in regards to historiography, anthropology, sociology, and musicology.

The goal of such visualizations is first and foremost to educate the public, including school-aged children, about the history of the Afro-American musical tradition. In the past, African-American history has been marginalized in favor of mainstream American history. Because of this, the public has not been as well educated on the history of African Americans or other minorities in United State. In focusing on a topic in black history, the project fills part of the gap in the collective memory of the American public. Moreover, this public history project also follows many of the curriculum standards upheld by public schools across the country. Although there are variations by state, a general guide of these standards can be found in the National Standards for History, administered by the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) at the University of California-Los Angeles under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards, which will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 3. Secondly, the project contributes a unique feature to public history and digital history. A discussion of historiography is rarely presented in either public or digital history projects. The Afro-American Slave Music Project is among the first to present historiography to the public, showing that history is a dynamic study that changes over time as we discover more sources and hypothesize new theories.

Much of the outline of the visualization is collectively modeled after the various secondary sources on the topic of Afro-American music. The arguments of these scholars are

presented throughout the project with a degree of synthesis that is comprehensible to the public. There are, however, a number of primary sources used to exemplify these arguments. Primary sources include narratives from slaves and observers, narratives from musicians throughout the period, sound recordings and videos of musical performances, and photographs and artwork related to music. The majority of these primary sources come from published collections of narratives, digital archives of folk documentaries, and the Library of Congress archives.

The digital media that the project utilizes are VuVox and VisualEyes, a free online authoring tool to create interactive visualizations. Visualizations are graphics that organize “meaningful information in multidimensional spatial form.”¹⁹ The project thus combines traditional prose-written history with visualizations to create a presentation that will appeal to different types of learners and make the history of the topic easy to understand.

Another vital component of this public history project is the consideration of spatial history. In mapping the appearance of features and genres of Afro-American music in certain geographic locations, the researcher can analyze these changes in conjunction with the political, social, and economic context of the region, especially the major migrations of African Americans outlined by *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*.²⁰ This will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

²⁰ “In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience,” The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, <http://www.inmotionaame.org/>.

Content

History

With the globalization of hip hop music and contemporary R&B, African-American music has come to the forefront of American popular music. Though these two genres are well-known for their dominance by African-American musicians, other genres now perceived as "white" also share the same roots. These origins go as far back as the sixteenth century, when the first African slaves were brought to the Americas. Although these men and women were stripped of their freedom, they were still able to maintain some of their culture and history.

Beginning with work songs, field hollers, Spirituals, and blues songs performed by slaves, African Americans have facilitated a unique blend of traditional African music with traditional Euro-American music to create a variety of distinct genres that have spread all over the globe in popularity in most recent decades. Because this unique style of music has African influences and is also a product of American culture, it can properly be labeled "Afro-American."

The earliest form of Afro-American music was developed in the context of the Atlantic Slave Trade and slavery in the Americas, which radically changed the lives of slaves brought from Africa to the Americas. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately twelve million slaves were brought to the Americas against their will.²¹ Though music was essential to nearly every aspect of life in Africa, slaves had to adapt to new conditions which, as

²¹ Ronald Segal, [*The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa*](#) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 4.

a result, affected how they practiced and performed music.²² However, African slaves by no means abandoned their love of music; in fact, music served as a form of comfort in the difficult life of a slave.

During the colonial period, settlers made little effort in converting slaves. Generally, slaveholders felt that both Africans and African Americans were not human and therefore could not be Christian, or that giving knowledge to slaves about Christianity would incite rebellion. The first Africans that arrived in the New World, as well as the first generations of African Americans, seemed to have little interest in converting to Christianity.²³ This began to change as the Second Great Awakening increased in popularity. Beginning in the 1790s and lasting until the 1870s, the Second Great Awakening was a Protestant revivalist movement that expressed the belief that all people could achieve salvation, even slaves. Gradually, an increasing amount of whites, especially following the Second Great Awakening, approved of the conversion of slaves, but still feared that enlightening slaves to Christianity would encourage them to rebel.

Both Spirituals and slave folk music share many of the same basic characteristics of Afro-American music: polyrhythm, syncopation, call and response, etc. Nonetheless, there are several characteristics of Spirituals that distinguish the genre from the early folk music performed by slaves. Slave folk music typically had secular lyrical themes, such as field work or the sorrows of slavery, whereas Spirituals are always religious in subject matter. Moreover, Spirituals are much more melodic than work songs and field hollers in that they are sung rather than grunted or hollered. Finally, slave religious music received much more influence from

²² Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, [*Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*](#) (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 127-128.

²³ Love Henry Whelchel Jr., *Hell Without Fire: Conversion in Slave Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 36.

other sources, including European-American music, and “represented an amalgam of forms, styles, and influences.”²⁴

The exact date of origin of the blues is difficult to determine due to lack of sources and audio recordings. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that work songs, Spirituals, and field hollers were crucial to the development of early blues form:

- From work songs - a regular beat with call and response patterns.
- From Spirituals - a nearly identical use of harmony and melody.
- From field hollers - the intensity of personal expression, the themes of loneliness and hardship, a similarity to melody, and a free structure.²⁵

Historiography

Though most scholars have not focused on African-American music specifically, the historiography of the subject can be described in regards to works and debates about the acculturation and creolization of Afro-American slaves and the existence of Africanisms and African survivals in American culture. The earliest beginnings of the debate start with anthropologists and sociologists rather than historians and can summarily be described with the Frazier-Herskovits debate. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued in his 1939 *The Negro Family in the United States* and 1957 *Black Bourgeoisie* that nearly all aspects of African culture amongst Afro-American slaves were decimated under the conditions of the slave trade and slavery. He cites the scattering of slaves from different nations on plantations and the inability to

²⁴ Jones, 41-42.

²⁵ Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 52.

communicate in the same language as each other for the destruction of African culture in the United States. Frazier then goes on to argue that the African-American “stripped of the relatively simple preliterate culture in which he was nurtured, has created a folk culture and has gradually taken over the more sophisticated American culture.”²⁶ Overall, the author characterized Afro-American culture as one of primarily American influence with adaptations made by African Americans themselves.

Anthropologist Melville Herskovits, however, challenged Frazier’s thesis in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), arguing that there is evidence of a significant number of African survivals in American culture. His primary purpose in this work was to debunk the idea that African Americans were a people without a history and with a culture unrelated to African culture.²⁷ Herskovits also denied the myth that Africans brought to the New World in the Atlantic slave trade were too diverse to retain their African culture; rather he argues that there was more linguistic and cultural unity amongst slaves than previously attributed. Though the two scholars disagreed on this key point, they both ultimately challenged the widely-held chauvinistic belief that African-Americans were biologically and culturally inferior to European-Americans.

Frazier and Herskovits laid the foundation for later academics, who have essentially taken one side and made modifications. Historian John K. Thornton expanded the debate in considering how some cultural traits can be destroyed by trauma while others survive intact. In his 1992 work *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, he builds upon Herskovits theses that there are a significant number of Africanisms that survival the

²⁶ Edward Franklin Frazier and Anthony M. Platt. *The Negro Family in the United States* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001): 479.

²⁷ Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958): 32.

conditions of slavery, and also that the disorganizing diversity of African slaves in the New World has been exaggerated.²⁸ In discussing music and other aesthetics, Thornton characterized these traits as more flexible and more variable than language or religion and therefore more likely to survive and adapt.²⁹

Though the above scholars have focused more broadly on acculturation and creolization of all aspects of Afro-American culture, a number have centered their debates on African-American music specifically. Like all other features of African-American culture, their music it was initially assumed to be an adoption of European-American folk culture. However, beginning in the mid-20th century, scholars began to attribute a unique creole character to the music of Afro-Americans. For example, Harold Courlander's *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (1963) describes the various features of Afro-American folk music while acknowledging its differences between Euro-American music, in effect implying that, at the very least, there has been some degree of creolization between African and European music.³⁰ He and other scholars specifically point to the predominance of rhythm over harmony and melody,³¹ drumming,³²

²⁸ John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 191.

²⁹ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 208.

³⁰ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

³¹ Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 21; Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 2-3; Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 6.

³² Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 212; Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs*, 3.

vocality,³³ call-and-response,³⁴ and the undeniable influence of African-American music on European-American music.³⁵

Organization

The secondary goal of the project itself is to present the historical and technical aspects of Afro-American genres of music that began during slavery. In order to do so, the project has utilized two different digital platforms: VuVox, to create introductory collages; and VisualEyes, to create interactive visualizations. Both platforms are discussed briefly below and more in-depth in Chapters 2 and 4.

The Collages

Explanatory collages are presented first using the free, online media creation tool VuVox.³⁶ VuVox allows users to create dynamic collages with multiple types of media. The platform also allows the user to take advantage of several of the promises of digital history: capacity, accessibility, flexibility, diversity, and hypertextuality (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). However, VuVox is also at risk of some of the challenges of digital history: quality, durability, and passivity (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). The platform is most vulnerable to the challenge of durability. Because the platform is proprietary, its user accessibility may be disrupted if the company changes its terms of use or goes out of business.

³³ Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 25; Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage*, 8.

³⁴ Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage*, 15.

³⁵ Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs*, 39.

³⁶ "VuVox," VUVOX Network Inc., accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.vuvox.com/>.

The Visualizations

When possible, spatial connections and movement patterns are made using maps of African-American migrations in the United States in conjunction with a timeline. The user may move the timeline to a certain year and click on a marker on the map to see examples of Afro-American music, which is in the form of a narratives, lyrics, and historical images. The visualization represents the most commonly accepted historiographical viewpoint among scholars that there is a significant degree of Africanisms in slave music and that the type of music created as a result of creolization is a unique blend of African and European musical traditions.

Each visualization features a clickable map and a movable timeline so that the user may interact and explore as they chose. As the user moves the timeline by clicking and dragging the cursor, starred markers will appear on the map. When the markers are clicked by the user, an “infobox” appears to provider the user with a primary source quotation or image, a brief analysis of the relevance of that source, and a Chicago-Turabian style footnote citation.

The Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 continues with an overview of digital history, the promises and challenges of the field, how computer technology can be used in social science education, how spatial history can be presented with digital media, and how this public history project utilizes digital history. Chapter 3 discusses the theory and practical applications of public history, the challenges faced by public

historians and especially historians of African-American history, and how this project fulfills national curriculum standards. Chapter 4 provides a more thorough overview of the Afro-American Slave Music Project, complete with screen captures to demonstrate how to navigate the collages and the visualizations. It also includes an assessment of both VuVox and VisualEyes as tools for digital history. This thesis terminates with Chapter 5, a conclusion that includes a discussion of how the project could be expanded in the future.

CHAPTER TWO:

DIGITAL HISTORY AND THE AFRO-AMERICAN SLAVE MUSIC PROJECT

Overview of Digital History

Digital history is the use of digital media and computer technology for the practice, research, analysis, and presentation of history. Due to rapidly changing formats and technologies, digital history is evolving on a regular basis, making the field difficult to define. The field typically takes form as digital archives, CD-ROMs, interactive maps, visualizations, etc. Digital history is typically more interactive and non-linear than traditional historical prose.³⁷ This chapter will discuss the benefits and challenges of using digital visualizations in history, the promises and challenges of digital history, how technology can be used in social science education, and how the Afro-American Slave Music Project utilizes digital history.

Visualizing History

The Afro-American Slave Music Project is organized as collages and visualizations, which are any graphics that organize “meaningful information in multidimensional spatial

³⁷ Thomas.

form.”³⁸ The project uses VisualEyes, a free online authoring tool, to create interactive visualizations. The tool was developed at the University of Virginia and allows users to “weave images, maps, charts, video and data into highly interactive and compelling dynamic visualizations.”³⁹ The visualizations can be used to present research and information in a medium that is interactive and visual. VisualEyes is also relatively easy to use for scholars who do not have expertise in Extensible Markup Language (XML), a markup language that emphasizes simplicity, generality, and usability via the Internet.⁴⁰ VisualEyes supports four basic kinds of information for display and research: maps, data, images and video, and events. Thus, the user can plot events on a map with the ability to display different kinds of data via charts, tables, etc., as well as display images and videos of primary sources.

In *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform Our Understanding of the Past*, David J. Staley argues that visualizations have the ability to meaningfully convey information without the aid of prose.⁴¹ He also argues that historians should use visualizations, when appropriate, to think about and to discuss history.⁴² With increasing advances in digital media, more and more information is being represented visually as opposed to verbally. Written prose is not always the most appropriate means of presenting the great deal of data and information that has been extrapolated in the digital age. This development is difficult to transfer to the historical profession, as many historians tend to define

³⁸ David J. Staley, *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform Our Understanding of the Past* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 3.

³⁹ “VisualEyes.”

⁴⁰ “Extensible Markup Language (XML) 1.0 (Fifth Edition),” World Wide Web Consortium, November 26, 2008, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-xml/#sec-origin-goals>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 44.

⁴² *Ibid.* 4.

the discipline by an historian's written works, rarely using graphics or only using them as supplements. However, as Staley argues in his book, visualizations can convey meaning just as effectively as written prose.⁴³ Unlike prose, which forces the reader to imagine change over time by examining datasets individually, visualizations allow the historian to transform multiple datasets into any number of different visualizations and to make relationships and patterns embedded in the historical record visible simultaneously.⁴⁴

There are a number of benefits to using visualizations to convey historical information and to present visual arguments. First, the syntax of visualization allows a greater freedom in arranging data and media. Additionally, by presenting data visually, visualizations allow the viewer to discern patterns that may not be evident otherwise. Moreover, because the viewer can see both the whole and the part simultaneously, visualizations are more conducive to synthesis—examining how the whole organizes the constituent parts; on the other hand, prose-written history is more conducive to analysis—examining the interconnections between parts. Visualizations also allow the viewer to easily see the analogical patterns between two or more domains that appear to have no connection.⁴⁵ As Staley explains, “where writing emphasizes sequence, unidimensionality, and linear chains, visualization enables simultaneity, structure, and association.”⁴⁶ Traditional historians tend to emphasize presentation that is diachronic, or that focuses on how the subject has changed over time. Historians utilizing visualizations have the opportunity to depict synchrony, the simultaneous occurrence of information both temporally

⁴³ *Ibid.* 5.

⁴⁴ Andrew J. Torget, “A Historian’s View of VisualEyes (Née HistoryBrowser),” VisualEyes, <http://www.viseyes.org/torgetArticle.htm>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 47-50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 53.

and spatially.⁴⁷ Because visualizations differ from prose in these ways, they may in effect encourage historians to think differently about the past in terms of methodology and historiography by freeing the viewer from the one-dimensionality of prose.

Most digital interpretive historical materials simply transform museum exhibits, scholarly articles, and popular essays into the digital medium.⁴⁸ However, this public history project seeks to create an entirely new interpretive historical secondary source in the form of a digital visualization. The visualization is much like digital museum exhibit by transcending the barriers of “time (most exhibits are temporary installations), distance (museum visitors must be area residents or tourists), and space (gallery space is a scarce resource) that have often frustrated museum curators.”⁴⁹ The Internet also allows digital historians to undercut some of the most basic features of museums, such as the need to possess or borrow specific artifacts; at the same time it undercuts some of the most basic features of museum-going, such as the tendency to share experience with others.⁵⁰

There are numerous examples of successful visualizations available on the VisualEyes website. The majority of the projects produced using VisualEyes are centered on the use of a set of quantitative data and/or qualitative information drawn from a set of sources. Many of the projects contain a spatial representation that is central to its purpose. For example, the Texas Slavery Project maps slave ownership in Texas from 1837 to 1845 using tax information, the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 54.

⁴⁸ Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 35.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 37.

MySQL database system, and GIS mapping tools.⁵¹ In effect, creator Andrew J. Torget is able to demonstrate the role of slavery in the development of the American Southwest. As he explains in his article “A Historian’s View of VisualEyes (Née HistoryBrowser),” prose makes it difficult for historians to “imagine the evolution of change over time that combinations of those datasets represent, usually forcing us to examining these moments in time individually,” whereas dynamic visualizations allows historians to manipulate various datasets simultaneously over both time and space.⁵² As a result, these visualizations can reveal relationships and historical processes in sets of data that otherwise may have not been apparent in written form.

Though many of the VisualEyes presentations feature primarily quantitative data and a spatial representation, there are some that focus mostly on qualitative information. For example, Bleak House shows the personification of slaves over time at David Wood’s plantation.⁵³ The project contains a number of digitized primary documents as well as narratives from the slaves that he owned. Other than the number of slaves Wood owned, there is very little quantitative data; likewise, spatial information is limited to only three locations. The Afro-American Slave Music Project seeks to combine the strengths of a spatial representation as well as a wealth of excerpts from historical narratives. Additionally, unlike other VisualEyes projects, this project makes a great deal of use secondary sources in explaining context and meaning so that the spatial and temporal information can be more easily understood by the public.

⁵¹ Andrew J. Torget, “Texas Slavery Project,” VisualEyes, <http://www.viseyes.org/show/?base=tsp>.

⁵² Torget, “A Historian’s View.”

⁵³ Alice Cannon, “Bleak House,” VisualEyes, <http://www.viseyes.org/show/?id=bleak.xml>.

The Promises and Challenges of Digital History

In assessing the use of digital history, one must first consider the potential benefits of digital technology. In *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*, Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig have established seven promises of digital media and networks as follows: capacity, accessibility, flexibility, diversity, manipulability, interactivity, and hypertextuality or nonlinearity.⁵⁴ First and foremost is the increased availability of and increased capacity for both storage space and display space. In producing a textbook, for example, space is limited by the publication costs. On the other hand, the Internet allows users to utilize more space for less money, especially as the cost of server space continues to drop. This vastness of space is especially useful in allowing the amount of primary documents that may be included. While a textbook generally can only offer a few primary sources, a website can fit a virtually unlimited number of primary documents, or at least offer clickable and easily-accessible links to primary source databases.

While this promise is true in theory, there can be limitations for capacity. In creating VisualEyes projects, there appears to be a threshold for the amount of space available. Initially, this public history project was intended to consist of one visualization that would present the history of Afro-American music beginning with slave folk music and ending with the rap and house music. The massive scope of the original project was far too large; in setting the framework for each tab, it quickly became apparent that the project would not load if every genre was to be represented. The scope of the project shrunk periodically until it was limited to the

⁵⁴ Cohen and Rosenzweig, 3.

three major genres most closely affected by the conditions of slavery: folk, Spirituals, and the blues. Even with this dramatic reduction, the Afro-American Music Slave Project could not be contained in a single visualization; instead, a separate visualization had to be created for the introduction, the folk music section, the Spirituals section, the blues section, and the conclusion. Though digital media and the Internet, in theory, offer more space for less money, it is important to remember that this capacity for storage space is not unlimited and that plans for long-term sustainability must be taken into consideration.

Digital media, with its capacity for storage and speed of delivery, also presents the advantage of accessibility.⁵⁵ As a result, digital media can reach wider audiences easier, faster, and cheaper, as well as reach audiences that previously did not have access to that information. For example, without digital media, items in archives could only be accessed by personally traveling to that archive. Computer technologies give researchers and the public access to information, thus democratizing knowledge and empowering students and the public.⁵⁶ This advantage will be addressed further in the discussion of technology and social science education later in this chapter.

Moreover, digital media proposes the promise of flexibility. Digital media can take multiple forms, such as text, images, sounds, and videos. In education, for example, printed textbooks are limited to text and sometimes images; with digital media, teachers can supplement their textbooks with higher-quality images, audio recordings, and motion pictures. Additionally, digitizing historic documents, photographs, audio recordings, and moving images makes those

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

⁵⁶ Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," University of Virginia, Virginia Center for Digital History, 1999, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>.

items, which often become more fragile with age, easier to preserve.⁵⁷ Thus, should a historical artifact deteriorate, it is not lost forever; it can still be accessible to later researchers, albeit in a reproduced form.

Digital media also allows for increased diversity by allowing not only a wider range of audiences but also a wider range of authors, thus giving a public voice to amateur historians. Educator Randy Bass has described the tremendous potential of digital technology for the non-professional user: “For the first time, perhaps, it allows the novice learner to get into the archives and engaged in the kinds of archival activities that only expert learners used to be able to do.”⁵⁸ Thus, not only has the reader become more diverse but the author has as well.

In addition, digital media allows the promise of manipulability by allowing the user to discover connections that may not be apparent. Computer technology gives the user the ability to locate and keep track of information quickly and efficiently.⁵⁹ For example, while print resources typically offer indexes, digital resources allow a user to search a site for a keyword in seconds. Moreover, digital media allows researchers to dynamically map historical events both temporally and geographically.⁶⁰ The Afro-American Slave Music Project takes advantage of manipulability via the map and timeline feature created with VisualEyes. Using visualization, the project maps primary sources regarding slave music both geographically and temporally, allowing the user to identify patterns within genres and between genres.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 5.

⁵⁸ Randy Bass, “Rewiring the History and Social Studies Classroom: Needs, Frameworks, Dangers, and Proposals” in *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 100.

⁵⁹ Steve Brier, “Historians and Hypertext: Is It More Than Hype?” in *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 87.

⁶⁰ Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, 7.

Digital media also makes interactivity possible. Interactivity allows the user to have a more active role in exploring history by enabling multiple forms of dialogue. Thus, as Cohen and Rosenzweig explain, the Internet becomes “a place for new forms of collaboration, new modes of debate, and new modes of collecting evidence about the past.”⁶¹ Digital media presents the user with the option to respond to a project with dialogue and feedback.

The last promise of digital history, as outlined by Cohen and Rosenzweig, is hypertextuality and non-linearity. Hypertext is electronic text with references to other texts, called hyperlinks, that users can quickly and easily access. Hypertext is the fundamental concept of the World Wide Web; webpages include clickable links to other webpages. Traditionally, as with a book, the user moves through a narrative sequentially as it was written. However, with computer technology and the Internet, a user may move through narratives or data in undirected and multiple ways.⁶² The collages are embedded with a number of hyperlinks, especially to text and external resources, allowing the user to explore the history of Afro-American slave music in a non-linear fashion.

As with every technology, there are some potential challenges. Perhaps the most central challenge to public history is maintaining authenticity. By increasing diversity and allowing more public voice to non-professional historians, digital media may also challenge the quality and authenticity of information on the Internet. It becomes easier for an author to publish inaccurate information online and also easier for those inaccuracies to reach wider audiences. Cohen and Rosenzweig lament that both historians and citizens “have yet to establish a new

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Ayers.

structure of historical legitimation and authority.”⁶³ At this point, the responsibility of maintaining authenticity rests on the author, and also on the reader who is responsible assessing the validity and reliability of a source. Nonetheless, there have been attempts to peer review works of digital history, via such organizations as the Organization of American Historians’ *The Journal of American History* (JAH)⁶⁴ and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s *Digital History Project*.⁶⁵

The second hazard of digital media is its apparent lack of durability. While computer technology has made it possible to back up historical documents in digital forms, there seems to be no means of preserving the digital present that is being created.⁶⁶ As of 2005, the United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) does not require that digital records be stored in their original form.⁶⁷ In order to address this issue, the Library of Congress established the National Digital Stewardship Alliance to “establish, maintain, and advance the capacity to preserve our nation’s digital resources for the benefit of present and future generations.”⁶⁸ Thus at this point, digital historians must ask the fundamental questions of what should be preserved and who should preserve it. In addition, digital historians must be aware of the unknown durability of digital formats, as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) still has not been able to determine a precise timeline for the deterioration of many digital

⁶³ Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, 9.

⁶⁴ “The Journal of American History,” Organization of American Historians, Journal of American History, <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/>.

⁶⁵ “Digital History Project,” Digital History Project, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://digitalhistory.unl.edu/index.php>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 9-10.

⁶⁷ “NARA Guidance on Managing Web Records, January 2005,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/pdf/managing-web-records-index.pdf>.

⁶⁸ “National Digital Stewardship Alliance,” Library of Congress, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/nds/>.

formats.⁶⁹ This is especially disconcerting as any sign of corruption in a digital resource typically results in that resource being unstable if not unreadable. Even if the digital resource itself remains intact, the absence or the corruption of the hardware or operating systems required can result in the effective loss of that digital resource.

In order to combat the potential challenge of durability, this public history project uses Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Extensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML). XML is a markup language that serves a set of rules for encoding documents. XML has the capacity to withstand the rapid changes in computer technology and has the potential to be viewable on hardware and with software that does not yet exist.⁷⁰ XHTML is an application of XML, similar to HTML though more advanced. It is an emerging web standard that will also render well on different machines and rely as little as possible on specific hardware and software. Nonetheless, another durability issue arose during the creation of the Afro-American Slave Music Project. In order to embed all of the visualizations of the project into one central source, web space was gained through the University of Central Florida. Though the web server is XML-capable, unlike many free web hosting sites, the web space is only available for a limited time. Should the project become more permanent, new web space will be necessary.

Because of the hypertextuality and non-linearity of digital media, the challenge of readability arises. If there is no direct sequence of a digital medium, it makes it difficult for the reader to determine the beginning, middle, and end. The thesis of a work may also be difficult for the reader to determine without some degree of linearity. “In effect,” write Cohen and

⁶⁹ Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, 222.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 234.

Rosenzweig, “those works undercut the unwritten social contract in which the author agrees to follow conventions of argumentation, organization, and documentation, and the reader agrees to devote a certain amount of time to give the article a fair reading.”⁷¹ Hypertext may make a work more difficult to read and discourage a reader from deciphering it. To counter this potential challenge, the Afro-American Music Project has been organized in a way to suggest a certain degree of continuity using VuVox by presenting the genres in sequential order by origin and by maintaining chronology within each genre.

There also appears to be a flipside to digital media’s promise of interactivity. As Cohen and Rosenzweig argue, “computers are good at ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ whereas historians prefer words like ‘maybe,’ ‘perhaps,’ and ‘it’s more complicated than that.’”⁷² Therefore, by presenting history in a closed-ended device, the information may lose its open-endedness. Moreover, some critics even argue that interactivity fails to present the user with the experience of understanding by accessing the lives and experiences of others, but rather only allows the user to experience more of themselves.⁷³ The project attempts to avoid this problem in its map and timeline feature. As narrative excerpts are presented on the map, a brief explanation of the significance of the quote is presented.

Finally, digital media presents the possible challenge of inaccessibility and monopoly. There is a digital divide in computer ownership and Internet access, especially along socioeconomic lines. A recent survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that only 3 percent of students coming from low-income families and 20 percent of students from

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.* 11-12.

⁷³ Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why* (New York: Scribner’s, 2001).

middle-income families have access to the Internet at home; the survey also reported that seven in ten teachers say their students rely on the Internet to complete their assignments.⁷⁴ In addition, when a user gains access to computers and/or the Internet, that does not necessarily mean that the user has developed the appropriate skills to make effective use of these technologies.⁷⁵ Moreover, wealthier institutions have more resources to overshadow smaller institutions. Lastly, with the passage of the Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998, copyright was extended another twenty years,⁷⁶ effectively limiting the accessibility of digital forms of items that have been published more recently. However, there has been a limited exception to the exclusive right granted by copyright law in the United States established by the Copyright Act of 1976. This law grants exception for “purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research.”⁷⁷ This project generally makes use of licensed material for educational purposes and is therefore protected from copyright infringement

Technology and Social Science Education

Though digital history has often been used to present sources and information for academics and researchers, it is increasingly being geared toward a public audience. Moreover, K-12 education is closely tied to the entire field of public history, especially exhibition design.

⁷⁴ Kristen Purcell, Alan Heaps, Judy Buchanan, and Linda Friedrich, “How Teachers Are Using Technology at Home and in Their Classrooms,” Pew Internet & American Life Project, February 28, 2013, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teachers-and-technology/Summary-of-Findings.aspx>.

⁷⁵ Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, 12.

⁷⁶ United States Copyright Office, Library of Congress, “Copyright Basics,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2012), 5-6, <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>.

⁷⁷ “17 USC § 107 – Limitations on Exclusive Rights: Fair Use,” Cornell University Law School, Legal Information Institute, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>.

For these reasons, it is important to consider how digital media can be used to educate students in the history classroom, especially in a time where there has been an increased marginalization of social science education.⁷⁸ The focus on education and job training has shifted to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, due to the lack of qualified candidates for high-tech jobs.⁷⁹

Professor of education Sam Wineburg has summarized the lack of progress in social science education in the United States: “considering the differences between the elite stratum of society attending high school in 1917 and the near universal enrollments of today, the stability of this ignorance inspires incredulity. Nearly everything has changed between 1917 and today except for one thing; kids don’t know any history.”⁸⁰ This begs the educational researcher and history teachers to ask why. According to the research and survey results reported by Randy Bass in his essay “Rewiring the History and Social Studies Classroom: Needs, Frameworks, Dangers, and Proposals” in *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age*, most American respondents reported that the history being taught in the classroom was personally uninteresting to themselves and that the content was expected to simply be memorized and regurgitated for examination, and then subsequently forgotten.⁸¹ Such a response indicates the

⁷⁸ Cheryl Mason Bolick, Reid Adams, and Lara Wilcox, “The Marginalization of Elementary Social Studies in Teacher Education,” *Social Studies Research and Practice* 5:2 (Summer 2010): 1, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.socstrpr.org/files/Vol%205/Issue%202%20-%20Summer,%202010/Research/5.2.3.pdf>.

⁷⁹ United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, “STEM: Good Jobs Now and For the Future,” by David Langdon, George McKittrick, David Beede, Beethika Khan, and Mark Doms, ESA Issue Brief #03-11 (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, 2011), 1.

⁸⁰ Peter N. Stearns, Peter C. Seixas, and Samuel S. Wineburg, eds., *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 94.

⁸¹ Bass, 95.

need to make history interesting and interactive. Many teachers and educational researchers have turned to technology to solve these problems.

Bass has outlined three frameworks for using technology to promote active learning: (1) inquiry-based learning by utilizing primary sources available online; (2) bridging reading and writing through online interaction by extending time and space for dialogue and learning and by joining literacy with disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry; and (3) making student work public in new media formats by encouraging constructivist pedagogies through the creation and exchange of knowledge representations.⁸² For the purpose of the Afro-American Slave Music Project, the focus is primarily on how the visualizations can be used for inquiry-based learning; the latter two frameworks are left for the teachers to implement.

In analyzing the implementation of social science education in public schools, it seems clear to the historian that there is a significant lack in primary source analysis conducted by students, typically due to limitations in the time teachers are allotted to teach required content and the space allowed in print resources. However, as Bass explains, “the analysis of primary sources, and the structure inquiry learning processes...are widely recognized as essential steps in building student interest in history and culture and in helping them understand the ways that scholars engage in research, study, and interpretation.”⁸³ Thus, it is clear that in order to increase student interest, educators must find ways to allow students access to primary sources. As discussed earlier, computer and Internet technologies allow the increased space and outlets for independent exploration usable for inquiry-based learning. For an educator teaching students

⁸² *Ibid.* 96.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 97.

about slavery or music, a homework assignment involving exploration of this project's visualizations can be used to allow students to analyze primary source documents independently at home without consuming classroom time.

In addition to allowing wider access to primary sources, computer technology in social science education also allows students to further enhance skills essential for historical research. For example, because of the large amount of inaccurate sources available on the Internet, students must develop the skill of deciphering between resources that are valid and reliable and resources that are not.⁸⁴ Finally, the innate multimedia character of digital technology allows teachers to expand their teaching tools to more than text and low-resolution images; with the aid of computers and the Internet, teachers can now use high-definition images, videos, sound recordings, and interactive resources to supplement their lessons.⁸⁵

As Steve Brier argues in his essay "Historians and Hypertext: Is It More Than Hype?" in *Clio Wired*, new electronic media can be used to "challenge our creativity as teachers if we are going to use them in ways that live up to their promise to democratize education and empower students."⁸⁶ In other words, interactive technology potentially allows history and other social sciences to be more available to broader audiences as well as give those audiences direct access to primary documents that may not be available locally. Moreover, computer technology allows students and others to determine what they learn, to move at their own pace, and to decide what direction they want to pursue. Finally, Brier explains that new digital technologies may allow

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 99.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 99.

⁸⁶ Brier," 90.

teachers more free time to work directly with students by allowing students to learn the “most repetitive and least edifying aspects of teaching” independently.⁸⁷

As Brier states, “any new technology carries within it repressive as well as liberating possibilities.”⁸⁸ As computer technology becomes more and more advanced, new devices become more expensive and old ones often become obsolete and unusable. This is especially detrimental in terms of education, as schools and institutions that receive less funding may not be able to update quickly as computers advance. In effect, this challenges the possibility of democratizing education, as wealthier schools will have a greater advantage in accessing these technologies. Moreover, the assumption that by simply incorporating technology into the social studies classroom will in itself transform education is a potential hazard; educators must only use technology when there is a clear advantage in learning and must use it creatively and effectively.⁸⁹

How the Afro-American Slave Music Project Utilizes Digital History

The Afro-American Slave Music Project is organized as a visualization, which is any graphic that uses the “organization of meaningful information in spatial form intended to further a systematic inquiry.”⁹⁰ In *Computers, Visualization, and History*, David J. Staley outlines a set of guidelines drawn from pre-existing forms of visualizations. As Staley suggests, a visualization must be a useful juxtaposition of primary sources conducive to inquiry. In order to

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 90-91.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 91.

⁸⁹ Bass, 103.

⁹⁰ Staley, 41.

be useful, a visualization must organize a historian's thoughts to serve as a means of scholarly communication. The primary sources selected must be appropriate and the abstraction and arrangement must be useful. Additionally, the sources must reflect evidence that is visibly apparent. A visualization, according to the author, must support analogy and association. Finally, a visualization also should be placed within a larger historiographical context, making references to other secondary sources.⁹¹

The Afro-American Slave Music Project uses these guidelines in order to create a meaningful digital visualization for presentation and education. Though many digital visualizations juxtapose quantitative data, this project utilizes more qualitative primary sources—mostly narratives from slaves and observers, but also lyrics, images, and audio recordings—and plots them both temporally and spatially. The sources selected demonstrate the existence and characteristics of Afro-American slave music and are arranged based on the location that the narrator described and the time period they were referring to. For example, a slave discussing the music he or she played as a child in the Mississippi Delta region during the Civil War would be placed geographically in that location and temporally between the years 1861 and 1865. Though the selection of qualitative primary sources and this type of placement may seem to imply no connection, patterns in where the genres of slave music originated, when they originated, and how these genres may be connected to one another in time and space become visibly apparent when juxtaposed geographically and temporally. Moreover, these primary sources are placed on a map that geographically represents African-American

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 86-87.

migrations during the Great Migrations. This allows the viewer to make comparisons, find resemblances, and discover similarities. For example, when viewing a visualization, the user may note that folk music and Spirituals are typically centered in the rural area of the Deep South, but blues music has moved northward and westward to urban centers as the years progressed. The user may also notice that the later genres of Afro-American music have mostly developed in northern and western urban centers, although southern cities such as New Orleans and Memphis have remained influential.

Finally, the Afro-American Slave Music Project presents the historiography of each of the three major genres discussed. Additionally, a “Bookshelf” collage is included in the project that cites the major secondary sources on slave music, identifies their major theses and contributions to the overall historiography, defines the author’s methodology and use of sources, and assesses the work’s strengths and weaknesses. Consideration of the debates and theses of academic scholars in public history is rare. However, presenting the public with the “history of history” provides insight to the evolution of historical thought over time. By including a discussion of historiography, this project opens the learning process to not just history and music, but also to anthropology and sociology.

CHAPTER THREE:

PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE AFRO-AMERICAN SLAVE MUSIC

PROJECT

Public history is a growing field within the study of history. It is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study and incorporates a wide range of activities.⁹² Generally speaking, public history is the practice of history outside of traditional academic historical practice, with the impetus to combine scholarship and practice.⁹³ Public history is practiced in a public setting, with goals directed for the benefit of public audiences. The National Council on Public History (NCPH) has defined the purpose of public history as “to promote the utility of history in society through professional practice.”⁹⁴ Activities in public history include historic preservation, archival management, museology, and other activities. This chapter will discuss public history in general, African-American public history, social science education, and how to present a difficult history.

Making History Public

In today’s society, many public historians have had some difficulty in fully engaging with the public. It has become extremely vital that historians address the public in their research. As Joan Hoff Wilson argues, it has become increasingly important for humanists to make their work

⁹² Barbara J. Howe and Emory Leland Kemp, eds., *Public History: An Introduction* (Malabar, FL: R.E. Krieger Pub. Co, 1986), 2.

⁹³ Terence O’Donnell, “Pitfalls Along the Path of Public History,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, Susan Benson Porter, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 239.

⁹⁴ Barbara J. Howe, “Reflections on an Idea: NCPH’s First Decade,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 11 No. 3 (Summer 1989): 68-85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3378613>.

relevant in an increasingly technological society.⁹⁵ Likewise, Wayne D. Rasmussen has added that it is vital that historical researchers conduct research that is relevant to today.⁹⁶ Larry E. Tise also notes that the field of history has “never been support except to the extent that its study of practice would serve as useful social, cultural, or governmental purposes.”⁹⁷ These issues have become major challenges in the developing the field of public history. The Afro-American Slave Music Project addresses these concerns by focusing on a topic that is relevant to today—music—and that is enjoyed by most, and moreover is a topic that describes the roots of the genres of music that exist today.

The project attempts to balance its directed audience to include all public audiences. By addressing music history, the project has the potential to attract many audiences due to both its aesthetic and social nature. Moreover, the project’s content can apply to K-12 audiences, which will be discussed in further detail in this chapter. Additionally, the content of the project does indeed promote the consideration of the important contributions of both African Americans as individuals and as groups but because the subject matter is of a topic that is of interest to all races, it is able to address a multiracial audience.

Additionally, the very nature of the visualization is able to appeal to a subject that taps into the interests of one social group in particular: African Americans. Though African Americans are not the sole target audience for this project, it is important to consider how the

⁹⁵ Joan Hoff Wilson, “Is the Historical Profession an ‘Endangered Species’?” *Public Historian* 2 (Winter 1980), 18.

⁹⁶ Wayne D. Rasmussen, “Some Notes on Research and Public Historians,” *Public Historian* 1 (Spring 1979), 68.

⁹⁷ Larry E. Tise, “State and Local History: A Future from the Past,” *Public Historian* 1 (summer 1979), 19-21.

project's content is relevant to the lives of at least one portion of the public audience. As a group, African Americans tend to express an interest in their "roots," which has a much broader meaning than "family roots" described by white Americans.

In describing "roots," according to Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, African Americans have a greater feeling of a shared, common history with other African Americans than European-Americans.⁹⁸ In the surveys and research conducted by Rosenzweig and Thelen, both Caucasian Americans and African Americans were asked what event or period in the past affected them the most. Of those who chose a public rather than personal event, 11.2 percent of African Americans chose slavery, which was the second most popular choice after civil rights (22.4 percent); other choices included World War II (6.7 percent), the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (4.5 percent), the other assassinations of the 1960s (4.5 percent), the Vietnam War (4.5 percent), the assassination of John F. Kennedy (1.5 percent), and the Gulf War (1.5 percent).⁹⁹ This is particularly interesting and telling when considering that the surveys were conducted in the early 1990s; the likelihood of any of the respondents having personally experienced slavery is slim to none, whereas many of the respondents likely experienced the other events. It is interesting that the long-term and perhaps less obvious effects of slavery on African Americans as a group was not lost on the African-American respondents nearly one hundred and thirty years after abolition; even people who were not enslaved understood how instrumental the condition of slavery was on their race. Thus, by presenting a topic still so important to this racial group makes the history of the project all the more interesting to the

⁹⁸ Roy Rosenzweig, and David P. Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 150.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 151.

public. In the same survey, only 1.2 percent of Caucasian Americans cited slavery as the event or period affecting them the most.¹⁰⁰ Though this is logical, considering the fact that significantly less white Americans can claim ancestry to slaves, it also lessens the likelihood of achieving the same degree of interest in the contextual subject of the project for other racial groups.

Another major aspect of the project that attracts the interest of African Americans is the selection of sources. The majority of the sources cited on the geographic map within the visualizations are orally transmitted histories—slave testimonies and narratives of African-American musicians. This is particularly important to African Americans as a group, according to Rosenzweig and Thelen, who reported from their surveys that oral histories tended to be more trustworthy to African Americans than “official” histories.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the visualization does not read simply like a textbook, but instead incorporates not only oral histories, but other primary sources as well as valid and reliable secondary sources.

African-American Public History

In describing African-American history in public history, Gertrude Fraser and Reginald Butler argue that the purpose of presenting these topics to the general public is “to insist on the centrality of African Americans in the making of America...to insist on the complexity of that contribution; to celebrate and to denounce; to acknowledge those who surmounted oppression as well as to give voice to the majority who just survived, and to those who did not survive...to rail

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 156.

against the alienation of African Americans from facets of their own history and to insist that they explore the basis of that alienation...to tear at the roots of hidden and explicit ideologies that perpetuate the asymmetry of economic and cultural relationships in the present.”¹⁰² In other words, by marginalizing the history of African Americans, the study of American history is incomplete; only part of the story is told.

However, the genesis of African-American public history did not arise simply from the desire to fill in the gaps of the American past. Rather, African-American public history was initiated primarily by African-American historians and humanists for the purpose of “fostering the black community’s self-esteem and to challenge both popular and academic white racism.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, African-American public history in itself was rather complex in that it celebrated the accomplishments and contributions of African-American individuals and groups to a society that was at odds with the goals of the African-American community. This dichotomy makes it difficult to include African-American history in any kind of celebration of American history as it exposes a great deal of racism, prejudice, and inequality evident in the majority of our nation’s past. The acknowledgement of the darker side of American history becomes quite difficult for many Americans to discuss.

Because of this contradiction, as well as the nature of African-American history or the history of any minority for that matter, many questions arise on how to define African-American

¹⁰² Gertrude Fraser and Reginald Butler, “Anatomy of a Disinterment: The Unmaking of Afro-American History,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, Susan Benson Porter, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 132.

¹⁰³ Jeffrey C. Stewart and Faith Davis Ruffins, “A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1828-1984,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Benson Porter (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 307.

public history. Is it more important to emphasize the survival of African traditions and the contributions of African-Americans or to emphasize evidence of African assimilation into mainstream society? Should African-American history be treated separately from American history? What audiences should African-American history be aimed at: black audiences, white audiences, or both?

Though this project in itself may not answer all of these questions, it seeks to find a balance of both sides of the spectrum. The academic content of the project is drawn from the current consensus in African-American history and African diaspora studies. For example, in reference to the question of African survivals (American cultural features that have origins in African culture) versus assimilation, the visualization highlights the African cultural “survivals” evident in slave music, but also argues how new Afro-American genres were created by incorporating mainstream European-American traditions. Furthermore, as the visualization progresses chronologically, it presents the exposure of Afro-American music to white audiences, thus making such genres mainstream. In essence, the visualization effectively includes evidence of both the “African-ness” of slave music, but also the “American-ness” of slave music.

Jeffrey C. Stewart and Faith Davis Ruffins divide African-American public history into two categories: the nationalistic approach, which is used to support a “sense of pride and liberationist ethos” and is generally directed at black audiences; and the integrationist approach, which is used to fight racism but is directed at both black and white audiences.¹⁰⁴ There is also

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 335-336.

an emerging category that Stewart and Ruffins describe, one that synthesizes both nationalist and integrationist public history.¹⁰⁵ This project falls into the new synthesis of both.

Social Science Education

Perhaps one of the largest blocs of the public audience is school-aged children. School field trips are one of the major sources of visitorship for many museums and historical sites. Because of this, the material presented in public history projects should follow curriculum standards in order to be educational. In 1996, the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California-Los Angeles developed the National Standards for History under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards.¹⁰⁶ Although many states have their own set of standards, they typically align to those outlined in the National Standards for History.

By its very nature, the Afro-American Slave Music Project presents two common subjects of history standards: slavery and migration. In regards to UCLA's National Standards for History, the project fulfills many of the Historical Thinking Standards and the U.S. History Content Standards. The Historical Thinking Standards consist of "Chronological Thinking," "Historical Comprehension," "Historical Analysis and Interpretation," "Historical Research Capabilities," and "Historical Issues." All of the visualizations employ a timeline feature and the collages highlight key events in the development of each genre, in effect allowing students to develop their chronological thinking skills. This is especially true for the standard requiring that students be able to "reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration and explain

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 336.

¹⁰⁶ "History Standards," National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/>.

historical continuity and change.”¹⁰⁷ With the aid of this project, a student may use the map and timeline feature to analyze changes in music and migration.

The project also fulfills the “Historical Comprehension” standard. With a wealth of primary and secondary sources, the project provides opportunities for students to: identify a historical document’s author and source; reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage; identify the central questions addressed by a narrative while taking purpose and point of view into consideration; differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations, especially in regards to secondary source material; read historical narratives imaginatively and appreciate historical perspectives by taking into account the humanity of the author and historical context in which he or she lived; and draw upon data in historical maps as well as in visual, literary, and musical sources.¹⁰⁸

The third Historical Thinking Standard, “Historical Analysis and Interpretation,”¹⁰⁹ can also be utilized with the Afro-American Slave Music Project. The primary sources presented in the map and timeline feature allows students to consider multiple perspectives, especially the perspectives of insiders (slaves, freedmen, and musicians) and outsiders (observers), as well as compare perspectives from individuals in different centuries. With the inclusion of the historiography collage, the student also has the opportunity to evaluate major debates among

¹⁰⁷ “Chronological Thinking,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/1.-chronological-thinking>.

¹⁰⁸ “Historical Comprehension,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/2.-historical-comprehension>.

¹⁰⁹ “Historical Analysis and Interpretation,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/2.-historical-comprehension>.

historians. Finally, the student may use the project to hypothesize the influence of the past, especially in regards to how slave music affected the development of later genres of Afro-American music.

In addition to the Historical Thinking Standards, the Afro-American Slave Music Project also applies to many of the U.S. History Content Standards, as many are related to slavery and migration.¹¹⁰ For example, Standard 3C requires the student to understand African life under slavery. This project is especially relevant to this standard in that it presents information so that the student is able to “analyze how Africans in North America drew upon their African past and upon selected European (and sometimes Indian) customs and values to develop a distinctive African American culture” and also “analyze overt and passive resistance to enslavement.”¹¹¹ The former goal fits perfectly within the goal of the presentation: to highlight the creole musical culture created by African Americans during slavery; the latter can be achieved by analyzing how slaves used folk songs and Spirituals to passively, and sometimes overtly, resist enslavement. Additionally, the project fulfills U.S. History Content Standards for migration by discussing the forced migration of slaves from Africa to European colonies in the Americas in the seventeenth century and the rapid increase of slave importation in the eighteenth century.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ “United States History Content Standards for Grades 5 -12,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/us-history-content-standards>.

¹¹¹ “United States Era 2: Section 3,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/us-history-content-standards/us-era-2#section-3>.

¹¹² “United States Era 2: Section 1,” National Center for History in the Schools, University of California-Los Angeles, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/us-history-content-standards/us-era-2#section-1>.

Presenting a Difficult Past

Perhaps one of the most difficult public history issues that need to be addressed in this project was how to deal to slavery. In a country where history has traditionally been used for nationalistic and patriotic purposes, slavery has served as a taboo subject. However, discussing the tremendous contributions of African and African-American slaves to the musical genres developed that they developed would not be complete without addressing the historical context of slavery.

Though the public presentation of slavery has been traditionally minimized, the consideration of slavery has been increasingly discussed in public education in most recent decades. Slavery is still an emotionally difficult reality to accept for many Americans and discussing such a subject on a public platform risks defensiveness, anger, and confrontation. The fact that our country, which was founded on the principle of liberty, enslaved millions of Africans as well as members of other races, is something that Americans generally are not proud of. “Simply put,” historian Ira Berlin writes, “American history cannot be understood without slavery. Slavery shaped America’s economy, politics, culture, and fundamental principles.”¹¹³ Dismissing such a vital part of our past is not an option; we cannot simply ignore the existence of millions of slaves in our country over the span of several centuries.

Many of the genres of popular music that exist in our culture today—rock’n’roll, pop, electronic dance music, hip hop, and rhythm & blues—would not exist had there not been cultural

¹¹³ Ira Berlin, “Coming to Terms with Slavery in Twenty-First-Century America,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, eds. James Oliver Horton and Louise E. Horton (New York: New Press, 2006), 2.

contact between West Africans and Europeans and European-Americans. Moreover, the slave folk music, Spirituals, and blues genres would arguably not have developed along the same path had these musical genres not existed in the context of slavery and racial inequality. Though the presence of slavery in the American past may signify a contradiction of progress, it is important to convey that many slaves were able to make positive contributions to American history, culture, and society despite their bondage. As Berlin explains, “What makes slavery so difficult for Americans...is that slavery encompasses two conflicting ideas—both with equal validity and with equal truth, but with radically different implications. One says that slavery is one of the great crimes in human history; the other says that men and women dealt with the crime and survived it and even grew strong because of it.”¹¹⁴ Thus, it is absolutely essential that this public history project acknowledges the context of slavery and how the conditions of enslavement affected these genres’ lyrical themes and creolization, or the creation of a new culture from two or more pre-existing cultures.

Because slavery is a difficult subject for many Americans, it must be addressed without sacrificing historical accuracy and authenticity. As historian James Oliver Horton states, “the vast majority of Americans react strongly to the topic... [but] most don’t know enough about the history of slavery to intelligently participate in any national discussion on the subject, some would rather not know, and until recently there have been few opportunities for them to learn.”¹¹⁵ The Afro-American Slave Music Project seeks to educate the public about slavery by

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 6.

¹¹⁵ James Oliver Horton, “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, eds. James Oliver Horton and Louise E. Horton (New York: New Press, 2006), 37-40.

highlighting a major contribution of slaves in an area that all Americans can relate to: music. Despite its more positive approach to the topic, the project does not sugarcoat the context of slavery. It still addresses the horrors of slavery and racism, but it only does so in explaining context. The inhumane conditions of slavery are not the central theme of the project; therefore, it is unnecessary to go into great detail. Nonetheless, the conditions of slavery are discussed when explaining the lyrical content and development of slave music. Slavery is addressed in a sensitive yet historically accurate fashion.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE AFRO-AMERICAN SLAVE MUSIC PROJECT

Overview

As described in Chapter 1, the visualizations are the primary component of the Afro-American Slave Music Project (<http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/home.html>). The purpose of such a method is to combine the tradition of explaining history in temporal terms with the growing field of spatial history, which focuses on geographical aspects. In other words, the visualizations combine the educational benefits of a timeline with the educational benefits of a map.

The project uses two methods of user interface. The first utilizes VuVox, a free online dynamic media creation suite that was developed for commercial use and that allows users to design and present interactive, multimedia collages.¹¹⁶ The second method uses VisualEyes, a free online authoring tool to create visualizations that was developed at the University of Virginia to “weave images, maps, charts, video and data into highly interactive and compelling dynamic visualizations.”¹¹⁷ Initially, the project was only intended to use VisualEyes; due to storage capacity issues, the textual narrative had to be transferred to VuVox, which was chosen because of its interactive features. The collages present the secondary source content with multimedia primary sources, while the visualizations present the narrative primary source content. This chapter includes an introduction to the website, an evaluation of VuVox with a

¹¹⁶ “Collage,” VUVOX Network Inc., accessed March 3, 2013, <http://www.vuvox.com/collage>.

¹¹⁷ “VisualEyes,” VisualEyes, accessed July 7, 2012, <http://www.viseyes.org/>.

walkthrough of the project's collages, and an evaluation of VisualEyes with a walkthrough of the project's visualizations.

Website



Figure 1: Homepage.¹¹⁸

The design of the website is basic, as web design was not priority for this project. The homepage contains a brief introduction to the project (Figure 1). The Menu panel contains hyperlinks to the Introduction, Folk, Spirituals, Blues, and Conclusion pages, as well as links to

¹¹⁸ Laura Cepero, "The Afro-American Slave Music Project," University of Central Florida, College of Arts and Humanities, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/home.html>.

the Bookshelf and Glossary pages. The content pages begin with a VuVox collage at the top, followed by a VisualEyes visualization, and Chicago-Turabian style footnotes at the bottom of the page (Figure 2).

Menu

[Home](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Folk](#)
[Spirituals](#)
[Blues](#)
[Conclusion](#)

Resources

[Bookshelf](#)
[Glossary](#)

History

During the colonial period, settlers made little effort in converting slaves. Generally, slaveholders felt that either Africans and African Americans were not human and therefore could not be Christian, or that giving knowledge to slaves about Christianity would incite rebellion. The first Africans that arrived in the New World, as well as the first generations of African Americans, seemed to have little interest in converting to Christianity.

Spirituals

The Second Great Awakening

Footnotes

Migration of Spirituals

Primary Sources

☐ Slave Narratives
☐ Lyrics
☐ Obituaries
☐ Post-Slavery Narratives

Select Migrations

☐ George Kye
☐ Lorenzo Ezeili
☐ Susan Snow
☐ Alice Sewell
☐ William Davis
☐ Muddy Waters
☐ Johnny Shines
☐ James Cotton

MAJOR MIGRATION CORRIDORS

South West to Midwest & Far West

South Central to Midwest

Southeast to Northeast

Map by Michael Segal
Rugans Cartography 2005

Source: "The Atlas of African-American History and Heritage"

1 Love Henry Whelchel Jr. *Hell Without Fire: Conversion in Slave Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 36.

2 Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible" Institution in Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137, 178.

3 Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 18.

4 Bob Darden, *Second Great Awakening: A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 26.

Figure 2: Spirituals webpage.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Laura Cepero, "Spirituals," University of Central Florida, College of Arts and Humanities, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/slavegenres/spirituals.html>.

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VuVox

VuVox is a free online dynamic media creation suite that was developed for commercial use and that allows users to design and present interactive collages using multiple types of media that can be personalized and customized. VuVox was launched in 2007 as the first “robust end-to-end digital media creation architecture with an online service” in the commercial market.¹²⁰ Some features provided by VuVox include image cropping and masking tools; layer positioning and compositing; interactive “hot spots” that can provide links to media, text, or other websites; and collage-length soundtracks.¹²¹

While developing the VuVox collages, a number of the promises and challenges of digital history established by Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig (see Chapter 2) became apparent. The tool appeared to have a large capacity for storage space; the VuVox website gave no indication of size limitations and no such issue arose during production. The most promising advantage of VuVox is its flexibility. VuVox allows creators to use multiple forms, including text, images, sounds, and videos. Additionally, because the tool is easy and free to use online, it has the potential to increase the diversity of the range of authors. VuVox does not require knowledge of HTML, XML, or web design; it does not require a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) setup or storage space online; it automatically scales down images and videos, eliminating the need for a graphics editing program (i.e. Photoshop); it allows the user to upload media from his or her computer and also to import media from other online sources (i.e. Flickr and YouTube);

¹²⁰ “VUVOX Network Inc. Introduces Immersive Media Creation and Sharing Service,” VUVOX Network Inc., January 30, 2007, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.vuvox.com/home/press>.

¹²¹ “Collage.”

and it provides the option to post collages on Facebook, embed collages on a website, and share collages via email. Finally, VuVox fulfills the promise of hypertextuality/non-linearity.

Although the presentation itself is somewhat linear in that it moves from left to right, the user decides which aspects of the project to explore via “hot spots,” which are equivalent to hyperlinks.

Along with the many advantages of VuVox, there are also some downfalls. One major con is a durability issue: collages cannot be downloaded to a computer. Thus, if VuVox changes its terms of use or closes down, the collage is lost. Moreover, VuVox is Flash-based and does not provide an HTML5 alternative. While Adobe Flash is generally considered more conducive to animations and multimedia, it has limited compatibility with mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.¹²² With this limit, the possibility of inaccessibility may arise.

Navigating the Collages

The bulk of the Afro-American Slave Music Project consists of five web pages, each with a collage and a visualization. All five sets of collages follow a similar format. The collages begin with the history of the genre(s) being presented, the musical characteristics of the genre(s), and the historiographical debates about the subject (Figure 3).

¹²² “Html vs. Flash,” *IM-Creator*, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://imcreator.com/knowledge/html-vs-flash>.

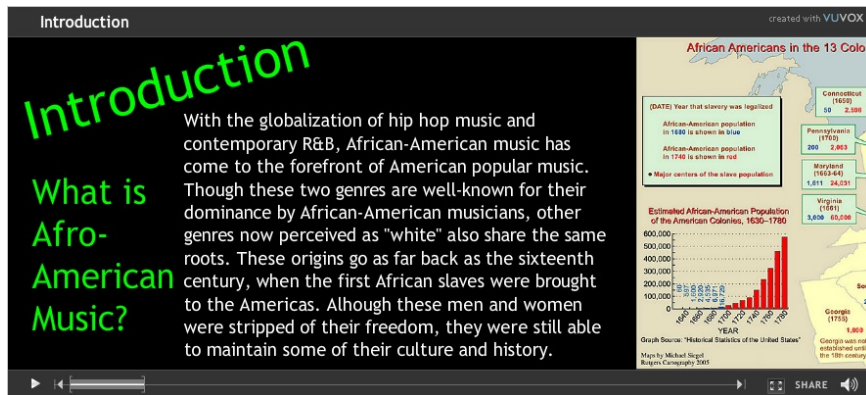


Figure 3: The Introduction collage. ¹²³

Each collage includes a number of clickable “hot spots” that give more information on each heading or subheading, allowing the user to determine whether or not he or she would like to explore further. There are four types of hot spots: text, visual, audio, and video (Figure 4). Most hot spots contain text complete with citations (Figure 5). This gives the user the option of either reading more in-depth explanations without cluttering the collage with too much text. Text hot spots also include a “Further Reading” link to an entry from WorldCat, a union catalog that itemizes the collections of thousands of libraries in several countries.¹²⁴ The WorldCat entry allows the user to enter his or her zip code in order to find a local library that carries the book or article being referenced. There are also several images displayed throughout the collage, which include hot spots showing the Chicago-Turabian style citation of the image, as well as a link to the original digital source for the image (Figure 6). Additionally, there are audio hot spots that link to audio recordings demonstrating the musical feature or genre being discussed (Figure 7).

¹²³ Laura Cepero, “Introduction,” University of Central Florida, College of Arts and Humanities, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/introduction.html>.

¹²⁴ “Worldcat,” Online Computer Library Center, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www.worldcat.org/>.

Finally, the video hot spots link to documentaries that are relevant to the genre or subject being presented (Figure 8). The last type of hot spot typically appears at the end of the collage, whereas the three other types of hot spots appear throughout the entire presentation.



Figure 4: Hot Spot Symbols.

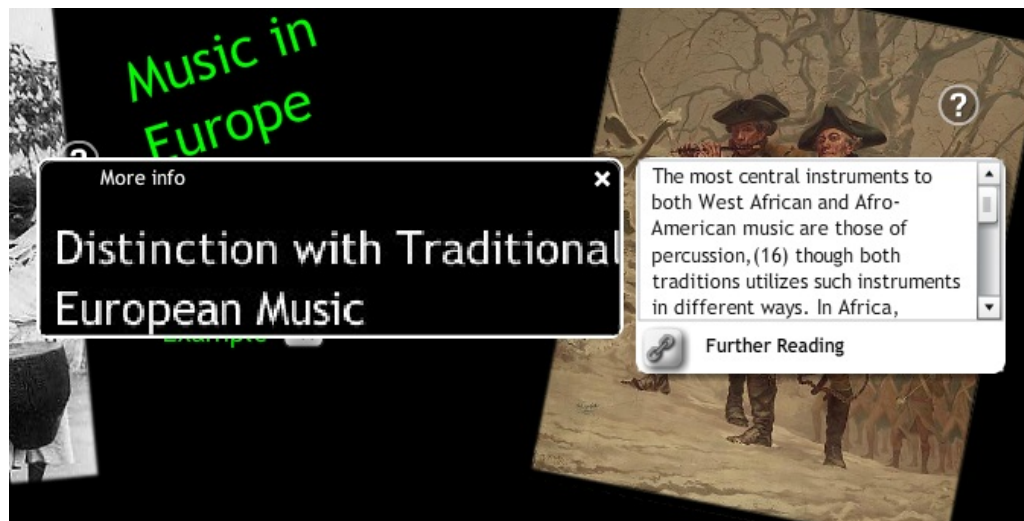


Figure 5: Text Hot Spot. The link symbol may be clicked to view a suggested work for further reading.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*



Figure 6: Visual Hot Spot. The link symbol may be clicked to view the original digital source for the image.

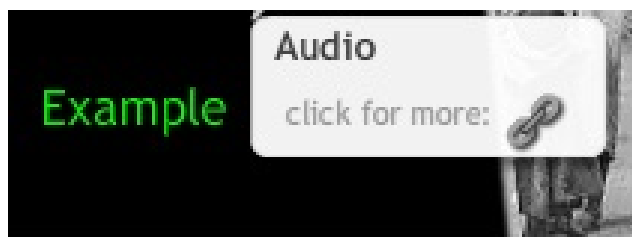


Figure 7: Audio Hot Spot. When the user hovers the mouse over an audio hot spot, a link to an audio recording appears.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*



Figure 8: Video Hot Spot. When the user hovers the mouse over a video hot spot, a link to a documentary appears.¹²⁷

There is also one additional, independent “Bookshelf” collage evaluation the major historiographical works related to Afro-American slave music (Figure 9). Like previous collages, this VuVox shows images of each book cover with hot spots linking to WorldCat entries. Each work also has a text hot spot for the “Summary,” “Sources and Methodology,” and “Strengths and Weaknesses.”

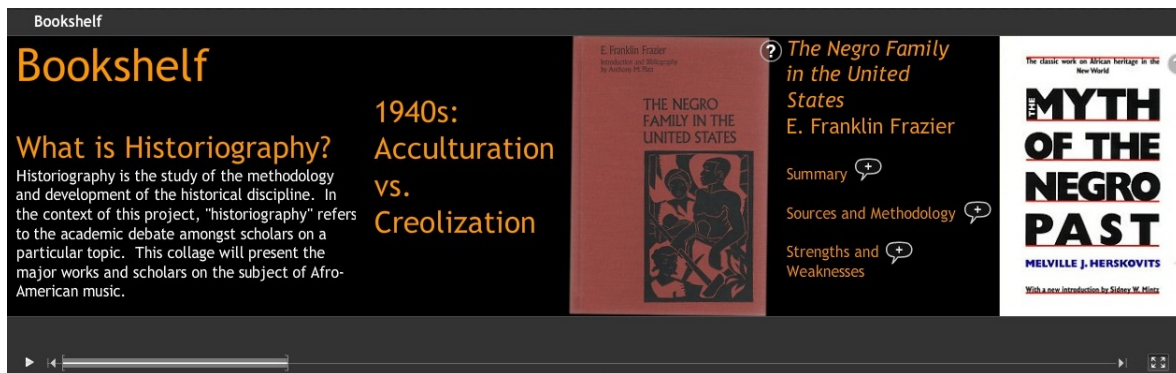


Figure 9: Bookshelf collage.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

VisualEyes

The collages demonstrate the secondary source content, with some visual and audio primary sources, of Afro-American slave music; the visualizations present the narrative primary source content. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, VisualEyes is a free online authoring tool used to create interactive visualizations. The tool itself allows the user to present research in the form of visualizations that present information in interactive, visual formats. VisualEyes supports four basic kinds of information for display and research: maps, data, images and video, and events. Thus, the user can plot events on a map with the ability to display different kinds of data via charts, tables, etc., as well as display images and videos of primary sources. For this project in particular, the goal was to display a map of the continental United States with a moveable timeline.

Like VuVox, VisualEyes exemplifies several of the promises of digital history. First, it takes advantage of the promise of flexibility, although it is not as flexible as VuVox. VisualEyes allows for the use of text, images, and videos; however, there is no option to share audio. VisualEyes also presents the promise of diversity and is free and easy to use. The website for the tool offers a number of guides to using VisualEyes, including a screencast tour, a step-by-step guide, an overview, a tutorial, a XML reference, a GLUE reference, and a spreadsheet guide.¹²⁹ VisualEyes creator Bill Ferster can be contacted by e-mail and often responds in timely manner. VisualEyes is particularly useful for non-programmers to create interactive visualizations that

¹²⁸ Laura Cepero, "Bookshelf," University of Central Florida, College of Arts and Humanities, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/bookshelf.html>.

¹²⁹ "VisualEyes."

were previously only possibly by highly-skilled programmers who were proficient in Extensible Markup Language (XML), which is similar to yet more complicated than HyperText Markup Language (HTML). Though XML is learnable, it is quite time-consuming for a historical researcher who already needs to spend a great deal of time conducting primary research and interpreting data. VisualEyes allows a historian to easily employ XML without actually being proficient in XML or HTML.

The use of XML can also deter the potential challenge of lack of durability. XML has the capacity to withstand the rapid changes in computer technology and has the potential to be viewable on hardware and with software that does not yet exist.¹³⁰ XHTML is an application of XML, similar to HTML though more advanced. It is an emerging web standard that will also render well on different machines and rely as little as possible on specific hardware and software. Nonetheless, another durability issue arose during the creation of the Afro-American Slave Music Project. In order to embed all of the visualizations of the project into one central source, web space was gained through the University of Central Florida. Though the web server is XML-capable, unlike many free web hosting sites, the web space is only available for a limited time. Should the project become more permanent, new web space will be needed.

VisualEyes has a major advantage over VuVox with its manipulability. By plotting primary sources spatially and temporally, VisualEyes provides users with a means to discover connections that otherwise may not be apparent. For example, when viewing the visualizations in the Afro-American Slave Music Project, the user can see how the primary sources related to a

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 234.

genre relate to their geographic locations and make connections between how select slaves and freedmen migrated over time.

There was one major con with VisualEyes in the process of producing this project: server storage space limitation. While creating the visualizations, there were often times when the addition of a very small element or attribute would prevent the project from loading. During an e-mail correspondence with VisualEyes creator Bill Ferster described the problem as “the proverbial straw on the camel’s back;” in other words, there was too much data for the program to load.¹³¹ Due to such limitations, there were a number of options considered to resolve the issue: creating multiple visualizations, deleting several elements and attributes (i.e. images, videos, etc.), or decreasing the scope of the project. It was ultimately decided to limit the scope of the visualization by discussing only the genres with origins in slavery: folk, Spirituals, and blues. However, size limitations remained. As a result, the decision was made to create a separate visualization for each genre of slave music in order to keep multimedia resources such as images and videos.

Even after this change was made, the challenge of readability arose. Initially, the text in the collages was presented in documents on each visualization. However, these introductions were text-heavy and visually unappealing. It was decided that VuVox collages could be used to present the information in a somewhat physically linear manner with hyperlinks that provided the user with the option of reading more. Thus, the two tools were used in collaboration to

¹³¹ Bill Ferster, E-mail to author, June 21, 2012.

highlight each tool's digital history promises and compensate for each other's potential challenges.

Navigating the Visualizations

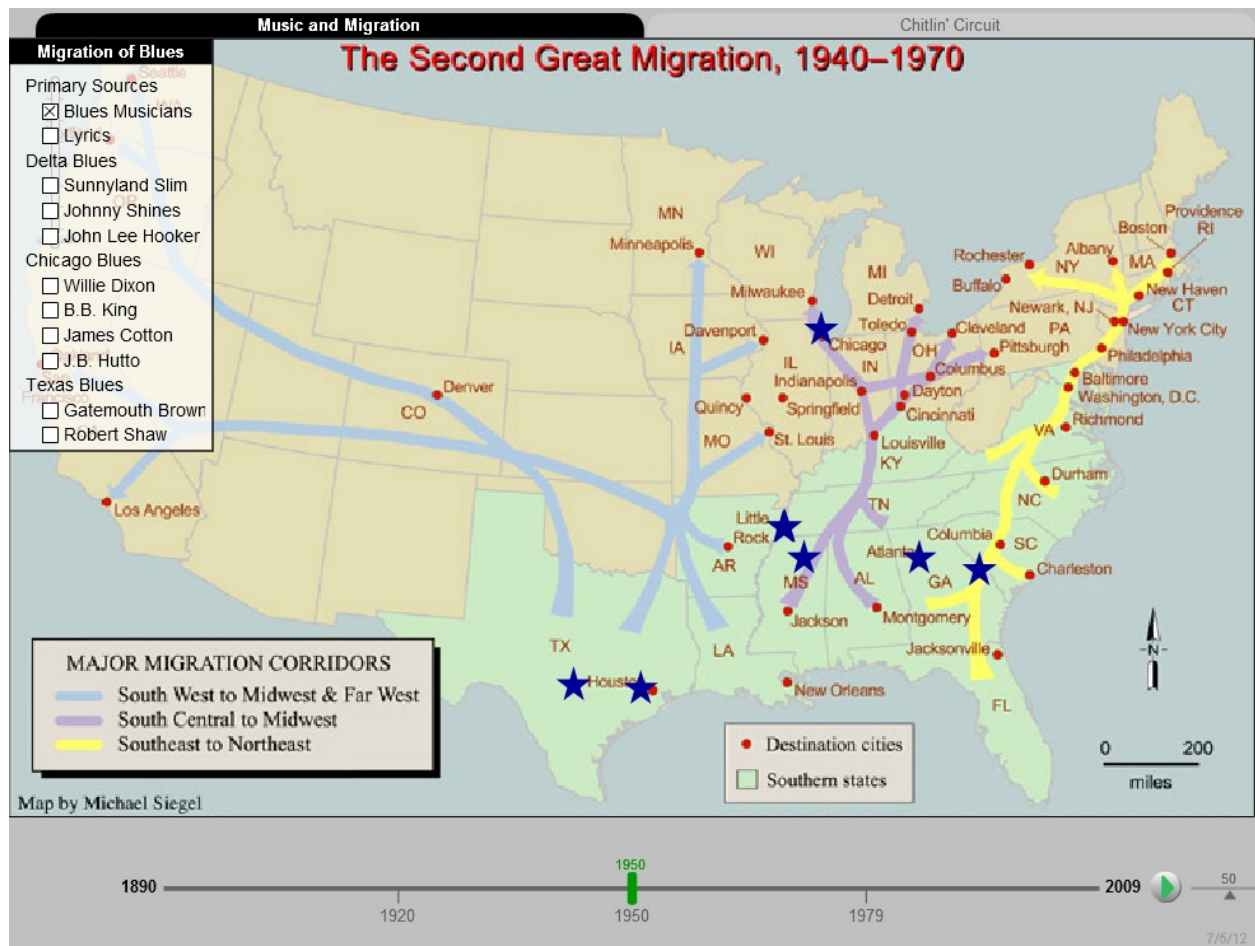


Figure 10: Map¹³² and timeline of the Blues visualization, with the “Blues Musicians” checkbox.¹³³

The Folk, Spirituals, and Blues visualization each contain two clickable tabs. The first tab presents a map with a timeline that can be clicked to change the dates at the bottom of the screen (Figure 10). The control panel appears in the upper left-hand corner. The user can click to select the one of the checkboxes below the “Primary Sources” header, such as “Blues Musicians,” to view related primary source selections or the user may click to select one of the checkboxes under “Delta Blues,” “Chicago Blues,” or “Texas Blues” to view the migration route of select individuals. When selecting the “Blues Musicians” checkbox, stars appear on the map based on where the slave, ex-slave, or observer was referring to and on the timeline based on when the speaker lived. Locations and dates are specific when possible, estimated when unclear.

¹³² Michael Siegel, “The Second Great Migration, 1940-1970,” Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience, http://www.inmotionaame.org/gallery/detail.cfm?migration=9&topic=1&id=9_007M&type=map.

¹³³ Laura Cepero, “Blues,” University of Central Florida, College of Arts and Humanities, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://projects.cah.ucf.edu/~la987151/slavegenres/blues.html>.

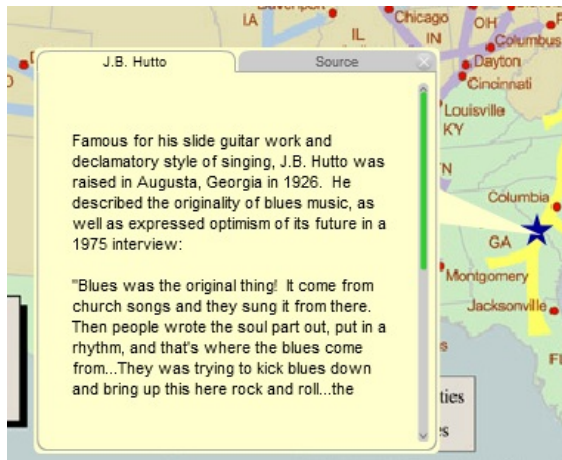


Figure 11: Infobox displaying the information regarding a specific marker on the map.¹³⁴

When the user clicks on a star, an infobox appears with two tabs. The first tab provides a brief explanation of the context of the speaker's life and an explanation of how their quote relates to the genre, followed by a quote from that speaker (Figure 11). The second tab shows the Chicago-Turabian style citation for the quote, lyrics, or image (Figure 12). This also allows the user to conduct further reading and research should he or she choose to. There are several instances, however, where more than one primary source applies to the same location. In these cases, there is a separate tab for each source, and the citation appears at the bottom of said tab (Figure 13).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

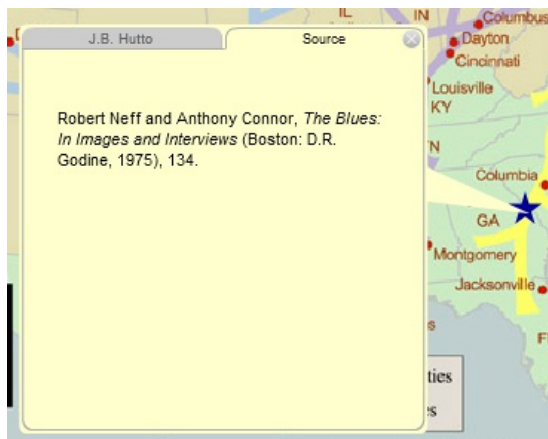


Figure 12: Infobox displaying the Chicago-Turabian citation for the source.¹³⁵



Figure 13: Infobox displaying multiple primary sources with citations at the bottom of each tab.¹³⁶

The user may select one or more of the other checkboxes to view the migrations of select speakers (Figure 14). After selecting the checkboxes, the user can move the timeline to view where that individual was born and where she or he migrated to over time. The infoboxes for

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

that individual still appear when the appropriate marker is clicked. This feature allows the user not only to compare these migrations to the general migration patterns drawn on the background map, but also to compare the migrations of observers and musicians to one another.

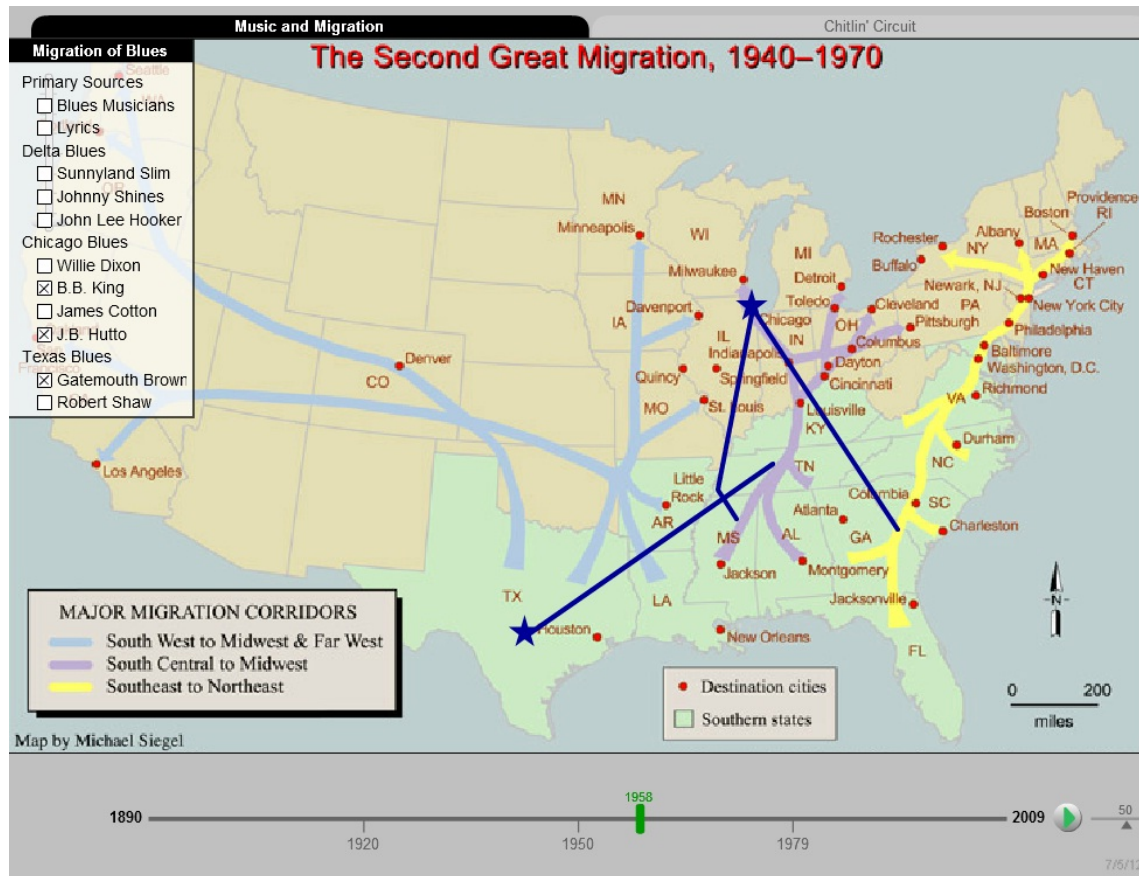


Figure 14: Map¹³⁷ showing the migration of select individuals.¹³⁸

The second tab of the Folk, Spirituals, and Blues visualizations features a tour route often used by that genre. For example, the Blues visualization features the “Chitlin’ Circuit,” a collection of performance venues that were generally considered safe and appropriate for

¹³⁷ Siegel.

¹³⁸ Cepero.

African-American musicians to perform at during the age of racial segregation.¹³⁹ When the user clicks on the marker for one of the locations, the name of the venue(s) and the name of the city appear in an info box (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Chitlin' Circuit infobox for Washington, D.C.¹⁴⁰

Although the Introduction and Conclusion visualizations follow a similar format, the content presented is slightly different. Instead of plotting primary sources on the map and timeline, these visualizations plot markers that represent important locations related to the development of various genres, as opposed to the location of specific primary sources. Instead, the color-coded markers represent important geographic locations in the development of numerous genres. For the Introduction visualization, the markers represent Folk Music (red),

¹³⁹ Preston Lauterbach, *The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 2011), 10.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Spirituals (yellow), and Blues (blue). The Conclusion visualization plots important locations for these same genres, with the addition gospel music (purple), jazz (dark green), rock'n'roll (aqua), soul (orange), funk (pink), and hip hop (green). When the user clicks a marker, an infobox with a tab for each genre that is relevant to that location appears. Each tab identifies the geographic location, the relevant time period, and a brief description of what musical developments occurred in that location (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Infobox for Memphis, Tennessee in the Conclusion visualization.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Afro-American Slave Music Project is a demonstration of how digital media can be used to address the challenges of digital history and public history. While public history has become a widely expanding field, public historians have had to face various issues. One of these major challenges is inspiring interest and encouraging learning. In order to surpass this problem, the Afro-American Slave Project has proposed using computer technology as a solution. This technology has the potential to make history more accessible, flexible, diverse, manipulatable, interactive, and non-linear.

Moreover, the project's content can be used to avert the public history issue of maintaining interest. By focusing on the topic of music, the project is able to tap into a subject that is relevant and interesting in the lives of most. This music is Afro-American in origin, a distinction that is important for two reasons. First, interest in the history and culture of minorities has increased dramatically in the past several decades. Second, by having both African and European influences, these musical genres represent a creole culture that is uniquely American.

There is, however, a potential issue in focusing on a subject that is inherently African-American. The history of African Americans is filled with captivity, racism, disenfranchisement, and discrimination. While the struggle against these obstacles may be a source of inspiration for many African Americans, it is often a sensitive and difficult history from many Americans to acknowledge. Nonetheless, history cannot be censored.

More specifically, the Afro-American Slave Music Project utilizes digital history to present a history that is not well known and sometimes difficult to synthesize exclusively with prose. While previous historians have noted the geographic origins of slave music and the importance of migration in the evolution of Afro-American music as a whole, it is much easier for the public to comprehend this information when it is represented both spatially and temporally using maps and timelines. Moreover, the potential for increased capacity of the computer and the Internet has allowed the inclusion of a wider range of primary and secondary sources, as well as various forms of digital media (images, videos, etc.) than previously allowed in printed works.

Perhaps the Afro-American Slave Music Project's most distinct contribution to public history and digital history is the inclusion of historiography. Generally speaking, historiography is not taught in K-12 education and is only briefly taught to history majors in college. Only graduate students pursuing a degree in history receive extensive exposure to the study of historiography. By making the public more knowledgeable of the debates and methodology of historians and other social science scholars, they will be better equipped to assess the validity and reliability of sources found on the Internet.

Future Expansion of the Afro-American Slave Music Project

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the original project was designed to span from slave folk music to current genres of American popular music, such as hip hop and electronic dance music (EDM). However, due to limitations in time and space and the lack of modern resources

available for fair use for copyright, the scope of the project had to be revised. Nevertheless, it is possible for the project to be expanded in the future to include its original goals.

Aside from scope, there may also be other additions in content. For example, an additional visualization on musicology could also be included. Ideally, this new section could contain a more thorough explanation of musical terms and videos providing demonstrations of musical characteristics. Finally, sample lesson plans could be designed and added to the website. This would increase the project's ease of use for educators and has been utilized for numerous other digital and public history projects, including *The Valley of the Shadow*,¹⁴² *Lincoln/Net*,¹⁴³ *Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project*,¹⁴⁴ and *History Engine*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² "Valley Teaching Resources," University of Virginia, Virginia Center for Digital History, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/teaching/vclassroom/vclasscontents.html>.

¹⁴³ "Lesson Plans," Northern Illinois University, Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/teachers/lessons.html>.

¹⁴⁴ "For Teachers," University of Washington, Pacific Northwest Labor and Civil Rights Projects, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/teachers.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ "Teacher Resources," University of Richmond, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/pages/teachers/resources>.

APPENDIX A:
INTRODUCTION TRANSCRIPT

What is Afro-American Music?

With the globalization of hip hop music and contemporary R&B, African-American music has come to the forefront of American popular music. Though these two genres are well-known for their dominance by African-American musicians, other genres now perceived as “white” also share the same roots. These origins go as far back as the sixteenth century, when the first African slaves were brought to the Americas. Although these men and women were stripped of their freedom, they were still able to maintain some of their culture and history.

Beginning with work songs, field hollers, Spirituals, and blues songs performed by slaves, African Americans have facilitated a unique blend of traditional African music with traditional Euro-American music to create a variety of distinct genres that have spread all over the globe in popularity in most recent decades. Because this unique style of music has African influences and is also a product of American culture, it can properly be labeled “Afro-American.”

Music in Africa

Rhythm

West African music centers primarily around the rhythm of the drum. As historian Tilford Brooks explains in *America's Black Musical Heritage*, “African music contained mixed meters and offbeat accents, while the music of the slave owners of North America contained only one time signature in each song in which the rhythm of the melody coincides with the pulse of

the meter.”¹⁴⁶ However, in regards of regularity of pulse—the regularly recurring accents that underlie the rhythm of a melody or harmonic progression—Afro-American music differs from both African and European traditions in that makes use of an uneven, rather than even, rhythm with a regular tempo.¹⁴⁷

Vocality

Afro-American music is “directly related to the music of West Africa.” Brooks again goes on to explain that “a variety of vocal timbre is found, ranging from falsetto tones to a raucous vocal quality. The call-and-response pattern...is a survival of West African musical practices. Even the so-called “blues notes,” so widely used in the music of American Blacks, are of West African origin.”¹⁴⁸

Function

Even the purposes of creating music were rooted in African tradition. Both slaves and their ancestors and relatives in Africa used music in their daily expression and activities, as “slaves indeed performed almost every conceivable task to the accompaniment of song with an intensity and style that continually elicited the comments of the whites around them.”¹⁴⁹ Songs, tales, proverbs, and verbal games served the purpose of storytelling, the teaching of history, the preservation of community values and solidarity, personal expression by individuals, and for

¹⁴⁶ Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1977.

ritualistic practice.¹⁵⁰ Slaves continued the utilization of music for these purposes, but also added new purposes: to make commentaries on the whites around them who could not understand their languages or their socio-religious references, as well as to express the hope for freedom from slavery. In other words, music was not purely aesthetic, as it typically was in Europe.

Music in Europe

Distinction with Traditional European Music

The most central instruments to both West African and Afro-American music are those of percussion,¹⁵¹ though both traditions utilize such instruments in different ways. In Africa, percussion is used to produce melodic and timbral patterns of high complexity. This method is distinct from European music, which is restricted melodic and rhythmic function. However, it is important to note Afro-American music's melodic and rhythmic function of percussion instruments are moderate in comparison to African music.¹⁵²

Because of this blending of influences, the term "Afro-American" is most appropriate. Though there are heavy influences from the musical traditions of West Africa, this type of music is in fact a creole music; it is truly a unique "American" creation. For example, Afro-American music shares polyrhythmic complexity with Africa, yet it utilizes a divisive, rather than additive,

¹⁵⁰ Levine, 7-8; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible" Institution in Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15; Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 52.

¹⁵¹ Sylvan, 50.

¹⁵² Brooks, 15.

approach to cross-rhythms, which shares similarities with the European musical tradition.¹⁵³

Melville Herskovits summarizes it best: “[African Americans] have evolved a real folk music which, while neither European nor African, is an expression of the African musical genius for adaptation that has come out under contact with foreign musical values.”¹⁵⁴

The Music

Characteristics

The term “Afro-American music” refers to a number of musical genres that have been created or influenced by African Americans. There are several features common to most Afro-American genres of music. These include:

Antiphony

Spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction in which the leader sings the call and the audience sings the response; also known as “call and response.”

Blue Notes

Note sung or played at a slightly lower pitch than that of the major scale.

Improvisation

Composition of music as it is being sung or played.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 12.

¹⁵⁴ Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 263.

Polyrhythm

Simultaneous use of two or more rhythms.

Syncopation

Placement of rhythmic stresses or accents where they wouldn't normally occur.

Guttural Effects

Speech sounds articulated near the back of the oral cavity, such as screams, shouts, moans, and groans.

Interpolated Vocality

Addition of new vocal sounds to a song while lyrics are varied or embellished.

Falsetto

Vocal phonation that allows the singer to sing notes beyond the vocal range of the average voice.

Melisma

Singing of a single syllable while moving between different notes in succession.

Vocal Rhythmization

Using the voice to create a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sound.

Historiography: The Scholars' Debate

The Frazier-Herskovits Debate: Did Slaves Maintain Their African Heritage?

E. Franklin Frazier

Though most scholars have not focused on Afro-American music specifically, the historiography of the subject is closely related to the works and debates about the acculturation and creolization of Afro-American slaves and the existence of Africanisms, or African survivals, in American culture. The earliest beginnings of the debate start with anthropologists and sociologists rather than historians and can be summarized with the Frazier-Herskovits debate. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued in *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939) and *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957) that nearly all aspects of African culture amongst Afro-American slaves were decimated under the conditions of the slave trade and slavery. He cites the scattering of slaves from different nations on plantations and the inability to communicate in the same language as each other for the destruction of African culture in the United States. Frazier then goes on to argue that African Americans were “stripped of the relatively simple preliterate culture in which he was nurtured, has created a folk culture and has gradually taken over the more sophisticated American culture.”¹⁵⁵ Overall, the author characterized Afro-American culture as one of primarily American influence with adaptations made by African Americans themselves.

¹⁵⁵ Edward Franklin Frazier and Anthony M. Platt, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 479.

Melville Herskovits

Anthropologist Melville Herskovits, however, challenged Frazier's thesis in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), arguing that there is evidence of a significant number of African survivals in American culture. His primary purpose in this work was to debunk the idea that African Americans were a people without a history and with a culture unrelated to African culture.¹⁵⁶ Herskovits also denied the myth that Africans brought to the New World in the Atlantic slave trade were too diverse to retain their African culture; rather he argues that there was more linguistic and cultural unity amongst slaves than previously attributed. Although the two scholars disagreed on this key point, they both ultimately challenged the widely-held chauvinistic belief that African-Americans were biologically and culturally inferior to European-Americans.

Recent Historians

On Acculturation Vs. Creolization

Frazier and Herskovits laid the foundation for later academics, who have essentially taken one side and made modifications. For example, Charles Joyner's *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* identified the connection between the ring shouts of Spirituals to the West African ring dance. He also points to the African word *saut*, which means "to walk or run around," as the origin of the term "shouting."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Herskovits, 32.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Chicago: University of

Historian John K. Thornton expanded the debate in considering how some cultural traits can be destroyed by trauma while others survive intact. In *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (1991), he builds upon Herskovits' thesis that there are a significant number of Africanisms that survived the conditions of slavery, and also that the disorganizing diversity of African slaves in the New World has been exaggerated.¹⁵⁸ In discussing music and other aesthetics, Thornton characterized these traits as more flexible and more variable than language or religion and therefore more likely to survive and adapt.¹⁵⁹

On Music

Although most scholars have focused more broadly on acculturation and creolization of all aspects of Afro-American culture, a number have centered their debates on Afro-American music specifically. Like all other features of African-American culture, the music was initially assumed to be an adoption of European-American folk culture. However, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, scholars began to attribute a unique creole character to the music of African Americans. For example, Harold Courlander's *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (1963) describes the various features of Afro-American folk music while acknowledging its differences between Euro-American music; in effect he implies that, at the very least, there has been some degree of creolization between African and European music.¹⁶⁰ Courlander and other scholars specifically

Illinois Press, 1984), 160.

¹⁵⁸ John K. Thornton, [*Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*](#) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 191.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 208.

¹⁶⁰ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 18.

point to the predominance of rhythm over harmony and melody,¹⁶¹ the centrality of the drum,¹⁶² vocality,¹⁶³ call and response,¹⁶⁴ and the undeniable influence of Afro-American music on American popular music.¹⁶⁵

Videos

Singing Fishermen of Ghana¹⁶⁶

This documentary shows work songs performed by fishermen in Ghana, Africa in 1964. The documentary shows continuity between the West African work song tradition with the African-American work song tradition.

¹⁶¹ Courlander, 21; Miles Mark Fisher, [*Negro Slave Songs in the United States*](#) (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 2-3; Brooks, 6.

¹⁶² Courlander, 212; Fisher, 3.

¹⁶³ Courlander, 25; Brooks, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Brooks, 15.

¹⁶⁵ Fisher, 39.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Seeger and Toshi Seeger, *Singing Fishermen of Ghana*, 16 mm, produced by Peter Seeger and Toshi Seeger (1964; Peter Seeger and Toshi Seeger, 1964), 16 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film,123>.

APPENDIX B:
FOLK TRANSCRIPT

The History

Context

The earliest form of Afro-American music was developed in the context of the Atlantic Slave Trade and slavery in the Americas, which radically changed the lives of slaves brought from Africa to the Americas. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately twelve million slaves were brought to the Americas against their will.¹⁶⁷

Though music was essential to nearly every aspect of life in Africa, slaves had to adapt to new conditions which, as a result, affected how they practiced and performed music.¹⁶⁸ However, African slaves by no means abandoned their love of music; in fact, music served as a form of comfort in the difficult life of a slave.

Limitations to the Continuation of African Culture

Europeanization

Although slaves were able to retain some aspects of their traditional African cultures, “the Europeanization of the mainland slaves was irreversible, not only because whites outnumbered in most states, but also because the black population was increasingly composed of people born in the United States.” Therefore, as new generations were born outside of Africa, the original culture of their West African ancestors diminished or was modified.

¹⁶⁷ Ronald Segal, [*The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa*](#) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 4.

¹⁶⁸ Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, [*Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*](#) (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 127-128.

Ban of African Religious Practices and Drums

Many slaveholders in the present-day United States banned African religions and any references to African deities.¹⁶⁹ Because slaves could not openly practice their traditional religions, many expressed their spiritual practices through music and dance, which were “clearly African in flavor but with no explicitly African thematic content.”¹⁷⁰ Many masters quickly observed the connection between religion and music amongst Africans and banned the drum, which was central to West African religion, music, and dance.

Comparative Study: Spanish, Portuguese, and French America

There were, however, parts of the Americas where drumming and religious expression were not restricted. In Latin America, the compatibility of Catholicism, practiced by the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the French, with West African possession religions allowed slaves in this region more religious freedom. Though much of United States was originally settled by the British, Louisiana serves as an exception. This region was originally conquered by France and later ruled by Spain before being sold to the United States. New Orleans’ Congo Square was one of the few places in the United States where slaves were allowed to gather to sing, dance, and drum in the West African tradition.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible” Institution in Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 65.

¹⁷⁰ Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 55-56.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 60.

Creolization

The Creation of a New Culture

In addition to the conditions that limited the sharing of traditional West African culture, it was inevitable that African musical traditions would come into contact with musical traditions of not only other African nations, but also of European nations. As a result, slaves played a major role in the creation of a new musical tradition that would incorporate features of both.¹⁷²

The “Hush Harbor” Tradition

In *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1968), Miles Mark Fisher cites the “hush harbor” tradition as a medium through which slaves were able to transmit culture, teach songs, and instill the “morality of the African cult.”¹⁷³ This point is important in that it offers an explanation of how slaves were able to share traditional culture without the prying eye and potential punishment of other slaveholders.

The Music

Rhythm

Perhaps the most defining characteristic of Afro-American music is its emphasis on rhythm, as opposed to emphasis on melody and harmony in European and European-American

¹⁷² John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228.

¹⁷³ Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 10.

music.¹⁷⁴ In African music as well as in Afro-American music, the use of polyrhythm is common, if not essential. In its most basic definition, polyrhythm is the simultaneous use of two or more different rhythms at once. As Robin Sylvan explains in *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*, “these rhythms lock into each other in specifically structured ways, interweaving into a richly textured rhythmic fabric.”¹⁷⁵ In addition, African and Afro-American music often employs the use of syncopation, or the placement of rhythmic stresses or accents where they normally would not occur, resulting in the interruption of the regular flow of rhythm.

Vocality

In terms of vocality, or special vocal effects, slave songs typically made use of a variety of guttural effects. A guttural effect is any vocal articulation created in the back of the oral cavity, such as humming, moaning, and groaning. These guttural effects are a “blissful or ecstatic rendition of a song, characterized by full and free exploitation of melodic variation and improvisation, sometimes with an open throat, sometimes with closed lips to create a humming effect.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Thornton, 226.

¹⁷⁵ Sylvan, 50.

¹⁷⁶ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 25.

Improvisation

Improvisation and spontaneity is the composition of music in the moment, without being written or composed beforehand.¹⁷⁷ The feature of improvisation can also be applied to Afro-American slaves' ability to improvise in terms of instrumentation. For example, because percussion instruments were often banned on plantations, handclapping and foot-tapping were used to create rhythm.¹⁷⁸

Call and Response

This method of singing is when a leader sings one line or more ("call"), followed by the listener(s) singing a line ("response"). The great degree of audience participation is a necessary component of much Afro-American genres, and is virtually unknown in European musical traditions.¹⁷⁹

Types

In *America's Black Musical Heritage*, Tilford Brooks outlined various relationships between the leader and the chorus that are found in call and response:

- Both the leader and the chorus sing the melody in unison, but allow for occasional harmonies in seconds, thirds, fifths, and octaves (where the upper voice may be falsetto).

¹⁷⁷ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 25-26.

¹⁷⁸ Raboteau, 65.

¹⁷⁹ Sylvan, 51.

- The leader repeats each line with a varied melody with an alternating response song by the chorus.
- The leader's solo lines differ from each other, followed by a fixed response from the chorus.
- The leader sings each solo line twice with a fixed choral response.
- The leader sing solo lines with one or more repetitions, with the chorus picking up the last phrase or word of each line and then sings a response.
- Any combination of the above.¹⁸⁰

Work Songs

The work song tradition has clear roots in Africa.¹⁸¹ When performing any kind of gang labor in West Africa, laborers would sing work songs that would enhance their ability to work by imposing a group consciousness and allowing them to work at a steady, rhythmic pace via the use of the call and response pattern.¹⁸² The singing in gang songs are “marked by antiphony, the most casual attention to harmony, and a tendency toward a shifting melody.”¹⁸³ Originally, work songs often told stories of West African deities; however, because such references were often forbidden, the work song was modified to feature non-religious themes.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Brooks, 42-43.

¹⁸¹ Charles Joyner, [*Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community*](#) (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 59.

¹⁸² Willis Laurence James, “The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America,” in [*Phylon*](#), First Quarter, 1955, 16.

¹⁸³ Courlander, 82.

¹⁸⁴ LeRoi Jones, [*Blues People: Negro Music in White America*](#) (New York: W. Morrow, 1963), 18.

There is another vocal expression in slave music that is closely related to work songs. A “field holler,” as described by contemporary white observer Frederick Law Olmstead, is a “long, loud, musical shout, rising and falling and breaking into falsetto” that is sung solo but is sometimes echoed by other workers or passed down a line from one to another.¹⁸⁵ Sometimes called a “cry” or “call,” the field holler “does not have to have a theme, or to fit into any kind of formal structure, or to conform to normal concepts of musical property. It is often completely free music in which every sound, line, and phrase is exploited for itself in any fashion that appeals to the crier.”¹⁸⁶ Such a musical device was used most often to maintain social contact on plantations under the guise of song.¹⁸⁷ Though this form of music is extinct in its original context and form, it can be heard in Spirituals and contemporary work songs, and is also the antecedent of blues music.¹⁸⁸

Historiography: The Scholars’ Debate

Mark Miles Fisher

There were two initial schools of thought in regards to slave culture, which can be summarized by the Frazier vs. Herskovits debate. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued that nearly every aspect of slave culture, including music, was decimated by the harsh conditions of

¹⁸⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom; A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based Upon Three Former Volumes of Journeys and Investigations by the Same Author* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 166.

¹⁸⁶ Courlander, 82.

¹⁸⁷ Brooks, 49.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 51.

slavery. Anthropologist Melville Herskovits, on the other hand, argued that there were a significant number of African survivals among slave culture.

Historians since the debate have tended to side with Herskovits, though with some modifications to his argument. In *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1968), Miles Mark Fisher cites the “hush harbor” tradition as a medium through which slaves were able to transmit culture, teach songs, and instill the “morality of the African cult.”¹⁸⁹ This point is important in that it offers an explanation of how slaves were able to share traditional culture without the prying eye and potential punishment of other slaveholders.

Lawrence W. Levine

Historian Lawrence W. Levine also argues for evidence of Africanisms in slave culture in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977). He explains that slaves were able to maintain a rich West African musical tradition due to the comparative isolation of slaves from whites, the tolerance and even encouragement of white slave masters, and the fact that “nothing in European musical tradition...was totally alien to [the slaves’] own traditions while a number of important features...and a number of practices were analogous” to both African and European musical traditions.¹⁹⁰ The result, according to Levine and other scholars, was a “hybrid with a strong African base.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Fisher, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Levine, 23-24.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 24.

John K. Thornton

Finally, historian John K. Thornton's monograph *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* further qualifies Herskovits' argument by stating that slave culture lacked "the ethnic and cultural specificity necessary to maintain or recreate their African culture in the Americas," thus causing the necessity for slaves to form a new culture. Though this new culture had African roots, "it was built in a context in which elements of the European culture served as linking materials" and thus resulted in a mixture that was European oriented with African elements "giving it flavor rather than substance."¹⁹² Countering the argument that diversity in Africa was too great for slaves in America to maintain a traditional African culture, Thornton instead argues that such diversity was exaggerated: there were only seven subgroups of West African slave, each of which were often quite homogeneous; moreover, some ethnic groups were brought to the Americas via the slave trade more frequently, allowing members of similar backgrounds to be enslaved in the same areas.¹⁹³

Videos

Afro-American Work Songs in a Texas Prison¹⁹⁴

This documentary features the work songs performed by Afro-American prisoners at in Huntsville, Texas in 1966. Though filmed well after the abolishment of slavery, this film

¹⁹² Thornton, 184.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* 192-193.

¹⁹⁴ Bruce Jackson, Daniel Seeger, Peter Seeger, and Toshi Seeger, *Afro-American Work Songs in a Texas Prison*, 8 mm, produced by Peter Seeger, Toshi Seeger, and Bruce Jackson (1966; Vestapol, 1966), 8 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.122>.

provides an example of the work song tradition that was started by Africans in West Africa, brought to the Americas by slaves, and continued into the post-slavery U.S. by African-American laborers and prisoners.

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O¹⁹⁵

This film documents the singing games of African-American children in Los Angeles, California in 1967. The documentary shows the continuity of structure in black singing games in the United States.

Home Across the Water¹⁹⁶

This video features a segment of a film documenting the efforts of the Sea Islanders in Georgia and South Carolina in preserving their culture in face of commercialization. The Gullah, as they are called, have been able to preserve much of their African heritage due to a relatively high degree of isolation from Euro-American culture. The documentary includes examples of Gullah music, which allows insight into the perhaps the purest form of African music in the United States.

¹⁹⁵ Bob Eberlein and Bess Lomax Hawes, *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, 16 mm, produced by Bob Eberlein and Bess Lomax Hawes (1968; Northridge CA: Media Generation, 1968), 16 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film,73>.

¹⁹⁶ Benjamin Shapiro, *Home Across the Water*, ¾ tape, produced by Benjamin Shapiro (1992; Benjamin Shapiro, 1992), ¾ tape, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film,148>.

Gandy Dancers¹⁹⁷

This documentary features the work songs of retired African-American railroad track laborers.

¹⁹⁷ Barry Dornfield and Maggie Holtzberg-Call, *Gandy Dancers*, 16 mm, produced by Barry Dornfield and Maggie Holtzberg-Call (1994; New York, NY: Cinema Guild Inc., 1994) 16 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film,101>.

APPENDIX C:
SPIRITUALS TRANSCRIPT

The History

Slave Conversion to Christianity

During the colonial period, settlers made little effort in converting slaves. Generally, slaveholders felt that both Africans and African Americans were not human and therefore could not be Christian, or that giving knowledge to slaves about Christianity would incite rebellion. The first Africans that arrived in the New World, as well as the first generations of African Americans, seemed to have little interest in converting to Christianity.¹⁹⁸

The Second Great Awakening

This began to change as the Second Great Awakening increased in popularity. Beginning in the 1790s and lasting until the 1870s, the Second Great Awakening was a Protestant revivalist movement that expressed the belief that all people could achieve salvation, even slaves. Gradually, an increasing amount of whites, especially following the Second Great Awakening, approved of the conversion of slaves, but still feared that enlightening slaves to Christianity would encourage them to rebel.

Southern Baptists and Methodists were the most active in converting slaves to Christianity. These denominations allowed not only multi-racial (yet segregated) church services, but also allowed the formation of independent black churches. Baptist churches were more lenient in allowing blacks to not only preach, but also allowed their congregations more

¹⁹⁸ Love Henry Whelchel Jr., *Hell Without Fire: Conversion in Slave Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 36.

independence and control in their own religious lives.¹⁹⁹ By the Civil War, the number of religious songs had increased greatly due to the widespread conversion of slaves to Christianity.²⁰⁰

Historical Context

The mass conversion of slaves was not solely caused by the increased effort of white Protestants. The Second Great Awakening included a new spiritual fervor that had affinities with the bodily movements of African possession religions—shouting, dancing, and spirit possession--making Christianity more relatable.²⁰¹ Slaves were expected to adapt to Christianity, but Christianity also adapted to African tradition as well.²⁰²

The Context of Slavery

It is also important to discuss the historical events that affected the lyrical and thematic content of Spirituals. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, an executive order calling for the end of slavery. However, slaves in the Confederate states were not freed until 1865, when the Civil War ended. Thus, the beginnings of Spirituals were enveloped in the context of slavery; this is made evident by the lyrics, themes, and imagery of Afro-American Spirituals. Slaves often used Spirituals to express their desire and Christian

¹⁹⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible” Institution in Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137; 178.

²⁰⁰ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 18.

²⁰¹ Bob Darden, *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 26.

²⁰² Ernest Borneman, “The Roots of Jazz,” in *Jazz*, eds. Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy (New York, Rinehart 1959), 21. Quoted in LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963), 42.

right to freedom. Historian Charles Joyner describes the implication of Spirituals best: “There is a haunting quality about the spirituals that partly echoes African communities in their music and performance style and partly reflects the trials and suffering, the sorrows and tribulations of life in bondage...the spirituals were also songs of hope and of affirmation. They reflected awareness that slavery was an unnatural--and temporary--condition.”²⁰³

The Influence of Slave Folk Music

Following the end of slavery, Spirituals began to evolve significantly. As many ex-slaves had greater freedom to form independent black congregations, both Afro-American religious and secular music lost many of the “more superficial forms it had borrowed from the white man.” The evolution of ring shouts, field hollers, Spirituals, and folk ballads has now been recognized as early blues music.²⁰⁴

Ring Shouts

A major component of Spirituals is the ring shout, rooted in the African ring dance. A ring shout is a series of dance-like body motions that slaves and their African ancestors performed as religious ritual.²⁰⁵ Although slaves were often not allowed to practice their traditional possession religions openly, they managed to perform the ring shout in secret via the hush harbor. The hush harbor tradition, with has roots in Africa, was the secret meeting of slaves

²⁰³ Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 164.

²⁰⁴ Jones, 59.

²⁰⁵ Joyner, 160.

to practice their rituals in the wilderness.²⁰⁶ Another major obstacle in the continuing of the ring shout tradition was the restriction of drumming in Anglo-America. Thus, slaves improvised by using hand-clapping and foot-stomping to recreate the polyrhythms of the drum.²⁰⁷

Spirit Possession

The central belief of the ring shout tradition is spirit possession. In Africa, members of a tribe would dance to the rhythm of the drum, usually resulting in an individual or a number of individuals going into a trance-like state. Africans believed that they were being possessed by the spirit of a deity or ancestor. When slaves were brought to the Americas from West Africa, many continued such practices, usually in secret. The movements of the ring shout also had a close resemblance to the rejoicing dances of Protestant evangelical conversion experiences.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the choreography of West African possession religions were able to survive outside of Protestant colonies; the trance-dance techniques of West African cults exist in Latin America as *Vodou*, *Santería*, *Candomblé*, and *Vudu*, and in Louisiana as *Voodoo*.²⁰⁹

Revivalist Camp Meetings

Protestant camp meetings became one of the major settings for the syncretic process of Afro-American religion during the Second Great Awakening. At these events, Christians would travel to one large area to camp out, sing hymns and Spirituals, and listen to preachers' sermons. Both

²⁰⁶ Leslie Howard Owens, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 155-156.

²⁰⁷ Joyner, 160.

²⁰⁸ Raboteau, 59.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* 28.

whites and blacks participated in biracial camp meetings, thus allowing exhorters to partake in both Euro- and Afro-American services.²¹⁰ It was here that there was significant influence of African American religion on European-American religion and vice versa. Ecstatic behavior was a common feature of these revival camp meetings, even where there had been little African-American influence; such behavior was found earlier in England and Ireland, as well.²¹¹ However, the significantly higher degree of emotionalism of slaves is evident in primary sources that describe the ejection of slaves in white churches and the splitting of denominations along racial lines.²¹² African religious practice brought a stronger emphasis to the singing, body movement, ritualistic dancing, the use of hand-clapping and foot-stomping for rhythm, and call and response preaching of camp meetings.

The Expansion and Sophistication of Black Spirituals in White America

Publications

In 1862, collector Lucy McKim Garrison released “Roll, Jordan, Roll,” the first Afro-American Spiritual to be published with sheet music. Garrison, along with William Francis Allen and Charles Pickard Ware, went on to publish an entire collection of Spirituals titled *Slave Songs of the United States* in 1867. In 1904, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an Englishman of partial African descent, published *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, a collection of piano arrangements. In 1916, musician Harry Thacker Burleigh published an arrangement of “Deep River” in the first of

²¹⁰ Yolanda Pierce, *Hell Without Fires: Slavery, Christianity, and the Antebellum Spiritual Narrative* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), 100.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 104.

²¹² Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 39.

his series, Jubilee Songs of the United States of America in 1916. In doing so, Burleigh raised the status of Spirituals to a respected art form. Furthermore, his arrangement made Afro-American Spirituals available for performance by some of the greatest singers of the twentieth century.²¹³

Performers and Performances

The Fisk Jubilee Singers began touring extensively in the United States in 1871 and in Europe in 1873. In 1925, African-American singer and civil rights activist Paul Robeson presented Spirituals on a formal concert stage for the first time in history; this further legitimized the genre as an art form. That same year, composer Hall Johnson organized his Hall Johnson Choir. The following year, the choir performed the first concert of solely slave songs.

The Music

Distinguishing Between:

Spirituals and Folk Slave Music

Both Spirituals and slave folk music share many of the same basic characteristics of Afro-American music: polyrhythm, syncopation, call and response, etc. Nonetheless, there are several characteristics of Spirituals that distinguish the genre from the early folk music performed by slaves. Slave folk music typically had secular lyrical themes, such as field work or the sorrows of slavery, whereas Spirituals are always religious in subject matter. Moreover,

²¹³ Jones, 41-42.

Spirituals are much more melodic than work songs and field hollers in that they are sung rather than grunted or hollered. Finally, slave religious music received much more influence from other sources, including European-American music, and “represented an amalgam of forms, styles, and influences.”²¹⁴

Afro-American Spirituals and Euro-American Religious Music

Afro-American Spirituals are also distinct from European and Euro-American religious music. African Americans adopted many traditional European hymns. Although the lyrics and the melodies often remained the same, the rhythms and harmonies changed to create a new song by incorporating rhythmic syncopation, polyphony, shifted accents, altered timbral qualities, and diverse vibrato.²¹⁵ Slave religious music, as well as secular slave music, also differed from Euro-American music in their approach to beat: European melodies tended “to fall on either [the] thesis or arsis of the rhythmic foot,” whereas the “main aspects of African melodies regularly fall between the down-and up-beats” creating more off-beats, retarded beats, and anticipated beats.²¹⁶ Moreover, Spirituals contained blue notes, or certain tones in major and pentatonic scale flattened or bent to a lower pitch.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Jones, 41-42.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 46-47.

²¹⁶ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, 29.

²¹⁷ Darden, 74.

Types of Spirituals

Categories by Melody

Perhaps the earliest scholar to categorize Afro-American Spirituals was musicologist John W. Work, who delineated black religious songs by melody:

- Call and response songs - most common; i.e. “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”
- Slow songs, with sustained long-phrase melody - least common; i.e. “Nobody Knows the Trouble I Seen.”
- Songs with syncopated and segmented melody - i.e. “Shout All Over God’s Heab’n.”
- Songs loose in structure.²¹⁸

Categories by Lyrical Content

Music education professor Tilford Brooks also categorized Afro-American religious music into three types

- Spirituals - high lyrical quality; express a wide range of emotions and places much emphasis on the believers’ relationship to the Holy Spirit.
- Jubilees - exuberant songs that “come from the heart of the singer.”
- Shouts - can be either of the previous two categories but used as dance songs.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ John W. Work, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals; A Comprehensive Collection of 230 Folk Songs, Religious and Secular* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1940), 18-19.

²¹⁹ Tilford Brooks, [*America's Black Musical Heritage*](#) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 32.

Categories by Tempo

Arnold Shaw has also categorized Spirituals, though on a various standards:

- Sorrow songs - slow tempi; themes related to the deprivations of slavery.
- Jubilees - sung up-tempo with exhilaration; focus thematically on the veneration of Jesus and God, the celebration of Biblical heroes, the rejection of the Devil, and the anticipation of Judgment Day and Heaven.
- Cult songs - derive from secret hush harbors where slaves practiced African cult religions and convey news to one another in code.²²⁰

Characteristics

Mode

Spirituals are characterized by a simple melody. Most songs are in the major mode, but can also occur in the natural minor, mixed major and minor, pentatonic, hexatonic (lacking 4th or 7th tone), major with both raised and lowered 7th tone, major with lowered 7th tone, minor with lowered 7th tone, minor with raised 7th tone.²²¹ However, it is important to remember that the notational system employed by European-Americans could not represent many tones present in Spirituals in their true pitches.²²²

²²⁰ Arnold Shaw, *Black Popular Music in America: From the Spirituals, Minstrels, and Ragtime to Soul, Disco, and Hip-Hop* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 10-12.

²²¹ Brooks, 36-37.

²²² *Ibid.* 37.

Form

- Coarse vocal textures.
- Propulsive rhythms.
- Heightened emotional level.
- Polyphony or “call and response” - two or more melodies sung simultaneously.
- Spontaneous improvisation.
- Pyramiding repetition.
- Melisma - singing of single syllable while moving between several different notes in succession.²²³
- Heterophony - simultaneous variation of a single melodic line.²²⁴

Structure

The typical structure of a Spiritual contains “rough and irregular couplets or stanzas [that] were concocted out of Scripture phrases and everyday speech, with liberal interspersing of Hallelujahs and refrains...The refrain of chorus is perhaps the predominant feature, not always connected with the subject-matter of the stanza, but rather ejaculatory. In some instances, such a refrain was merely tacked on to a familiar hymn or an arrangement of one.”²²⁵ In other words, Spirituals are organized by an *aabb* rhyme scheme--three repeated lines and a refrain--or an *aaba* rhyme scheme--two repeated lines, one new line, and then a repeat of the first line.

²²³ Shaw, 9-10.

²²⁴ Darden, 74.

²²⁵ Louis FitzGerald Benson, *The English Hymn* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, George H. Doran company, 1915), 292-293. Quoted in Darden, 56-57.

Themes

Lyrical Themes

The themes present in Spirituals typically have double meanings. For example: Satan was the slave master, Hell was the Deep South, the Jordan River was the first step to freedom, the Israelites were the enslaved Africans, the Egyptians were the slaveholders, Canaan was the land of freedom, Heaven was the North, and Home was Africa.²²⁶ English professor Erskine Peters also identified several different lyrical themes:²²⁷

- Sorrow, alienation, and desolation.
- Consolation and faith.
- Resistance and defiance.
- Deliverance.
- Jubilation and triumph.
- Judgment and reckoning.
- Regeneration.
- Spiritual progress.
- Transcendence.²²⁸

²²⁶ Darden, 72.

²²⁷ Charshee Charlotte Lawrence-McIntyre, "The Double Meaning of the Spirituals," *Journal of Black Studies* 12:4, 1987, 388.

²²⁸ Erskine Peters, "Spirituals, African American," in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: Garland Pub, 1996), 682-683.

Characteristics of a “True” Spiritual

Historian and pastor Wyatt Tee Walker defined seven basic thematic characteristics of a “true” spiritual.

- Deep Biblicism.
- Eternity of message.
- Rhythmic in nature.
- Given to improvisation.
- Antiphonal or call and response.
- Double or coded meaning.
- Repetition.
- Unique imagery.²²⁹

Musical Features

Religious scholar Albert J. Raboteau also cited a number of essential musical characteristics defining Spirituals:

- Polyrhythm - simultaneous use of two or more conflicting rhythms.
- Syncopation - disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm.
- Ornamentation - musical flourishes that are not necessary to carry the overall line of the melody or harmony.

²²⁹ Raboteau, 74.

- Slides from one note to another.
- Repetition.
- Body movement, hand-clapping, and foot-tapping.
- Heterophony - simultaneous variation of a single melodic line.²³⁰

Vocalization Techniques

According to author Robin Sylvan, Spirituals also include several vocalization techniques common in West Africa, such as:

- Falsetto - vocals in frequency range just above the modal voice register and overlapping with it by approximately one octave.
- Guttural effects - vocals articulated in the back of the oral cavity, such as shouts, moans, and groans.
- Melisma - the singing of a single syllable of text while moving between several different notes in succession.
- Nonverbal interpolations.²³¹

²³⁰ Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 56-57.

²³¹ George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933). Quoted Shaw, 7.

Historiography: The Scholars' Debate

The Origins of Black Spirituals

George Pullen Jackson

One of the earliest works on the subject of the origins of Spirituals was musicologist George Pullen Jackson's *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes."* (1933) Jackson argues that African Americans learned Spirituals from Euro-Americans at revivalist camp meetings and at southern Christian church services.(33)

Mark Miles Fisher

Jackson's hypothesis remained relatively unchallenged until around the 1960s. Historian and Baptist minister Miles Mark Fisher was one of the first to challenge early historians' assertions. In *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1968), Fisher outlined the many influences of Afro-American Spirituals:

- African religious music.
- Beliefs and customs.
- Non-hymnal European music.
- Scotch and Irish music as performed by Presbyterian ministers and Scotch and Irish slaveholders.

- European hymns - arrangements (verses followed by chorus structure) and theology (vocabulary, meter, rhythm, and tunes).
- Euro-American folk songs.²³²

Lawrence W. Levine

Lawrence W. Levine adds to Fisher's thesis in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1968) by arguing that it was actually white evangelical music that departed from their own origins in traditional European Protestant hymnology, approaching the qualities that characterized Afro-American and West African music: rhythmic emphasis, heavy percussion, polymeter, syncopation, and call and response patterns.²³³ He goes on to explain that such a transition was possible due to the shared textual characteristics between European-American hymns and African-American religious songs, though the content and emphasis differed. Both musical traditions shared the features of a sense of community, the use of martial imagery, the depiction of Heaven as an ideal destination, the emphasis on preparing oneself for Judgment, and the desire to reunite with loved ones in death. However, the two traditions differed in that the white spiritual genre was informed by pervasive otherworldliness, rejected the temporal present more markedly, and placed more concentration on Christ. Black Spirituals, on the other hand, contained more vivid Biblical imagery, identified more with the plights of the Jews, and had a greater tendency to reference the Old Testament.²³⁴

²³² Fisher, 178-179.

²³³ Levine, 20-21.

²³⁴ *Ibid.* 23.

William H. Tallmadge

In 1981, music professor William H. Tallmadge continued along Levine's line of thinking and challenged Jackson's original thesis directly in "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals." In this article, Tallmadge argues that the structure of Spirituals was a contribution from African-American musical tradition, citing the verse-refrain-chorus structure in particular.²³⁵

Tilford Brooks

In *America's Black Musical Heritage* (1984), musical education professor Tilford Brooks also argues this point, stating that "there is absolutely no proof of the preexistence of the White spiritual...the [Black] spiritual was established by the end of the seventeenth century. The camp meeting tradition, which produced the White spiritual, did not get started until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the White spiritual came into being some time later."²³⁶ He does, however, acknowledge that there were European musical influences on Afro-American Spirituals, but concludes that their roots lie primarily in Africa.

²³⁵ William H. Tallmadge, "The Black in Jackson's White Spirituals," *The Black Perspective in Music* 9, no. 2 (1981): 139-160. Quoted in Shaw, 7-8.

²³⁶ Brooks, 33.

Dating Spirituals

Eileen Southern

In her 1972 article “An Origin for the Negro Spiritual,” musicologist Eileen Southern argues that Spirituals could not exist until slaves converted to Christianity in the early 1800s.²³⁷

Dena J. Polachek

Musicologist Dena J. Polacheck Epstein follows this same hypothesis in *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (1977), stating that “African elements in religious singing were recognized and described as early as 1819, although they must have existed earlier, antedating by decades the first published reference to a ‘Negro spiritual.’”²³⁸ Epstein also explains the difficulty in dating Afro-American music by noting the lack of precedent for transcribing non-European music during that time period, along with the fact that African-derived music often contained features that could not be represented conventional musical notation standards, such as blue notes, swoops, glissandos, etc.²³⁹

²³⁷ Eileen Southern, “An Origin for the Negro Spiritual,” *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 3 (1972). Quoted in Shaw, 7.

²³⁸ Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 232.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* 346-347.

Videos

Black Delta Religion²⁴⁰

This documentary features the church services of an African-American church in the Mississippi Delta in 1968. Although Spirituals had mostly been overshadowed by gospel music by this period, this film presents a rare survival of the sorrow-filled religious music inherited from nineteenth century slaves.

²⁴⁰ Josette Ferris and Bill Ferris, *Black Delta Religion*, 8 mm, produced by Josette Ferris and Bill Ferris (1973; Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Network, 1973), 8 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film,82>.

APPENDIX D:
BLUES TRANSCRIPT

The History

Early Development

The exact date of origin of the blues is difficult to determine due to lack of sources and audio recordings. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that work songs, Spirituals, and field hollers were crucial to the development of early blues form:

- From work songs - a regular beat with call and response patterns.
- From Spirituals - a nearly identical use of harmony and melody.
- From field hollers - the intensity of personal expression, the themes of loneliness and hardship, a similarity to melody, and a free structure.²⁴¹

Historical Context

Religious scholar Yvonne P. Chireau describes the context in which blues music developed in and its overall quality, stating that blues music “bares witness to African American thought after Emancipation...Conventionally interpreted as a ‘worldly’ or ‘profane’ music, the blues are more adequately defined as ‘secular spirituals,’ for they also delivered sobering reflections on the human condition. In this respect, the blues were the result of African Americans’ creative attempts to come to terms with the existential dilemma of human suffering.”²⁴² Moreover, following emancipation, Afro-American music lost many of the forms

²⁴¹ Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 52.

²⁴² Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 145.

borrowed from Euro-American music, due to the increased physical separation between whites and blacks in the latter half of the 1800s.²⁴³

Standardization

Throughout the 1800s, the blues structure was completely free. However, it began to stabilize in the early 1900s due to two factors: the method of notating blues begun by W.C. Handy in 1912 to create a standardized twelve-bar form; and the recording of blues music beginning in 1920, which standardized the length of songs due to what space was available on 78 rpm records.²⁴⁴ Mamie Smith became the first African American blues singer to make a commercial recording in 1920 when she recorded Perry Bradford's Crazy Blues. This ushered in the era of race records, which were commercial recordings aimed specifically to attract a black market.²⁴⁵ Though this development allowed the increased growth of blues music, it put limitations on improvisation due to the limited amount of length available on records.

Major Phases

Country/Archaic Blues

Scholars have generally categorized blues into three phases, the first being archaic or country blues. This form began in the Mississippi Delta and was characterized by a lack of standardized form, unamplified guitar, and spoken lyrics during introduction and conclusions.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963), 59.

²⁴⁴ Brooks, 52-53.

²⁴⁵ Jones, 99.

²⁴⁶ Brooks, 53.

Some of the popular musicians of country blues, though not active until the 1920s and 1930s, were Blind Lemon Jefferson, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Brownie McGhee.

Class/City Blues

From the 1910s to the 1930s, a great deal of African Americans left the South in exodus in order to seek economic opportunities, as well as more social equality, in the Northern, Midwest, and Western industrial centers, such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. There was also an exodus of African-American musicians from New Orleans in 1917 when the city's red light district, Storyville, was closed, leaving many musicians out of work.²⁴⁷

This exodus, now called the Great Migration, drastically transformed many African Americans from rural residents to urban residents. Due to this new demographic, economic, and social context, classic or city blues developed during the 1920s and 1930s. Classic blues is characterized by a standardized form, regular beginnings and endings, and an increased number of instruments used for accompaniment, usually between two and seven.²⁴⁸ This phase was dominated by female singers, including Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey.

Contemporary Blues

Contemporary blues developed following World War II and the Second Great Migration, when more African Americans moved from the South to the North, Midwest, and West. This category is also notated and arranged and is characterized by the inclusion of saxophones and

²⁴⁷ Jones, 111.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 57.

guitars, as well as the shouting style of singing with a riff.²⁴⁹ Some of the most famous blues artists were involved in this phase, including T-Bone Walker and B.B. King.

Though these phases typify the major delineations of the chronological development of blues music, there are a number of subgenres, including boogie-woogie and electric blues and also fusion genres such as jazz blues, Gospel blues, rhythm and blues, blues-rock, and soul blues.

The Music

Influence of Slave Folk Music

Early forms of slave music--work songs, Spirituals, and field hollers—all played a crucial role in the creation of blues music.²⁵⁰ From work songs, blues incorporated a regular beat with call and response patterns; from spirituals, a nearly identical use of harmony and melody; and from field hollers, the intensity of personal expression, the themes of loneliness and hardship, a similarity to melody, and a free structure.²⁵¹

Origin of “Blues”

The naming of blues music as such is quite evident in the common lyrical themes of the genre--sorrow, deprivation, pain. The melancholic theme in blues lyrics is a product of the conditions of slavery and post-emancipation life. Perhaps the most common theme in blues

²⁴⁹ *Ibid* . 59.

²⁵⁰ Brooks, 52.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*.

songs is the “woman problem,” and is also commonly found in early slave songs related to Conjure.²⁵²

Form

Though blues has strong origins in work songs, Spirituals, and field hollers, it is a distinct genre of music. Its form has evolved several times, creating numerous subgenres. Prior to the 1900s, the length of a song depended on the number of measures required by the singer to complete a statement; in other words, there was a free structure with no clear-cut bar pattern.²⁵³

This feature changed in the 1900s due to the standardization of form and length. The twelve-bar form became the standard when composers, beginning with W.C. Handy, began notating blues music. Like its predecessors, blues music also involves singing over a steady, percussive rhythm, with pauses of varied lengths.

Lyrics

Lyrically, the singer typically follows a three-line stanza format, a feature common in earlier slave shouts, with the second line being a statement of the first and the third line contrasting the first statement. This style is rarely found in English literature, and may possibly have originated with African Americans.²⁵⁴ Additionally, blues music has an antiphonal

²⁵² Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 130.

²⁵³ Brooks, 53.

²⁵⁴ Jones, 111.

structure, meaning that a four-measure phrase often has a melody that is slightly longer than two measures. The remaining length of time allows for other instruments to improvise.²⁵⁵

Blue Notes

Finally, blues music is characterized by blue notes, which are sung at a slightly lower pitch than that of a major scale, and blue tonality, partially flatted third and seventh notes. Though such notes are not common in European musical tradition, they are not originated in West African music either, but rather in music from other areas of Africa.²⁵⁶

Major Types

Country/Archaic Blues

Country, or archaic, blues was the earliest form of blues music, with non-standardized forms, an unamplified guitar, spoken verses, ostinato patterns in guitar accompaniment, the use of bottlenecks on guitar frets, and a falsetto voice with “rough and growling tones.”²⁵⁷

Classic/City Blues

City, or classic, blues was standardized and had regular beginnings and endings with between two to seven instruments used for accompaniment.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Brooks, 55.

²⁵⁶ Courlander, 18-20.

²⁵⁷ Brooks, 56.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 57.

Contemporary Blues

Contemporary blues incorporated different kinds of instruments, such as saxophones and electric guitars, and also had vocal lines sung in a shouting style with a riff—a short, repeated melodic phrase in the blues chord pattern.²⁵⁹

Historiography: The Scholars' Debate

Origins

It is difficult to determine the exact date of origin of blues music, due to the lack of sources and documentation, especially sound recordings. Historians and other academic scholars have generally narrowed its origin to sometime between the middle of the 1800s to the early 1900s.²⁶⁰ It is quite possible that blues began after emancipation, as Baptist preacher and musicologist Tilford Brooks argues in *America's Black Musical Heritage*. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that blues music has deep origins in early Afro-American musical genres--work songs, Spirituals, and field hollers.²⁶¹

Spirituality

Robin Sylvan

Although blues music is considered a secular form of music, some scholars have argued for a significant deal of spirituality present in the genre. In *Traces of the Spirit: Religious*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 59.

²⁶⁰ Brooks, 51-52.

²⁶¹ Jones, 59.

Dimensions of Popular Music, religious scholar Robin Sylvan demonstrates the spirituality of blues music primarily by referring to the tradition of West African spiritual expression via large religious drum and dance ensembles which, he states, was transformed to “one man playing the guitar and then back into newly configured musical ensembles in a completely different context.”²⁶²

Yvonne P. Chireau

Similarly, religious scholar Yvonne P. Chireau argues in her book *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* that blues music was a “prime conduit for African American supernatural beliefs.” She cites the African-American folk magic traditions Conjure, Hoodoo, and Voodoo, as constant inspirations for blues composers; many African-American blues musicians directly referenced talismans, spirituals, and magic in their songs.²⁶³ However, Chireau goes on to explain that blues was typically rejected by members of black congregations, often calling it “the devil’s music.”²⁶⁴

²⁶² Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 61-62.

²⁶³ Chireau, 145.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 148.

Videos

I Ain't Lying: Folktales from Mississippi²⁶⁵

This film documents the narratives of storytellers and bluesmen in Leland and Rose Hill, Mississippi in the 1970s. The film includes stories that demonstrate the African-American oral traditions of joking and toasting, which would be incorporated later into hip hop music. Performances by several bluesmen are also presented.

The Land Where the Blues Began²⁶⁶

This film documents the stories and music of blues musicians from the Mississippi Delta region in the late 1970s, including Johnny Brooks, Walter Brown, Bill Gordon, James Hall, William S. Hart, Beatrice and Clyde Maxwell, Jack Owens, Wilbert Puckett, J. T. Tucker, Reverend Caesar Smith, Bud Spires, Belton Sutherland, and Othar Turner.

Blues Houseparty: Music, Dance and Stories by Masters of the Piedmont Blues²⁶⁷

This documentary features the stories and music of Piedmont blues musicians in 1989. These bluesmen and blueswomen discuss not only their music, but also the historical context of country blues.

²⁶⁵ Bill Ferris, *I Ain't Lying: Folktales from Mississippi*, 16 mm, produced by Bill Ferris (1975; Memphis, TN: Center for Southern Folklore, 1975), 16 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.87>.

²⁶⁶ John M. Bishop, Alan Lomax, and Worth W. Long, *The Land Where the Blues Began*, ¾ tape, produced by the Mississippi Authority for Educational Television and Alan Lomax (1979; West Hills, CA: Media_Generation, 1979), ¾ tape, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.109>.

²⁶⁷ Eleanor Ellis, *Blues Houseparty: Music, Dance and Stories by Masters of the Piedmont Blues*, BetaSP, produced by Eleanor Ellis (1989; Takoma Park, MD: Eleanor Ellis, 1989), BetaSP, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.234>.

Give My Poor Heart Ease: Mississippi Delta Bluesmen²⁶⁸

This documentary features the stories and music of blues musicians from the Mississippi Delta region in the 1970s, including B.B. King, Son Thomas, and others.

Music Masters and Rhythm Kings²⁶⁹

This film demonstrates various styles of music, including blues, and explores the multi-ethnic origins of each.

²⁶⁸ Bill Ferris, *Give My Poor Heart Ease: Mississippi Delta Bluesmen*, 16 mm, produced by Yale University Media Design Studio and the Center for Southern Folklore (1975; Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Network, 1975), 166 mm, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.80>.

²⁶⁹ Peggy Bulger and Melissa Shepard Sykes, *Music Masters and Rhythm Kings*, BetaSP, produced by Peggy Bulger and Melissa Shepard Sykes (1993; Peggy Bulger and Melissa Shepard Sykes, 1993), BetaSP, <http://www.folkstreams.net/film.185>.

APPENDIX E:
CONCLUSION TRANSCRIPT

Influence of American Popular Music

Afro-American folk music, Spirituals, and blues laid the foundation for a wide range of musical genres that have come to dominate American popular music today. As discussed throughout the project, many of the musical features of Afro-American slave music had origins in Africa, but many features were also newly created by African Americans as a group. It is also important to remember that there is evidence of European and Euro-American influences on Afro-American music, especially as African Americans became more involved in mainstream culture. Moreover, while African Americans were primarily responsible for the development of the major genres of American popular music, there were a number of Euro-Americans who contributed as well and many subgenres were pioneered by Euro-Americans.

Jazz

The History

New Orleans Jazz

Jazz originated in African-American southern communities in the twentieth century and is another example of the merging of African and European musical traditions. The earliest jazz style was New Orleans, or Dixieland, jazz. This style incorporated the African-inspired music performed in New Orleans' Congo Square, the instruments used in marching bands and funeral processions, and French and Spanish influences from the region's previous colonizing empires. Cornet player Buddy Bolden and his band is credited with creating the first syncopated bass drum pattern that deviated from the standard on-the-beat march during the late 1890s and early

1900s.²⁷⁰ The New Orleans jazz style was disseminated throughout black communities and later white communities via vaudeville performances.²⁷¹ The first jazz arrangement, Jelly Roll Morton's Jelly Roll Blues, was composed in 1905 and published in 1915, and also further spread the influence of the New Orleans style.²⁷² Originally a ragtime composer, Morton also decreased the embellishments of ragtime's rhythm, in effect creating swing.²⁷³

The Jazz Age

In the 1920s and 1930s, the United States experienced the Jazz Age, a period in which jazz music became heavily popularized. Performed at speakeasies during Prohibition, jazz gained the reputation of being immoral. In 1922, Kid Ory's Original Creole Jazz Band became the first African-American New Orleans jazz band to record their music. It was during this period, however, that Chicago, Illinois became the new center of jazz. Louis Armstrong also began forming a new phase of jazz during the Jazz Age, extemporizing chords rather than melodies and popularizing scat singing.²⁷⁴

Big Band and Swing

By the 1930s, big band swing music became the popular form of jazz. Though many African-American musicians played a major role in this style, such as Cab Calloway and Duke

²⁷⁰ Wynton Marsalis, *Jazz*, directed by Ken Burns, DVD (PBS, 2000).

²⁷¹ "Original Creole Orchestra," *The Red Hot Archive*, accessed September 30, 2012, <http://www.redhotjazz.com/creole.html>.

²⁷² Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38; 56.

²⁷³ Cooke and Horn, 54.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 546-59.

Ellington, this subgenre also saw the increased participation of white jazz musicians, such as Benny Goodman.

Bebop

In the 1940s and 1950s, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, and others pioneered the development of bebop. Bebop was treated as an art form rather than entertainment. The style is characterized by faster tempos with highly syncopated, linear rhythmic complexity;²⁷⁵ a more abstracted form of chord-based improvisation;²⁷⁶ traditional scales with an added chromatic passing note; passing chords, substitute chords, and altered chords.

Fusion Genres and Subgenres

Since these early periods of the genre, jazz has experienced a wide range of subgenres and styles, such as: Afro-Cuban jazz, the Dixieland revival, cool jazz, hard bop, modal jazz, and free jazz in the 1940s and 1950s; Latin jazz, post-bop, soul jazz, and various jazz fusions in the 1960s and 1970s; and smooth jazz and other subgenres developed from the 1980s up until the present. In summation, jazz has a long history of evolution and off-shoots that continue to develop in the present day.

²⁷⁵ Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

²⁷⁶ Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book* (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music, 1995), 171.

The Music

Characteristics

From African and African-American musical tradition, jazz incorporates blue notes, improvisation, polyrhythm, syncopation, and swing notes.²⁷⁷ According to musicologist Joachim Berendt, jazz differs from European music in that it has a “special relationship to time, defined as ‘swing,’“ with a high degree of improvisation, spontaneity, and individualism.²⁷⁸

Influences

Many of the Afro-American features originated from several sources:

- The percussive styles of African festivals held at Congo Square in New Orleans, Louisiana up until the 1840s.²⁷⁹
- The harmonic styles of Spirituals.²⁸⁰
- The heterophony of rural blues.²⁸¹
- The adoption of European instruments in minstrelsy.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 4-5.

²⁷⁸ Joachim Ernst Berendt, *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond* (Westport, CT: L. Hill, 1981), 371.

²⁷⁹ Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 37.

²⁸⁰ Cooke and Horn, 14-17.

²⁸¹ Gerhard Kubik, *Africa and the Blues* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 112.

²⁸² Cooke and Horn, 18.

Rhythm

Additionally, jazz is often accompanied by a rhythm section that plays chords and rhythms to complement the soloist by outlining the song's structure.²⁸³ Although musicians of New Orleans jazz and Dixieland jazz initially took turns playing melodies while the others improvised countermelodies, big bands of the swing era relied increasingly more on written or memorized arrangements. Bebop musicians refocused on small groups with minimal arrangements. In bebop, the core of the performance was improvised.

Gospel

The History

Gospel music originates from Afro-American Spirituals and slave folk music tracing back to the early seventeenth century. It also has a degree of influence from Euro-American Christian hymns and religious music.

Influences

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a number of musicians and composers began establishing Gospel music publishing houses, such as that of Charles Tindley. The Holiness-Pentecostal, or sanctified, movement was instrumental in the development of Gospel music during this century. Appealing to “less sophisticated” people in terms of musicology, Pentecostal churches expanded the types of instruments used in church music, including

²⁸³ “[Jazz Drumming](http://www.drumbook.org/drum-lessons/jazz-drums/jazz-drumming/),” *Drumbook: Free Drum Lessons Online*, accessed September 30, 2012, <http://www.drumbook.org/drum-lessons/jazz-drums/jazz-drumming/>.

anything from tambourines to electric guitars. Mahalia Jackson, Andrae Crouch, and other musicians of all races acknowledged the influence of the Pentecostal tradition in their music.²⁸⁴ Some other influences include harmonies of barbershop quartets, the rhetorical speeches of jack-leg preachers, and the singing style of religious quartets.

Radio Airtime

The audience of gospel music increased vastly with the advent of radio in the 1920s. It was also during this period that Arizona Dranes became the first musician to introduce ragtime to the genre and was also the first to play the piano on a gospel recording.

Modern Gospel Music

Specifically within African-American gospel music, a cappella style quartets developed in the 1930s, though they received limited attention outside of the black community.²⁸⁵ Known as the “Father of Black Gospel,” Thomas A. Dorsey, formerly a composer of secular music, also began to perform gospel music exclusively and established a publishing house in Chicago.²⁸⁶ In 1930, the National Baptist Convention began to endorse modern Gospel music, marking what many consider the beginning of the modern style.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Bill C. Malone, “Music, Religious, of the Protestant South,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. Samuel S. Hill, ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1984), 521.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 522.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 523.

²⁸⁷ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, third edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 484.

Exposure to White Audiences

In 1950, black gospel music increased in white exposure when Joe Bostic produced the first Negro Gospel and Religious Music Festival held at Carnegie Hall, which moved to Madison Square Garden in 1959. Despite this, white and black Gospel music remains mostly separate today.

The Music

Vocals

Gospel is generally characterized by dominant vocals, strong use of vocal harmony, and lyrics of Christian themes. This genre, like its pre-cursor the Spiritual, features a refrain and syncopated rhythms. In the Afro-American musical tradition, Gospel features a great deal of repetition and call and response singing.

Subgenres

The major subgenres of gospel music are contemporary gospel, urban contemporary or black gospel, gospel blues, southern gospel, progressive southern gospel, Christian country music, bluegrass gospel, and modern gospel or contemporary Christian music. Many of these forms use choirs, pianos, organs, drums, bass guitars, and electric guitars.

Rock'n'Roll

The History

Origins

Evolving during the late 1940s and early 1950s, rock'n'roll is a synthesis of blues, country, jazz, and gospel music; it is synonymous with the development of rhythm & blues. Although it originated in the South, rock was brought to major urban centers, including Memphis, New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo by many African Americans during the Second Great Migration. Rock'n'roll music was available to all racial groups due to its popularity on radio stations and with the development of the gramophone record.

Technological Developments

Rock'n'roll experienced a significant technological change with the developments of the electric guitar, amplifier, microphone, and 45 rpm record.²⁸⁸ Moreover, the rise of independent labels such as Atlantic and Chess lead to the increased airtime of rock music on radio stations, as well as the increased interest of the genre among affluent white teenagers.

Musical Advancements

Stylistically, there have also been some key milestones developed by African-American musicians. For example, Chuck Berry's music began to feature a distorted electric guitar solo

²⁸⁸ Vladimir Bogdanov, Chris Woodstra, and Stephen Thomas Erlewine, *All Music Guide to Rock: The Definitive Guide to Rock, Pop, and Soul* (San Francisco, CA: Backbeat Books, 2002), 1303.

and warm overtones created using an amplifier.²⁸⁹ Bo Diddley introduced a new beat that is essentially a clave rhythm, or a five-stroke pattern, that was heavily influenced by African rhythm and went on to influence many later rock artists.²⁹⁰

White Rock'n'Roll Musicians

While many white rock'n'roll artists performed rockabilly, some of the earliest rock hits were covers or re-writes of earlier R&B or blues songs by African-Americans. This was due to the taboo feeling about playing black music on white radio stations. Nonetheless, many white musicians and producers sought to reap the benefits of rock'n'roll and covered earlier African-American songs.²⁹¹

The Music

Influences

Rock'n'roll's most immediate predecessors were rhythm & blues and country music in the 1940s and 1950s.²⁹² Jazz, blues, gospel, and folk music were also quite influential in the development of this new genre. Historians and musicologists debate which influences were most integral to the development of rock music and whether the new genre was a re-branding of

²⁸⁹ John Collis, *Chuck Berry: The Biography* (London: Aurum, 2002), 38.

²⁹⁰ Peter Buckley, *The Rough Guide to Rock* (London: Rough Guides, 2003), 21.

²⁹¹ Richard Aquila, *That Old-Time Rock & Roll: A Chronicle of an Era, 1954-1963* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 6.

²⁹² Bogdanov, Woodstra, and Erlewine, 1306-1307.

African-American R&B for a white market or a new hybrid of both Afro- and Euro-American forms of music.²⁹³

Instrumentation

Although the earliest forms of rock'n'roll feature the piano or the saxophone as the lead instrument, both were replaced by or supplemented with the guitar by the mid- to late 1950s.²⁹⁴ Rock music also includes a blues rhythm with an accentuated backbeat, typically played by a snare drum.²⁹⁵

Subgenres

Though African Americans played a vital role in the development of rock music, their participation in later genres have decreased in comparison. Many genres of rock have been developed and influenced by white musicians. Some of the major subgenres of rock music include British, garage, psychedelic, progressive, glam, soft, hard, heavy metal, Christian, punk, alternative, grunge, indie, and emo.

²⁹³ *Ibid.* 1303.

²⁹⁴ Tony Bennett, *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions* (London: Routledge, 1993), 236-238.

²⁹⁵ S. Evans, "The Development of the Blues" in *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, Allan F. Moore, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40-42.

Soul

The History

Originating in the 1950s and early 1960s, soul music synthesizes elements of gospel and r&b. “Soul music” has also been used as an umbrella term for black popular music during the 1960s, often encompassing r&b and the “Motown sound.”²⁹⁶

Early Development

Ray Charles’ “I Got a Woman” (1954) is often cited as the first soul song. However, many historians and musicologists argue that the genre was not solidified until Solomon Burke’s recordings with Atlantic Records in the early 1960s. Little Richard, Fats Domino, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, and Sam Cooke are also considered influential in the development of soul music. Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and others are characteristic of the soul sound.

Seminal Record Labels and Artists

Geographically, the urban centers in the North and Midwest, such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, Memphis, and Florence are considered the major centers of soul, each with their distinct styles. FAME Studios was centered in Florence, Alabama and Stax Records was located in Memphis, Tennessee. These two record labels had a close relationship to one another and led the way in the Southern soul subgenre. Motown Records, also important in the development and mainstreaming of rhythm & blues music, was based in Detroit, Michigan, and is perhaps the

²⁹⁶ “Soul Music,” Stanley Sadie, John Tyrrell, and George Grove, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001), 23.

most successful black-owned record label before the advent of hip hop. Motown produced such artists as Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, the Four Tops, and the Temptations and was so unique that its music was labeled as the “Motown sound.” The birthplace of soul, Chicago, Illinois, was home of Curtis Mayfield, the “Godfather of Northern Soul” and a center for the “sweet soul” sound. Mayfield was a major practitioner of call and response singing, which came from Gospel music.

Increased Exposure

Soul music continued to flourish in the 1970s with artists such as Al Green, The Staple Singers, and Michael Jackson and the Jackson Five. It was also during this period that soul music became influenced by pop music, psychedelic rock, and other genres. Moreover, soul music expanded its audience with the television series Soul Train, which debuted in 1971, supplying an outlet for many soul artists to exhibit their music.

Decrease in Popularity

As disco and funk began to dominate popular music in the late 1970s and early 1980s, soul music developed into the subgenre quiet storm, which featured relaxed tempos and soft melodies. In the 1980s, soul became influenced by electro music, eventually evolving into what would become contemporary R&B.

The Music

Characteristics

Soul is typically characterized by catchy rhythms that are stressed by handclapping and extemporaneous body movements. The genre also makes use of call and response singing and a tense vocal sound, as well as improvisational vocalizations.

Regional Variations

The sound of soul music varied often along geographic regions. Detroit soul, or the Motown sound, featured a dense musical texture with a large emphasis on the rhythm section via handclapping or by playing the tambourine. Motown also pioneered the subgenre of pop-soul, which is characterized by raw vocals with a polished production and an audience-sensitive subject matter that led to great crossover success. Pop-soul also led to the development of disco. Deep, or Southern, soul is defined as a subgenre combining soul music, rhythm & blues, and Gospel music. Stax's Memphis soul tended to have smaller ensembles with expressive Gospel-tinged vocals, as well as the extensive use of saxophones and brass instruments.²⁹⁷ Stax often replaced background vocals with vibrant horns and focused on a low frequency. Memphis soul differs somewhat from Southern soul in that it features melancholic and melodic horns, organs, basses, and drums. New Orleans soul is heavily influenced by Gospel music, pop music, and the boogie-woogie style. This subgenre is typically accompanied by a piano and a saxophone, while

²⁹⁷ Julia Winterson, Peter Nickol, and Toby Bricheno, *Pop Music: The Text Book* (London: Peters Edition, 2003).

guitars are rare. Choirs are almost always feminine. New Orleans soul also went on to directly influence funk.

Funk

The History

Early Developments

Funk music originated in the mid- to late 1960s by blending soul, jazz, and rhythm and blues into a more rhythmic form of music. Little Richard is often credited with laying the foundation of funk music in the mid-1950s by adding “funky” beats to rock’n’roll music.²⁹⁸ By the mid-1960s, soul singer James Brown had developed a new groove that emphasized the downbeat. Brown placed heavy emphasis on every measure, rather than the back beat that characterized Afro-American music.²⁹⁹ In other words, he changed the percussive emphasis/accent from the second and fourth backbeat, typical of soul music, to the first and third downbeat. Funk began to spread in the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially in the West Coast region. San Francisco-based group Sly & the Family Stone, a mixed race band, was amongst the first to reach crossover success on the charts.

²⁹⁸ “Little Richard,” *The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*, accessed October 1, 2012. <http://rockhall.com/inductees/little-richard>.

²⁹⁹ Freddie White, “Lessons in Listening - Concepts Section: Fantasy, Earth Wind & Fire, The Best of Earth Wind & Fire, Volume 1,” *Modern Drummer Magazine* (January 1998), 146-152.

Later Developments

Perhaps one of the major innovators in funk music after James Brown was George Clinton and his bands Parliament and Funkadelic (collectively called Parliament-Funkadelic). The style of funk played by Clinton and his bands became known as a distinct subgenre called P-Funk, which was heavily influenced by jazz and psychedelic rock.

Subgenres

Since the 1970s, a number of genres and subgenres have come from funk. Disco is said to be largely a product of funk music. Similarly, hip hop music tended to sample funk songs more often than any other genre. Some subgenres of funk include the funk rock, jazz funk, go-go, electro, boogie or electro-funk, funk metal, Timba, G-funk, the nu-funk, punk funk, and funk jam.

The Music

Rhythm

Funk returns to a re-emphasis of rhythm over melody and harmony, a feature of African and early Afro-American music. A strong rhythmic groove is created using an electric bass and drums and places it in the foreground. Funk usually features an extended vamp on a single chord instead of centering on chord progressions, as R&B and soul music does. The rhythm of funk is based on a two-celled onbeat/offbeat structure, a characteristic inherited from Africa.

Groove

The intense groove is created by using strong guitar riffs and bass lines. The guitar usually plays in a percussive style, often using the *wah-wah* sound effect. Many bassists also practice the slap bass style, which combines thumb-slapped low notes and finger-popped or -plucked high notes, allowing the bass to play a drum-like rhythmic role.

Harmony

In terms of harmony, funk utilized extended chords similar to that of bebop, but instead abandoned the bebop's complex, rapid chord changes altogether. Instead, funk creates static single chord vamps with little harmonic movement. Again, this method places more emphasis on rhythm.

Hip Hop

The History

Old School

Both hip hop music and hip hop culture developed at block parties common in New York City during the 1970s. Typically consisting of urban African-American youths, these block parties featured disc jockeys (DJs) that played various genres of music, especially funk and soul. Original hip hop music is generally described as an outlet for the disenfranchised black youths of

low-income urban areas.³⁰⁰ However, it is important to note that the Latino community was also quite influential in the development of hip hop culture, as many early DJs and rappers had at least partial Latino ancestry.

Several DJs, such as the Father of Hip Hop DJ Kool Herc, began to isolate percussive breaks of songs, a technique borrowed from Jamaican dub music,³⁰¹ and extend those breaks using two turntables. Rapping was soon added to accompany DJing.

Expansion

The earliest forms of hip hop music were recorded by PA systems and distributed as mix tapes. However, in 1979, the Sugar Hill Gang recorded “Rapper’s Delight,” generally considered the first true hip hop record. By the early 1980s, the major elements of the genre had been implemented and the music had spread to cities with large African-American populations, such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Los Angeles, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas; Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri; Miami, Florida; Seattle, Washington; New Orleans, Louisiana; and even Toronto, Canada. Later in the decade, the hip hop culture spread outside of the United States, especially in Japan, Australia, and South Africa.

³⁰⁰ Scott Crossley, “Metaphorical Conceptions in Hip- Hop Music,” *African American Review* (St. Louis University Press, 2005). 501–502.

³⁰¹ Mike Pawka, “What is ‘Dub’ Music Anyway? (Reggae),” *stason.org* accessed October 7, 2012, <http://stason.org/TULARC/music-genres/reggae-dub/3-What-is-Dub-music-anyway-Reggae.html>.

The 1980s

The 1980s also marked the diversification of hip hop music into various styles, most notably the electro style of Afrika Bambaataa. Lyrically, rapping became more metaphorical and socially conscious beginning with Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Fives *The Message* in 1982. This diversification of the genre continues to today and has ultimately resulted in various regional and stylistic genres, such as new school (Run-DMC, LL Cool J), gangsta or West Coast (N.W.A., Snoop Doggy Dog), Southern (Lil Wayne, OutKast).

The Golden Age of Hip Hop

What is often considered the “golden age” of hip hop is the period from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, with acts such as Public Enemy, Eric B. & Rakim, and A Tribe Called Quest. This period feature strong Afrocentric themes, political militancy, experimentation, eclectic sampling, and a strong jazz influence. Towards the end of this period, hip hop culture was able to breakthrough to the mainstream, especially with Public Enemy’s *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990), MC Hammer’s *Please Hammer, Don’t Hurt ‘Em* (1990), Dr. Dre’s *The Chronic* (1992). By the mid-1990s, hip hop had become the best-selling musical genre.³⁰²

Revitalization

Although hip hop had a decline in sales in the mid-2000s, it has since been revitalized by alternative hip hop rappers, such as 50 Cent, Kanye West, and Kid Cudi. Today, rap is considered one of the most popular genres of music, especially among youths of all races.

³⁰² Angus Batey, “The Hip-Hop Heritage Society,” *The Guardian*, October 7, 2008.

The Music

DJing

Originally, hip hop centered around the turntable, with DJs using techniques such as scratching, beat mixing and beat matching, and beat juggling. Rapping to an instrumental or synthesized beat is also a central feature to the genre of hip hop music.

MCing

In its most simple definition, hip hop consists of a stylized rhythmic music that typically accompanies rapping, which is a rhythmic speech that is chanted with rhyming lyrics.

Rapping, or MCing, is a vocal style of speaking lyrically in rhyme and verse. The roots of rapping can be traced not only to Afro-American music, but also to African music. In West Africa, griots, or storytellers, spoke in a style similar to modern-day rapping and is believed to be an Africanism that survived the conditions of slavery and acculturation.⁷ Additionally, rapping includes the African-American traditions of signifyin', the dozens, jazz poetry, and call and response vocal patterns.

Rhythm

In hip hop, beat (created instrumentally or synthetically) is almost always in 4/4 time and is typically created by sampling or sequencing previously produced songs. Synthesizers and drum machines are the most common instruments in hip hop.

APPENDIX F:
BOOKSHELF TRANSCRIPT

What is Historiography?

Historiography is the study of the methodology and development of the historical discipline. In the context of this project, “historiography” refers to the academic debate amongst scholars on a particular topic. This collage will present the major works and scholars on the subject of Afro-American music.

1940s: Acculturation vs. Creolization

The Negro Family in the United States

Summary

In *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argues that nearly all aspects of African culture amongst Afro-American slaves were decimated under the conditions of the slave trade and slavery. He cites the scattering of slaves from different nations on plantations and the inability to communicate in the same language as each other for the destruction of African culture in the United States. The author then goes on to argue that enslaved Africans and their offspring were stripped of their preliterate culture, created a folk culture, and ultimately adopted the more sophisticated Euro-American culture. Overall, Frazier characterized Afro-American culture as one of primarily Euro-American influence with adaptations made by African Americans themselves.

The book focuses specifically upon the African-American family in the United States and is an expansion of his earlier work, *The Negro Family in Chicago*. He analyzes the African-American experience of enslavement, the mother as the head of the family, the forced mating of

slaves, the separation of husband and wife, the migration of African Americans throughout the country, black social organization, urbanization and the subsequent delinquency associated with broken homes, and the process of assimilation and acculturation.

Sources and Methodology

Frazier's study of the African-American family is modeled after W.I. Thomas and Florian Zuaniecki's study of the Polish family. He uses statistics as well as personal documents to support his argument.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Though seminal at the time of its publication, Frazier's conclusions have mostly been overshadowed by the works of Melville J. Herskovits and later scholars. For example, his exaggeration of the immorality and leniency of the African-American family organization during slavery is seen as outdated. Another weakness is that many of the author's conclusions depend too much on generalizations; for instance, he characterizes most, if not all, white men as treating their slaves like a herd of cattle, despite evidence that some who appeared to be genuinely concerned with the morality of their slaves.

The Myth of the Negro Past

Summary

In *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), Melville J. Herskovits seeks to dispel the myths of African-American history: that African Americans are childlike and adjust easily to harsh

conditions; that only the lower African classes were enslaved; that slaves were unable to retain their African heritage due to the cultural diversity of a group of slaves in any given area; that the African cultures were so savage that they would naturally become dominated by the superior Euro-American culture; and African Americans have no true history.

In regards to this project, Herskovits most significant contribution is his argument for a much higher degree of African survivals than previously supposed. He is able to do so by challenging the myths of the African-American past, instead showing that Africanisms were quite capable of surviving the harsh conditions of the slave trade, bondage, and disenfranchisement. For example, by demonstrating that Africans were brought from a relatively small region of the continent, West Africa and areas along the Congo, he is able to contradict the notion that there was too much cultural diversity for slaves to maintain their heritage. Overall, Herskovits' work is seminal in the historiography of the creolization of African Americans.

Sources and Methodology

As an anthropologist, the author himself has much field experience in the United States, Africa, and Latin America. He has used much of his own research to defend his thesis, along with primary and secondary sources from others. Additionally, Herskovits methodology is a comparative study in which he recognizes the historical affiliations of the people of Africa with the people of African descent in the Americas. This particular work is an extension of the research memorandum that Herskovits prepared for the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Gunnar Myrdal "Study of the Negro."

Strengths and Weaknesses

A major strength of this work is the author's critique of earlier scholars of African-American acculturation, especially Franklin E. Frazier. Herskovits argues that previous study of African-American history has been based on assumptions rather than factual analysis, and thoroughly supports this point. Perhaps the most notable strength in this work is the author's argument that African culture is not inferior to European culture; rather, West African culture demonstrates a great deal of complexity and was perhaps even more complex than European culture in the Middle Ages.

One weakness of Herskovits book is that he fails to detail the extent of specific African survivals. In other words, while he may cite Africanisms in American culture, he does not explain how widespread or popular that aspect is. There are also some noteworthy logistical weaknesses as well. Herskovits frequently does not cite who is being quoted in his footnotes within the text. Additionally, the publisher printed citations as endnotes instead of footnotes, making it more difficult for the reader to verify the speaker of various quotes.

1950s and 1960s: Studies on Afro-American Music

Negro Slave Songs in the United States

Summary

In *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1953), Miles Mark Fisher makes a critical inquiry into the historical evolution of slave music and what they mean to African Americans. His first major point is that these songs are actually oral histories that reveal the psychology and

philosophy of slaves. In doing so, the author divided slave music into two categories: militant, spanning the period of 1740 to 1831, and pacific, spanning the period of 1832 to 1867. The first category of songs were used to arouse slaves to use militant means, if necessary, to achieve freedom from bondage. However, as Fisher argues, more pacific and conservative African-American leaders replaced the militant and radical ones when their music gained the reputation of instigating slave rebellions. He states that these new leaders believed that they would have improved conditions if slaves proved themselves to be good people. This work includes a thorough study of many slave songs, both spiritual and secular. The author provides the reader with an object study and does not delve into the controversial debates of the time, such as whether or not slaves were docile or belligerent.

Sources and Methodology

Fisher's approach to the subject of Afro-American slave music is to restudy slave songs from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Maryland. He analyzes not only the text of Spirituals, but also the songwriters, the temporality and geography or origin, and the implicit messages expressed within them.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One strength in this work is the author's ability to make new conclusions about African American history; analyzing slave music for psychological and philosophical content was quite revolutionary at the time. One weakness of Fishers book is the confinement of primary sources

to Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Maryland. Because of this, the author is unable to give a true picture of slave music in the Deep South.

Negro Folk Music U.S.A.

Summary

Harold Courlander's *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (1963) describes the various features of Afro-American folk music while acknowledging its differences between Euro-American music; in effect he implies that, at the very least, there has been some degree of creolization between African and European music. Courlander specifically points to the predominance of rhythm over harmony and melody, the centrality of the drum, vocality, and call and response.

Sources and Methodology

Courlander performed extensive fieldwork in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean in order to write this work.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One minor flaw of the book is the typographical organization. The majority of the musical examples are placed in the back of the book, often with different parts of the example printed on various different pages. Moreover, the work also utilizes endnotes instead of footnotes, making it inconvenient for the reader to verify citations. Finally, the citations are often incomplete and lacking.

Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music That Developed From It

Summary

Blues People is a seminal study of Afro-American music and culture by Amiri Baraka, formerly known as LeRoi Jones. The major premise of Barakas work is that one can explore the level of assimilation of African Americans into American society by tracing the evolution of Afro-American music. He traces this evolution through the development of blues and jazz. Baraka argues that blues music, as well as all other forms of black musical expression, is the progressive development of an emic vocabulary and expression that Euro-Americans seek to understand but never can. He goes on to add that although the plight of the African American in American society, as well as his music, has changed, a certain voice has maintained continuity.

Sources and Methodology

Because the author of this work is a African-American poet and playwright, *Blues People* provides a more poetic and lyrical analysis of blues music, as opposed to a social science perspective.

Strengths and Weaknesses

With Baraka background come some weaknesses. There seems to be a hint of ethnocentrism that permeates the book, as well as an exaggerated claim of sophistication in musicology, sociology, and psychology. His evidence is often weak and his logic is often unconvincing, especially in the first half of the book. However, Baraka offers a unique

perspective based on his own Afro-centric ideology. One of the greatest strengths of *Blues People* is the analysis of the ironies of white and black musical interaction via minstrelsy and cool jazz, for example.

Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life: The People of Johns Island, South Carolina, Their
Faces, Their Words, and Their Songs

Summary

Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life (1966) is a compilation of photographs, oral histories, and sheet music of the Gullah of Johns Island, South Carolina. Guy and Candie Carawan published this work in order to publicize the linguistic and cultural traditions of the Gullah, who have maintained a great deal of continuity with early African-American folk life. The book contains six sections on the following topics: slavery and post-emancipation life, Gullah life in the 1960s, Spirituals, folk tales, race relations, and the island's consumer cooperative club. In terms of music, the Carawan's work demonstrates many common features of folk music and Spirituals: complex rhythms created by hand-clapping and foot-tapping, call and response singing, the transformation of four-line stanzas of Methodist hymns into organic wholes, and possession-like dancing. The oral histories also demonstrate a musical division amongst age groups: the elders sing Spirituals and consider blues music to be profane; young adults and teenagers listen to rock and roll and blues music; and children play singing games with a basis in gospel music.

Sources and Methodology

The book consists almost entirely of primary sources: photographs, quotations from oral histories, and sheet music. There is little, if any, analysis by the authors. The authors' purpose in compiling this work was to present the Gullah culture as objectively as possible.

Strengths and Weaknesses

This work is a very strong resource for primary sources. Many of the songs have never been transcribed before and the authors had developed several orthographical devices to notate the music more accurately. The album *Been in the Storm So Long: Spirituals and Shouts, Folktales, and Children's Songs on Johns Island, S.C.* was produced as an additional resource for this book. The book has only one minor weakness in that the authors did not identify the individuals pictured in photographs. This makes it difficult for the reader to match faces to oral histories.

1970s: Trend Toward Africanisms/African Survival

Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War

Summary

In *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*, author Dena J. Epstein examines the secular and sacred music performed by African Americans before the Civil War. The work is divided into three sections: Afro-American folk music up until 1800, its characteristics from 1800 to 1867, and its emergence during the Civil War. The author is also

Careful to make the distinction between religious and secular slave music and also emphasizes the dynamic history of the development of slave folk music. Epstein is also among the first to support the notion that a distinct Afro-American musical tradition developed around the beginning of the nineteenth century from the synthesis of African and European sources. In her research, Epstein has discovered that there is a significantly greater amount of secular slave music in the beginning of the nineteenth century than recognized by previous scholars. Additionally, she is able to demonstrate a significant degree of African survivals in the music from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, such as an African-based, xylophone-like instrument found in eighteenth century Virginia.

Sources and Methodology

Epstein surveys a large array of primary source materials on slave music, both folk and religions. She also includes a number of illustrations, musical examples from original sources, appendixes presenting the musical excerpts from William Francis Allen's diaries, a chronological table of sources for the banjos, and the earliest published versions of the Spiritual "Go Down, Moses."

Strengths and Weaknesses

The author spent about twenty years locating, identifying, and researching the primary sources that she cites in this book. For that reason alone, she has greatly contributed to the study of slave folk music. With this strength also comes a weakness, though not necessarily at the fault of Epstein. Primary sources from the beginning of the nineteenth century are thin, but this

may be due simply to a lack of preservation of these sources. As a result, the reader does not get as clear a picture of slave folk songs from the earlier part of the century as they do from the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. Epstein attempts to make up for this gap by supplementing it with data from the West Indies during the same period. She also failed to utilize the extensive source material in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) slave narrative collection, one of the major primary sources used in nearly every secondary source on slave folk music.

Another weakness of Epstein's book is her avoidance of the most basic historiographical debates of the subject, such as racial origin of Spirituals. With the great wealth of sources she used, it would be interesting to see how she answers these questions.

1980s: Influence of Slave Music on American Music

America's Black Musical Heritage

Summary

America's Black Musical Heritage is a comprehensive studies of all aspects of black music in the United States. In writing this work, author Tilford Brooks sought to present a neglected aspect of American music: the black musical heritage to a majority population that was less receptive. He outlines the roots of black music, its unique characteristics, its creole nature, and its history. However, Brooks focuses mostly on the black classical music tradition, while downplaying Afro-American folk and popular music.

Sources and Methodology

Brooks has synthesized sources from his own personal research with materials drawn from previous scholars as well. However, the author fails to cite the most recent secondary sources on the subject. Many of the sources he cites were written in the 1960s, over a decade before his book was published.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One major strength of Brooks' book is the appendices, which list works by individual composers while citing the performance forces needed, the year of the composition, the contents, the publication information, and the data on the first performances.

One major weakness of *America's Black Musical Heritage* is the lack of discussion on folk and popular genres in favor of classical music. He does indeed discuss blues, jazz, gospel, etc. but not to the same extent as he discusses classical forms.

Black Popular Music in America: The Singers, Songwriters, and Musicians Who Pioneered the
Sounds of American Music

Summary

In *Black Popular Music in America*, Arnold Shaw discusses various kinds of popular music, places each in historical context, and conveys the essence of each genres form and style. In his thesis, the author argues that American popular music is a blend whose designation should properly be Afro-American. Moreover, he claims that African-American musicians have been

the innovators, but that white artists have added new dimensions to a create a syncretic music. He does not limit his evaluations exclusively to black musicians, but also includes white artists such as Eric Clapton, Pete Townshend, and Jeff Beck.

Sources and Methodology

Although Shaw is a composer by profession, his work is not a musicological analysis. Rather *Black Popular Music in America* provides the groundwork on which future analysis of the contributions of African-Americans to popular genres.

Strengths and Weaknesses

A major strength of *Black Popular Music in America* is the author's inclusion of white musicians. Many previous scholars have acknowledged the influence of white artists, but have focused exclusively on discussion black musicians in-depth. Shaw, on the other hand, gives appropriate credence to white musicians as well, providing more specific explanations on the syncretic nature of subgenres of Afro-American musical styles.

1990s and 2000s: Political and Religious Dimensions of Afro-American Music

The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States

Summary

In *The Power of Black Music*, Samuel A. Floyd discusses the influence of African music, religion, and narrative on the Afro-American musical tradition; the transformation, syncretization, and synthesis of African musical and cultural traditions into a new, oppressive American context when slaves were brought to the Americas; and the musical creativity that flourished within the African-American community even after slavery. He also centers much of his analysis on the West African oral tradition, arguing for a cultural memory expressed via song, dance, and storytelling. His main thesis in the book argues that the musical tendencies, mythological beliefs and assumptions, and the interpretive strategies of African Americans are the same as those in African music and that they continue to inform the continuity and elaboration of African-American music.

Sources and Methodology

Floyd's approach is technical, though still readable for various audiences. He combines cultural studies with musical analysis to theorize the interdependence of race issues and musical discourse. He uses a broad range of source materials and secondary literature to support his conclusions. Ultimately, the author takes an interdisciplinary approach in his book by combining historical, cultural, literary, and musicological studies.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One strength of *The Power of Black Music* is Floyd's attention to the oral tradition of West Africa, which has been revealed as quite significant in the development of hip hop music over most recent decades. He is also among one of the first scholars to note the influence of West African religious dance and music to a much greater extent than previously explored. There are also some weaknesses in Floyd's book. He uses several self-aggrandizing autobiographies as musicians as sources for his theory, which may give more credence to myth than it should. He also minimizes the important schisms in black culture and music that occurred in the 1990s, 1920s, and 1960s. Finally, he only briefly discusses interracial musical cross-fertilization.

Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music

Summary

In *Traces of the Spirit*, author Robin Sylvan takes a unique approach to the subject of American popular music. In his thesis, he argues that several aesthetic and spiritual features of West African possession religions have survived the oppression of slavery, segregation, and racism in the form of popular music. Sylvan claims that various genres and subgenres of American popular music maintain ritual activity, communal ceremony, a philosophy and worldview, a code for living life ethical, a cultural identity, a social structure, a sense of belonging, and encounters with the numinous. He argues that this religious impulse in American popular music can be traced back to the West African traditions brought over by slaves.

Although Sylvan's main thesis is that popular music is a type of new spirituality, the first part of his book provides some insight to these genres African-American influences dating back to slavery.

Sources and Methodology

Sylvan uses a range of sources that appeal to his interdisciplinary approach. He also uses his own experiences in four case studies in the latter part of the book.

Strengths and Weaknesses

One of the strengths of Sylvan's book is his emphasis on the spirituality of West African possession religions that survived via the musical medium. His arguments on how spirit possession still exists in many genres of music is quite convincing. For example, he compares the trance-like states in electronic dance music (EDM) to spirit possession in West African religions.

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