Constructing a history from fragments: jazz and voice in Boston, Massachusetts circa 1919 to 1929

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of History

Keele University

June 2017
Abstract

Boston is a city steeped in history. Beyond the struggle for abolition, however, the historical experiences of the majority of black Bostonians, especially during the early twentieth-century, are lacking recognition. In this respect, the Jazz Age (represented here as circa 1919 – 1929) serves as a noteworthy case-in-point. For insofar as the impact of jazz music on social, political, and economic climates in cities such as New York, New Orleans, and even Kansas have been recorded, the music’s impact on and significance in Boston is yet to be addressed in any great detail. Simply put, the history of jazz in Boston, and with it an important period for black development in the city, exists in fragments such as discographies, newspaper listings, musical handbooks, potted witness accounts among others. Therefore, the principle aim of this thesis is to piece-together these fragments to form a mosaic history that reveals instances of black struggle, resistance, and progress during a period of heightened racial (Jim Crow segregation), political (the Red Scare), and economic tension. Essential to this process is not only the need to locate the voices of Boston’s black past, whether in text, testimony, sound and beyond, but also to create the conditions to hear them on their own terms. In order to achieve this, emphasis here is placed on tracing instances of voice, and as a by-product heritage, in musical form from the arrival of the first slaves to Boston in the first-half of the seventeenth century and analysing the ways in which these voices were perpetuated through methods of adaptation, appropriation, and evolution. This approach would ultimately assist in enriching the Jazz Age with a black art form that was not only unique but a distinct form of expression for a race lacking a significant voice in America at the time. In this respect, this thesis looks at the ways in which homegrown Boston musicians, such as Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney, and frequenting players, such as Duke Ellington, used jazz music as a way to oppose standard forms of white dominance, cultural elitism, and economic subjugation.
This thesis is dedicated to my partner and closest friend, Shreya...

Sophisticated Lady

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Kate Cushing for the continuous support of my Ph.D study and related research, for her patience, motivation, and knowledge. This would not have been possible without her.

Secondly, I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the David Bruce Centre, Keele University, and Lesley University for helping to fund my research.

I would also like to thank the many people who supported and assisted me in the research and writing phases of this thesis. In no particular order, special thanks go to Dr. Shalini Sharma and Dr. Philip Morgan at Keele University, Donna Louise Halper at Lesley University, Boston, MA., Bruce Raeburn at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Boston jazz essayists, Richard Vacca and Stu Vandermark, the staff at Harvard University Library, Boston Public Library, and the many other libraries and archives I have visited over the last three years.

Last but not the least; I would like to thank my family, in particular, Shreya, for her devotion and positivity; my mother for her continuous support and love; my Grandad for inspiring me to read history and better myself academically; my nana for her unwavering belief in my abilities; and in addition, my step-father, Richard; and my wonderful sisters, Lianne, Lisa, and Claire.
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Introduction

As a uniquely American musical synthesis and culture, jazz music has achieved pre-eminence throughout the world, most especially through the black American experience.¹ Today it is recognised as a national treasure, celebrated by ethnographers, historians, US presidents and more. However, jazz goes far beyond the boundaries of cultural significance. It is, in its own right, a complex and diverse national language; a language underpinned by music ‘born of struggle but played in celebration’.² At its core is a vocabulary of principle elements that consists, amongst others things, of rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and structural rudiments. But its performative improvisational quality dictates an expression of protest, rebellion, and freedom that renders the language transient; in other words, jazz is inevitably and constantly in a state of evolution.

Jazz developed and continues to do so within the cultural environment that surrounds it, but these environments are rarely fixed. From Saint Louis’ Ragtime to New Orleans’ Dixieland and all the way to New York boogie-woogie and beyond, jazz has been defined by the geographic locations in which musicians have cultivated distinctive musical styles. In doing so, these musicians have in turn contributed to the mythologies of certain cities and epochs. This dynamic is particularly relevant in the context of the Jazz Age (1919 – 1929). This is recognised as a time when musicians in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and Kansas City fostered and appropriated ragtime, Dixieland, and jazz styles that had been developed by Buddy Bolden, Joe ‘King’ Oliver, Kid Ory and many more in New Orleans

between 1902 and 1918. These cities as such feature prominently in the context of Jazz Age-narratives.

By contrast, Boston, Massachusetts is rarely mentioned in the chronicles of jazz history. The city is perhaps best known as a place where the music flourished in the post-Second World War-era haze of fading swing bands and rising bebop culture. Richard Vacca’s 2012 work *The Boston Jazz Chronicles,* described as ‘the first book to document the city’s active jazz scene at mid-century’ focuses on the years 1937 to 1962 and is a testament to this. Before this time, the history of jazz in Boston has been significantly underwritten. There is no work that addresses the music in the city during the twenties, while in addition the broader cultural context of the period is similarly untouched.

In many ways, Boston jazz exists as a rich history in fragments. These fragments consist of passing references and brief insights in general works, autobiographies, and media sources, yet when pieced together they form a mosaic that reveals a unique period in the city’s history. Despite political uncertainty, heightened racial tensions, and social upheaval, jazz musicians often found Boston to be a particularly expedient springboard for national success: as a part of the compact New England touring circuit and due to its close proximity to New York, Boston was a productive training hub for aspiring players. In addition to producing unique home-grown talents, such as saxophonists Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, and trumpeter, Max Kaminsky, the city also played a major role in the career development of jazz

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5 The democratic tide, spearheaded by the emergent Irish population of the city, was fast washing away the influence of the city’s homogenised Yankee overlords, known as Brahmins.
6 Following the release of D.W Griffiths’ controversial 1915 film, ‘Birth of a Nation’, which portrayed black men as savages possessed by animalistic lust, anti-black sentiments in the city increased against a backdrop of Jim Crowe. While Boston at this time boasted a strong past of anti-racialist and abolitionist actions, in a general sense many of its white citizens did follow the national pattern of increased hostility towards blacks.
7 In the foreground of everyday society, protest, anarchism, murder, and disaster created a sense of disquiet amongst the population. In January 1919, a molasses flood killed 21 and injured 150; increased inflation and living costs generated the conditions for widespread worker strikes, with the most notable being the Boston Police Strike in September of the same year, which resulted in widespread looting, violence, and eight deaths.
pioneers and American icons such as Duke Ellington, Bix Beiderbecke, and Jean Goldkette. Legendary tenor saxophonist, Charles Walker remarked, ‘If you talk to any old-time jazz musician, they recognize that Boston was a great jazz place.’

The lack of consideration paid to Boston jazz during the period 1919-1929 is perhaps best understood in the context of a broader issue with the city’s black history. For insofar as black heroes of Independence, abolition, and the Civil War such as social-reformer, orator, and writer, Frederick Douglas have been venerated and make up important aspects of the memorial landscape, the historical experiences of black Bostonians in the ensuing decades have received scant attention. As Lorraine E. Roses notes, ‘neither scholarly tomes nor historical markers have addressed in depth the intriguing struggle of black Boston’s development beyond the struggle for abolition’. This absence together with a lack of easily accessible primary source material, such as oral accounts, may be considered to reflect the national hardening of the colour line during the first half of the twentieth century. The halt to interracial progress was underpinned by the increased conduct of whites treating blacks with paternalism. During the twenties there is, consequently, a clear distance between the textbook term ‘progressive era’ and the real experience of black Americans, especially in Boston.

As a cultural and social construct, black jazz has become an essential part of the American master-narrative. Whether considered in terms of its artistic input or its resistance to subjugation, its history communicates a legacy of progress. Throughout its many years of maturation, the music has projected the need for social change, arguing a case for racial integration and mutual respect. For example, in Fats Waller’s 1929 jazz standard ‘(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue’, Louis Armstrong sings:

'I’m white inside, but that don’t help my case /
That’s life; can’t hide what is in my face.'

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10 Louis Armstrong, (What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue. © 1929 by Okeh, 8714. Vinyl.
Jazz is thus intrinsically linked to the construction of black identity. Importantly, this identity has at its core the first instances of an independent, autonomous black voice, which served as a potent protest against the widespread disenfranchisement, economic subjugation, and racial violence that impeded black progress in the first-half of the twentieth century. This voice in the context of Boston’s history during the early twentieth century is yet to be fully explored and as such remains largely unheard.

Through analysis of the broader cultural climate of the period, this dissertation seeks to construct a history of Boston jazz from 1919 to 1929. In doing so, emphasis is placed on the ways in which political and social dynamics both conditioned and inhibited the development of the music. As will be shown, in the midst of ongoing hierarchical power shifts in the city, cultural leaders, including those from the black community, often relegated jazz music to the periphery. It is my contention that this was primarily done in an effort to maintain esteem in the realms of classical and concert music, which those in authority considered superior in technique, education, and above all morality. In this respect, while opposition to jazz on a national scale was principally reduced to issues of race, in Boston, it will be argued that it was just as much about class. Unable to develop careers at home, enterprising black Boston musicians migrated to more culturally affluent cities across America. In doing so, they transformed Boston jazz from a local scene of limited substance into an essential component of the music’s national success.

Between 1900 and 1930, black Boston evolved into two subsections: the South End, northwest of South Boston, with its centre at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Columbus Avenue (or as it is also known, Crosstown), and the In-town, which comprised Lower Roxbury and the Outer South End.12 As communities, these neighbourhoods

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11 Louis Armstrong, (What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue. © 1929 by Okeh, 8714. Vinyl.
epitomised the black working classes of the time whilst also typifying the ethnic dynamic of the city. Boston was a melting pot of races, segregated into tight-knit ethnic and geographic enclaves. For example, following years of immigration from Europe, the Azores, Southern Italy, and Sicily, according to the 1930 census the North End of the city was at this time 99.9 percent Italian-born, or descended.13

![Figure 1.1: Boston South End: Washington Avenue and Roxbury](image)

By 1920, the total black population of Boston comprised 16,350, 2.2 percent of the city’s overall population.15 By contrast, the once similarly marginalised Irish population, the city’s largest ethnic group, numbered 57,011.16 From 1870 to 1920, the percentage of black Boston residents, 1.4 percent in 1870 and 2.2 percent in 1920, was roughly on a par with New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland.17 This figure was significantly below the national average of 9.9 percent. While Boston was ranked the seventh most-populated city in America

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in 1920 (748,060 residents) it was ranked twenty-seventh in black population.\textsuperscript{18} A quantative comparison with New York, however, shows that the 2.7% of blacks in that city amounted to a figure of 152,467 residents, ten times the number in Boston.\textsuperscript{19}

The bulk of Boston’s black population (45%)\textsuperscript{20} were geographically grouped in one location: the South End’s Ward 13 (making up 28% of its population).\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 1.2:} Map showing part of Wards 12 and 13 from 1931.
\end{center}

In communities such as this, blacks found themselves racially integrated with new immigrants to the city from Russia, China, Germany, and Southern Europe.\textsuperscript{22} Left to their own devices, these communities struggled to generate the means to achieve social uplift, both within their ethnic social sets and collectively. In reality, they existed as an isolated, politically

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Mark R. Schneider, \textit{Boston Confronts Jim Crow 1890 – 1920} (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 4.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Cary D. Wintz, \textit{Analysis and Assessment, 1940 – 1970} (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1996), 201.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Mark R. Schneider, \textit{Boston Confronts Jim Crow 1890 – 1920} (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, \textit{Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920}. Volume III Population – Country of Birth for the Foreign-Born White, for the State and Principal Cities 1920. Page 437.
\end{itemize}
marginalised, and vocationally inhibited underclass, consistently hampered by racial discrimination. Small in size and limited to menial labour work, these people posed no economic or political threat to the city’s white residents.

Mark R. Schneider asserts that the smallness of Boston’s black population during the early decades of the twentieth century somewhat insulated them from the types of racial violence experienced by blacks in other cities across America. He adds that their marginalisation also encouraged community activism. This became prominent towards the close of the 1920s onwards as the community, through black organisations - Bookerites, Trotterites, and the NAACP – developed links between Boston’s abolitionist past and what would become the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Conversely, however, when returning to actual numbers, in comparison to other northern American cities the black community in Boston was not as substantial in size and thus therefore struggled to generate political representation. Moreover, the community’s smallness meant that it could not produce the levels of cultural production needed to rival leading jazz centres of the time, such as New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia.

Despite its size, however, the black community of Boston did produce a consistent outpouring of cultural talent. In the churches, playgrounds, schools, and parades of its South End and Roxbury communities cultural black Boston developed. This was the Boston where

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25 Bookerites: Supporters of black educator, author, orator, and advisor to presidents of the United States, Booker T. Washington (April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915). In response to the violence and turbulence experienced by blacks in the South during reconstruction, Washington advised blacks on matters such as self-help and attaining economic security, whilst encouraging blacks to allow political equality to happen over time.
26 Trotterites: Supporters of William Monroe Trotter (April 7, 1872 – April 7, 1934), a black, Boston-based newspaper editor, real estate businessman, and activist for African-American civil rights. In 1901, Trotter founded the newsweekly, *The Boston Guardian*, and used its pages to call for civil rights and also to oppose Booker T. Washington’s approach (gradual economical and social advancement) to racial equality. In response, Trotter advocated immediate political and intellectual empowerment.
27 The ‘National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’ (NAACP) is an African-American civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909. Its mission is ‘to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination’ – NAACP: Welcome to the NAACP. Available: http://www.naacp.org/about/mission. Accesed: September 6, 2014.
artist Allan Crite and world-renowned tap dancer Jimmy Slyde were raised; and it was the Boston into which educationist, culturist, and activist Ruth M. Batson was born. More importantly, this Boston served as a training ground for brilliant black musicians. Beginning in 1910 and continuing well into the 1930s, on the stages of the Crosstown’s ballrooms, nightclubs, and bars, black Boston jazz musicians, such as drummer and early jazz pioneer, George Latimer, developed nuanced playing styles and distinct musical voices that were on par with the finest in America.

Significantly, out of this community came three-fifths (Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, and Paul Gonsalves) of arguably the finest jazz band of all-time: Duke Ellington’s Orchestra. Duke’s relationship with Boston, which is discussed in chapter six of this thesis, was instrumental in his development during the early years of his career. For four summers – 1924 to 1927 – Ellington held residencies in the area, which gave the band its first exposure outside of New York and resulted in its first out-of-town reviews. The addition of saxophonists Carney and Hodges also provided him with sidemen equipped to fulfill his musical ambitions. Not long after he acquired both, Ellington moved away from the limitations of three-minute compositions designed for 78-rpm records into longer, experimental pieces. Work such as 1931’s Creole Rhapsody transformed him into the leading jazz vanguard of the time. Shortly thereafter in 1935, again in Boston, Duke Ellington became the first black musician to lead an orchestra.

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While New Orleans, Chicago, and New York, in particular Harlem, produced jazz that was distinct in terms of sound (such as nascent Harlem Jazz with its distinct rhythms and sonority) to the point of being geographically identifiable by ear, Boston did not ‘promote a unique style’, as noted by Thomas O’Connor.\textsuperscript{34} Rather, as the styles of jazz changed (from early ragtime, French quadrille, and beugine-inspired forms to developing hard-swing, and bluesy, gypsy jazz) so too did Boston musicians, excelling at the new forms.\textsuperscript{35} This versatility of Boston musicians often meant that they were readily equipped to acclimatise to the demands of performance in developing jazz cities such as New York, where uniquely pronounced styles were the backbone of scenes.

In addition, during 1915, black band-booker and leader, Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, established the American Federation of Musicians (Local 535).\textsuperscript{36} This was the top black musicians’ union in the country up until the 1970s, serving the interests of local and more significantly nationally-lauded jazz artists, such as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Earl Hines, and Jimmie Lunceford.\textsuperscript{37} In addition, booker Howard ‘Swan’ Johnson, following in the footsteps of Hicks, elevated some black Boston musicians to status in ‘society bands’ and thus on to the stages of the city’s finest hotels and venues in the mid-to late 1920s.\textsuperscript{38} In providing such opportunities, aspiring black Bostonians often quickly appropriated this modicum of social uplift into a launch pad that transported them on to the grander stages of more culturally-affluent locations.

Navigating the cultural terrain of early twentieth-century Boston for blacks, however, was a difficult task. As Harlem, New York, evolved into a promising platform for black artistry and political expression, Boston became a place where culture was increasingly inhibited by its political sphere. Blacks had little influence in either respect, but power struggles between

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
the city's traditional Protestant upper-classes, known as Brahmins, and the once marginalised, emerging Irish-Catholic population downgraded them further. The Brahmins, with their New England exclusivity, close ties to Harvard University, and staunch Puritanism had for over a century dictated political, social, economic, and cultural interests in the city. But with the ascension of Irish immigrant, Hugh O'Brien to the position of city mayor in 1885, the Brahmin stranglehold on the city began to diminish.³⁹

Further Irish-Catholic mayoral victories in 1905, John F. Fitzgerald, and in particular 1913, James Michael Curley, exacerbated matters. Throughout his four terms as city mayor, Curley unapologetically favoured Irish-Catholics and repeatedly frustrated the Brahmin class by passing laws that allowed working classes, of which the Irish were an integral part, to get ahead.⁴⁰ By the time he retired from politics in 1950, having been elected to the House of Representatives and serving as Governor of Massachusetts, Irish Catholics were represented in every sector and on every level of industry.⁴¹ To make matters worse, in the realms of religion Brahmin dominance was also being challenged by new Protestant populations made up of immigrants. The religious sphere of the early twentieth century was quickly turned into a battlefield: shared Protestantism had the effect of causing friction rather than cohesion amongst different ethnic groups as they vied for power within the church.⁴²

To halt their diminishing power, the Brahmin class repeatedly turned to progressive and often controversial governmental reforms. These reforms focused on racialist theories, which ushered in an era of anxiety and disillusionment. This era was very different from the city's bygone days of anti-racialism and antebellum achievements. In 1894, three Boston

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Brahmin students of Harvard founded the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) with a view to re-establishing a semblance of authority.\textsuperscript{43} In support, Henry Cabot Lodge, at the time a well-regarded Brahmin and (city) Congressman remarked that the immigration of people of alien or lower races, of less social efficiency and less moral force not only served as a threat to the decline of a great race but also of human civilization itself.\textsuperscript{44}

Restrictive social policies on alcohol, prostitution, and gambling, that continued the legacy of Boston’s Puritan forefathers,\textsuperscript{45} would dominate the early twentieth century in Boston. First put into effect from 1823-1829 by then Mayor Josiah Quincy under the banner of temperance,\textsuperscript{46} public officials were tasked with transforming Boston into a beautiful city and were informed that it was their duty to rid it of drunkenness and uncouth behaviours.\textsuperscript{47} Raids on brothels, the filing of liquor-law violations, and the enforced closure of gambling dens soon followed. This stance was maintained by subsequent Mayors, including Quincy’s son, Josiah Quincy, Jr., and was later adopted and appropriated by the Brahmin class. In short, these policies would, in the second-half of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, inspire the Brahmin standpoint on defined social-ills.

As their hold on power in Boston slipped toward the close of the nineteenth century, the Brahmins came to view city taverns and bars as places of strong Irish unity.\textsuperscript{48} These were the arenas in which the initial challenges to Brahmin control over civic and political life were being voiced. While the puritans were not entirely against alcohol, merely drunkenness, Brahmin influence saw to it that it became synonymous with immigration, vice, crime, and was viewed as a conduit of corrupt Irish politics. This was the precursor to prohibition - a ban

\textsuperscript{44}Herman L. Crow, William L. Turnbull, \textit{American History: A Problems Approach, Volume 2} (Boston: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 49.  
\textsuperscript{45}The term ‘Puritan’ was created to describe the extremist tendencies of people in the New World who thought the Elizabethan Settlement fostered an impure, compromised Protestantism. Puritan leaders, such as Boston settler, John Winthrop (January 12, 1588 – March 26, 1649) were often highly educated and believed strongly in rational religion.  
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 25-27.  
on the manufacture, storage, transportation, and sale of alcohol (1920-1933) - which they embraced wholeheartedly. As Thomas O’ Connor asserts, it was but ‘one more way of reducing the disastrous impact of foreign immigration on western institutions’.

In addition to temperance ordinances, (Brahmin) Blue Laws, which restricted licensing hours for city bars and taverns, were a product of mid nineteenth-century Brahmin legislation that had a direct impact on cultural proliferation in the city, especially during the Jazz Age. Vibrant and exciting jazz centres such as New Orleans and New York in the early twentieth century were awash with neighbourhoods full of bustling streets and bars. As the bars of Boston were subject to early-closing, the city became an unattractive proposition for performers. Longer trading hours meant greater income, which translated in turn into an ability to finance entertainments. Stage time in the city was often, as such, in short supply. The legacy of Brahmin blue laws is still felt today, with many Beacon Hill bars unable to operate beyond the hours of 1 am. In 2004, Michael Sletcher of The Boston Globe remarked that even now world-class musicians are still playing local pubs for as little as $30 a night.

Along with the war against social ills, The Watch and Ward Society, founded in 1878 as the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice and underpinned by Brahmin influence, also placed stringent sanctions on literature and theatre. The Society’s influence in Boston was so great that the city’s Public Library kept books that had been deemed objectionable, such as Walt Whitman’s 1882 work *Leaves of Grass*, in a locked room. Furthermore, publishers and booksellers held back publications for fear of the organisation’s

influence with prosecutors and judges, while plays were often performed in a censored ‘Boston Version’, with instances of alcoholism, sex, and violence omitted.\textsuperscript{56} Between 1919 and 1929, the Society banned seventeen literary titles, including works by Aldous Huxley,\textsuperscript{57} Ernest Hemmingway,\textsuperscript{58} and D. H. Lawrence.\textsuperscript{59} While the society’s restrictions did not directly affect music, their influence nurtured an unhealthy cultural environment. Conversely, in New York, literary works, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s \textit{The Great Gatsby}, were being interwoven into the fabric of the developing \textit{Jazz Age}.\textsuperscript{60}

In a general respect, the Boston Brahmins maintained superiority in the arena of culture during the early decades of the twentieth century. For example, by 1910 they had established, with great success, a classical – and somewhat Eurocentric – canon of legitimate high-culture in the city, with great focus on concert and symphony music such as chorale music, oratorios,\textsuperscript{61} and operatic airs.\textsuperscript{62} As patrons of the arts and wealthy philanthropists centrally located, both literally and figuratively to Boston’s power structure, they had endowed the city in the second half of the nineteenth century with theatres, concert halls, and museums, including The Athenaeum, Boston Symphony Hall, the Museum of Fine Art, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.\textsuperscript{63} These institutions, which rivaled some of the finest in Europe, gave Boston a certain cultural distinction.

Sociologist Paul DiMaggio, in his work on cultural entrepreneurship in America suggests that the demarcation between high culture (such as classical music and fine art) and popular culture was non-existent until the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{64} He places the


\textsuperscript{57} Aldous Huxley, \textit{Antic Hay} (Toronto: Harper/Collins, Canada, 2014).

\textsuperscript{58} Ernest Hemmingway, \textit{The Sun Also Rises} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).


\textsuperscript{60} F. Scott Fitzgerald, \textit{The Great Gatsby} (Maryland: Wildside Press, LLC, 2006).


development of high culture between the years 1870 and 1900, and argues that the
development of a privileged sphere of cultural production was a result of the deliberate and
calculated efforts of the elite Anglo-American class, in particular, the Boston Brahmins.\footnote{A. P. Dobson, \textit{Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers} (New York: Routledge, 1995).}

Using commercial wealth, much of which had been accrued through trade, the Brahmins
pursued three interrelated projects. One: classification - distinguishing high culture from mass
culture; two: cultural entrepreneurship - the establishment of cultural institutions over which
elites monopolised control; and three - framing, the introduction of new social norms which

In order to institutionalise their aesthetic tastes and preferences, Boston Brahmins
employed, as DiMaggio terms it, a 'high-culture model'.\footnote{A. P. Dobson, \textit{Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers} (New York: Routledge, 1995), 40.}

This model is most prominently identifiable in the governing structure of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and the
Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) of the time.\footnote{Jeremy Tanner, \textit{Sociology of Art: A Reader} (London: Routledge, 2004), 168.} In both cases, these private organisations were
founded and governed by Brahmins in possession of great wealth and elite status, such as the
Cabots\footnote{The Cabot family: a prominent Brahmin family in America since the arrival in 1700 of John Cabot at
Salem, Massachusetts. The Cabot family has enjoyed a long tradition of wealth, philanthropy, and talent.} and the Lowells.\footnote{The Lowell family is one of the Boston Brahmin families of New England, known for both intellectual and commercial achievements. They originally settled on the North Shore at Cape Ann after they arrived in Boston on June 23, 1639.}
These influential and wealthy individuals were holders of elite educational credentials and/or artistic accomplishments.\footnote{Crystal M. Flemming, Lorraine E. Roses, ‘Black cultural capitalists: African-American elites and the organization of the arts in early twentieth century Boston’, \textit{Poetics} 35 (2007), 368 – 387.}

The Orchestra and Museum were
both established on a corporate model and relied upon charitable support from interested
wealthy parties.\footnote{Ibid.} Such organisational tactics essentially insulated the MFA and the BSO from
government-lead) commercial interests and established these institutions as symbols of
cultural elitism.
It was in this way that Boston’s white elite was able to transform the relatively undifferentiated cultural fields of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into an aesthetic hierarchy of distinction from which the working class and poor were essentially excluded.\textsuperscript{73} Moreover, the distinction of these institutions and their artistic interests purposefully excluded non-elites, especially minorities from the black social set of the city. This created a clear divide between white-dominated forms of expression considered to be high-culture, such as classical music, and black-dominated forms of expression, such as blues and jazz, which were amongst many things considered low-class, uncouth, and the ‘Devil’s music’.\textsuperscript{74} In this way, high culture came to stand at the top of a pyramid of cultural types because it was deemed by the Brahmins to be morally pure and edifying.\textsuperscript{75}

Within black communities, upwardly mobile residents seeking their own advancement in the arts via a process of cultural entrepreneurship ironically appropriated the Brahmin model. Studies of black communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries acknowledge the existence of class differences. For example, in his 1899 study, \textit{The Philadelphia Negro}, Du Bois noted the presence of what he defined as a small upper class of blacks, which included caterers, government clerks, teachers, professionals, and small merchants.\textsuperscript{76} Du Bois noted that many of these individuals had significant wealth, elite education, political influence, and connections.\textsuperscript{77}

Adelaide Cromwell, in her work \textit{The Other Brahmins: Boston's Black Upper Class, 1750-1950} notes similar professional trends in Boston, adding that the black upper class on average, around 2% of the black population in Boston, belonged to an upper crust that was usually college-educated, attended churches, and included community leaders.\textsuperscript{78} This

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Adelaide M. Cromwell, \textit{The Other Brahmins: Boston's Black Upper Class, 1750-1950} (University of Arkansas Press, 1994).
collective had, according to William B. Gatewood, a reputation for exclusiveness that went ‘even beyond those in Washington or Philadelphia’. Wealthy men, such as the merchant, John H. Lewis and the baker, Joseph Lee promoted old-line black families of less means like the Ruffins, Ridleys, Duprees and Haydens. This group established a genteel way of life, complete with white servants, musical training for their children, and membership into exclusive clubs that were modelled on those of their white counterparts.

This group's wealth was, of course, not as great as its white counterparts was, and status stemmed primarily from occupation, education, and family background. Culturally, however, their aim was much like the Brahmins to advocate and promote a brand of high culture stewardship, albeit within a context of rigid racial boundaries during an era of widespread discrimination. By opting to promote and present culture that was socially acceptable to the powerful and wealthy whites of the city, these upwardly-mobile blacks projected an outward indifference toward mass and popular culture. In contrast, elsewhere elite blacks such as the Creoles in New Orleans were in inter-racial alliances with leading whites, spearheading that city's jazz movement.

The black elites of Boston were not, however, nearly as financially advantaged, socially connected, or influential as their Brahmin counterparts. As such, they were much more constrained in their ability to redefine the cultural field. Whereas the Brahmins successfully institutionalised their aesthetic sensibilities, black elites were limited in terms of both cultural status and the material resources they had at their disposal. Whereas white elites were able to convert economic wealth and social standing into durable cultural institutions (the Museum of Fine Art, Symphony Hall, and so on), non-dominant black elites in the city were much more likely to bring about change through coalition building and, more infrequently, strategic

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partnerships with dominant Brahmins. Like the city’s Anglo-American upper-class, these black elites selectively contributed to the high arts in an effort to promote an aesthetic hierarchy of distinction from which the working class and poor, especially black jazz musicians during the progressive era, were essentially excluded.

In 1884, long before the furore of jazz took hold of America, John S. Dwight, virtuoso in music, and an enthusiastic student of the arts declared Boston supreme as an art, literary, and musical centre.\textsuperscript{83} Forty years later, as jazz music was fast turning New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia into cultural hotspots, the newly-appointed director of the Boston Symphony, Serge Koussevitzky, a Russian-born conductor, composer, and double-bassist, echoed Dwight’s sentiment by stating that Boston would again be America’s centre of music.\textsuperscript{84} At the same time, he declared jazz to be a passing thing, remarking, ‘I do not think it will endure – it is like a fashion. One year you have a new hat, the next year you discard it for another style’.\textsuperscript{85}

In a general sense, Boston struggled beyond the demarcation of concert and classical music. Its leading Brahmin figures viewed these musical forms as untainted, edifying, and artistically superior to all others. While the city had enough wealth and resources to make a telling cultural impact, such resources did not stretch to the popular music of the time, namely jazz, which was considered uncivilised and immoral. As such, Boston did not develop the infrastructure of record companies, managers, booking agents, and media coverage required to be an eclectic music centre like New York. Through the commitment of blacks such as band booker and leader, Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, Boston maintained a jazz scene but it could not grow one. Nevertheless, this scene produced important jazz musicians and in conjunction supported and developed the careers of many national icons.

\textsuperscript{84} Author Unknown, ‘Boston to be Center of Modern Music’, \textit{The Boston Globe}. Published: September 3, 1924. Page 1.
\textsuperscript{85} Serge Koussevitzky in Author Unknown, ‘Boston to be Center of Modern Music’, \textit{The Boston Globe}. Published: September 3, 1924. Page 2.
The aim of this dissertation is to construct and understand Boston jazz in the broader context of the city's history between 1919 and 1929. In doing so, the chapters that follow will explore the dynamic between race and class in Boston within the frameworks of culture (in particular, music), social development and politics during this period. At its core will be a focus on black jazz musicians, both homegrown and with a connection to the city, and the ways in which these individuals, against a backdrop of strict racial limitations, transformed their abilities into a form of cultural capital; i.e., the means with which to achieve a modicum of social uplift. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu:

Capital is accumulated (In its materialised form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor.\(^\text{86}\)

In this sense, accomplished musicianship presented some Bostonians with the first real opportunity as blacks to advance beyond the restrictions of their small and marginalised communities. In turn, their abilities also served as the means to combat the limitations placed upon them by a culturally-oppressive Brahmin hierarchy. Where possible, Boston produced and nurtured musicians who contributed to the development of a national cultural phenomenon in the form of jazz - an art form that gave blacks the first opportunity to nurture a unique voice of cultural relevance and political significance.

The developing popularity of jazz on a national scale meant that blacks had for the first time a widespread audience that was willing, whether in support or opposition of the music, to listen and thus engage them in a unique form of discourse. In this respect, as literary theorist and philosopher, Gayatri Spivak notes, ‘Anyone can talk; it is merely the act of producing a stream of syllables in a stream of noise. But speaking is dialogic – in that it requires not only that someone listen but someone reply, too’.\(^\text{87}\) Thus jazz music whilst primarily a source of entertainment was simultaneously used by enterprising blacks, such as Duke Ellington, as a mouthpiece for the advancement of the race. Aided by Boston musicians, Harry Carney and

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Johnny Hodges, Ellington drew on the popularity of jazz during the latter years of the 1920s and transformed the music into a portal through which the black voice was transported from the margins into the mainstream.

This thesis spans six chapters which trace the social, cultural, and economic developments of blacks in Boston, from their early colonial settlements through to their position of insularity in the South End of the city during the Jazz Age. While at its core, this thesis presents a history of Boston jazz music (the players, booking agents and venues integral to the development of the art form in the city) circa 1919 – 1929, this dissertation also brings to the fore instances of the ‘history-less’. The latter are presented here as anonymous black Bostonians of the time, who in their work, artistry, and daily lives contributed to the development of a nuanced black cultural sphere. This sphere, which has received only limited recognition to date, ultimately assisted in creating the conditions for some jazz musicians, in particular Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges, to succeed nationally.

What follows is first a theoretical approach to dealing with the construction of a history from source fragments. This approach draws on and melds together aspects of musicology, history from below and new cultural history. In doing so, the aim is to use an array of materials - from songs, biographies, literary texts, images and more - to reveal instances of Bostonian voice, identity, and agency. Thereafter, notably in chapter three, focus shifts to an analysis of the racial climate of early twentieth-century Boston, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the Red Scare, the promotion of fear of a potential rise of communism or radical leftism circa 1919, reinforced notions of prejudice towards and the oppression of black Bostonians.

Chapter four, five, and six collectively hone in on the importance of music in Boston as a means of perpetuating cultural identity and as a mode of protest, especially for blacks, as well as a portal for the establishment and upholding of class distinction for whites. For example, in chapter four emphasis is placed on the significance of propagating black heritage (and as a by-product the black voice) through the generational transference of African rhythms, call-and-response vocalisations, slave songs and more from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. Thereafter, an analysis of the rise of Brahmin-led cultural
elitism in Boston and the ascension of classical music to a position of high-art follows. As the leading cultural form in the city, classical music in the first instance served to satisfy the taste sensibilities of the genteel elite, but it also existed, as previously noted, as a barometer for the differentiation of what was perceived to be good and bad culture.

Chapters five and six take a more narrative and at times anecdotal approach to constructing the past, with particular emphasis on personal struggles and achievements, as well as key events: including the murder of James Reece Europe and the Pickwick Club disaster. These histories are underpinned by the contextualisation established in chapters two, three, and four, and show that despite the outward indifference of Boston’s elites to mass and popular music, limited resources, and growing racial tension, blacks in Boston cultivated a jazz scene that was fundamental in the national development of the music between 1919 and 1929. While the city paled in comparison to New York, New Orleans, and Chicago in terms of numbers, venues, and appeal, black Bostonians, through a strong sense of community, cultural entrepreneurship, and a desire for uplift perpetuated a small scene. This scene, irrespective of size, influenced, nurtured, and produced proficient players who projected compelling black voices, including, as will be shown in chapter six, Duke Ellington.
Chapter two: Historiography, approaches to fragmented sources, and methodologies

1. Introduction

Constructing a history of Boston jazz from 1919 to 1929 is, in the simplest of terms, a challenging prospect. Almost a century on from the start of the Jazz Age, many of the great musicians who the city produced during this cultural ‘golden age’ have all but been forgotten, while others have received no recognition at all. The lack of attention paid to such figures has furthermore limited the consideration of jazz music’s impact in the context of racial, social, and political developments in the city, and in turn the significance of Boston jazz on the national scale. One of the issues with memorialising Boston jazz is that unlike neighbouring New York, which has ingrained the music into the makeup of its identity through a ‘National Jazz Museum’, a Duke Ellington sculpture, and an ever-expanding archive of research, Boston is yet to invest in tangible markers and the intellectual input required to bring its Jazz Age musicians and their importance into the present.

For Boston jazz enthusiasts, current nods to the music’s past in the city are the vague and obscure remnants of what once was. For example, protruding along a stretch of the Charles River in neighbouring Waltham, Massachusetts, are the pilings upon which legendary jazz venue ‘The Nuttings on the Charles’ once stood. Built in 1914 by C.P. Nutting, the Nuttings was one of the few ballrooms in Massachusetts where Boston musicians and the famous travelling big bands of the time performed with regularity. It burned to the ground in 1961 having hosted jazz icons such as Max Kaminsky, Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington and many more. The worn and weather-beaten concrete today serves as a kind of makeshift monument – a tangible marker - to a history all but forgotten.

There is no museum to Boston jazz, no statues, and little written work. Rather, the closest thing to an official acknowledgement of a jazz past in the city is a solitary painted mural, entitled ‘Honor Roll’. Financed by the Boston Arts Commission and produced by local artist, Jameel Parker in 1999, the work is displayed on the lower fascia of what once was the city’s famous Hi-Hat jazz Club on the corner of Massachusetts and Columbus Avenues in the city’s South End. It pays homage to a handful of jazz icons active in the city during the first half of the twentieth century, notably homegrown talents, Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges. While work of this nature can of course articulate the identity of a particular place and impose it upon a community, there is something less fixed, however, and somewhat more temporary about a painted homage than the stable, static substances – brick and bronze – that make up reverences to jazz in New York.

In a metaphorical sense, these two examples conjure a certain symbolism that speaks to the pressing issue of constructing Boston’s jazz past. In one respect, the protruding concrete remains of the ‘Nuttings on the Charles’ are evocative of the partially obscured history of Boston jazz that exists beneath the surface of more considered narratives. But this history is, like the painted impermanence of Parker’s ‘Honor Roll’, susceptible to deterioration and in time certain to fade and flake away, thus distorting its overall impact. In fact, portions of

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Boston’s jazz history have already dulled, and more alarmingly some of the links – booking records, musical society handbooks, several newspaper archives (including the Boston American 1904 – 1961) and more – have been completely lost, thus resulting in a level of fragmentation that can distort.94

There is thus a pressing need to transform the remaining fragments of this past into a history. With this in mind, the overall aim of this chapter is to present a methodological approach to constructing a history of Boston jazz in the period 1919-1929 from fragments. This approach purposefully appropriates ideas gleaned from the school of subaltern studies and the discipline of musicology and amalgamates them to form a workable framework in which to undertake this task. In this respect, emphasis is firstly placed on the nature of the fragmented materials available and the benefits and problems they pose. Portions of these materials relate to broad instances of socio-cultural and political developments in the city, while a primary focus is placed on more direct references to jazz music itself, such as sound recordings, musical notation, and oral testimony.

Thereafter, attention is switched to the history of subaltern studies, and the ways in which the school of thought has, since its conception in the 1970s, been developed and reconceptualised.95 From a rigid means of locating unheard voices in Indian and Asian history, subaltern studies has through a process of diversification been transformed primarily by western scholars and cultural commentators, such as American historian, David Ludden,96 into a multifarious and ever-evolving methodological approach. The diversification of subaltern studies underpins the basis for the third aspect of this chapter, which deals with the application of an appropriated concept of methodology into what is referred to here as, ‘Can the Subaltern Play?’ This concept builds on, and in some respects appropriates, the work of

95 In the ‘Preface’ to the first volume of Subaltern Studies, Ranjit Guha explained that the term ‘subaltern’ would be used by the authors in the series as a ‘general attribute of subordination in South Asian society’. He argued that the subaltern condition could be based on caste, age, gender, office, or any other way, including, but not limited to class. Ranajit Guha, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 19880), 35.
Gayatri Spivak’s ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’\textsuperscript{97} and Rebecca Romanow’s ‘Can the Subaltern Sing?’\textsuperscript{98} to transform jazz composition and its many expressions into modes of dialogue, in other words, a metaphorical language. In doing so, this process will assist in locating a black Boston voice in music produced by the city’s jazz players between 1919 and 1929.

2. Historiography: sources, fragments, and absence

In the foreword to Robert C. Hayden’s 1991 study \textit{African-Americans in Boston: More Than 350 Years},\textsuperscript{99} media and political strategist, Joyce Ferriabough wrote:

This book was born out of sheer frustration and an urgent necessity. There needed to be a lasting record that chronicled the important contributions of African-Americans in Boston in order to educate our young people of all races and, in particular, to inspire future generations of African-Americans.\textsuperscript{100}

Prior to this work, ‘there was not a single publication that even attempted to chronicle this illustrious history’.\textsuperscript{101} Hayden used his introduction to present the aim of the work and more importantly his hope in its influence. The aim was rather straightforward: to acknowledge some of the many significant and largely unacknowledged black Bostonians in the city’s history, while his hope that the work would ‘spur additional research’ was a rallying call to fellow scholars to build upon his foundations and continue to catalogue and narrate Boston’s black past.\textsuperscript{102} As he remarked, ‘For the story to be complete, you and others must be involved’.\textsuperscript{103}

However, in the twenty-four years that have followed since the release of Hayden’s work, the kind of outpouring that he might have anticipated has not occurred. As Lorraine E.

\textsuperscript{100} Joyce Ferriabough in Robert C Hayden, \textit{African Americans in Boston: More Than 350 Years} (Boston: Trustees of the Boston Public Library, 1991), 9.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Robert C Hayden, \textit{African Americans in Boston: More Than 350 Years} (Boston, Trustees of the Boston Public Library, 1991), 11.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 13.
Roses in the introductory notes for her 2006 project ‘Where’s Black Boston?’ remarks, the city’s ‘official histories and popular accounts of black participation remain focused on Abolitionism, while black life during the ensuing decades remains oddly invisible’. This is despite a strong lineage of black figures in the city’s early twentieth-century history. Amongst many others, names such as Melnea Cass, Maria Baldwin, Alan Rohan Crite, and Malcolm X have a particular resonance in Boston. The city was an integral player in the character development of these figures and thus contributed to the shaping of their national recognition identities.

What has come to fruition in the wake of Hayden’s study is by all accounts an accomplished yet altogether small body of research. Insightful studies such as, Adelaide Cromwell’s, The Other Brahmins; Violet M. Johnson’s, The Other Black Bostonians: West Indians in Boston, 1900-1950; and Susan Traverso’s, Welfare Politics in Boston, 1910-1940 serve more as the relaying of Hayden’s foundations rather than building blocks of a developing history. On a positive note, however, these studies incorporate peripheral or marginal figures, communities, and events into the historical picture, and they present, in part,

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105 Melnea Cass (1896-1978) fought vigorously and successfully for the improvement of services and resources for Boston’s black community for over 60 years.
106 Maria L. Baldwin was the first black citizen of Massachusetts to be appointed school principle. She was appointed head of the Agassiz School in Cambridge, MA. in 1899, and served 23 years.
107 Alan Rohan Crite is regarded as Boston’s most distinguished Black artist and art historian. His work has been displayed all over America and Europe, and remains on permanent display in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, The Boston Boston Public Library, and the Boston Athenaeum.
108 It was in Boston that Malcolm Little (X) went from being a partying teenager who could not keep a job, to a street hustler who got busted and imprisoned as inmate number 22843. Behind the bars of Massachusetts prisons he educated and remade himself into a disciplined, religious man with the backbone to stand up for his people.
a valuable insight into the lived experiences of ordinary, working class blacks during the period.112

There has in a general sense, however, been a tendency in work on early twentieth-century black Boston history to overlook the social conditions and roles of everyday citizens.113 To an extent, this is reflected in the fact that the wealth of research into Boston’s blacks has sought to document the lives of its most esteemed.114 Adelaide Cromwell’s pioneering work *The Other Brahmins: Boston’s Black Upper Class 1750–1950,*115 which focused on blacks in the city who exercised leadership from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, is one of several examples.116 Studies in this vein have repeatedly explored the political, economic, and social roles that leading black figures, such as the Lew Family,117 and the League of Women for Community Service (LWCS),118 played in the contexts of the city’s race and social caste systems.

In this respect, as William B. Gatewood asserts in his 1991 study, *Aristocrats of Color: the Black Elite 1880–1920*119, interest in the Lews and other leading blacks (especially in Boston) is best understood within the dynamics of elite status. In short: the relationship between privileged blacks and whites rather than the dynamic between elite blacks and

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117 The Lew family were descendents of Brazilia Lew, ‘a black Bostonian who had participated in the American Revolution’. The Lews were not necessarily wealthy, but their history entitled them to a place at the top of Boston’s black social structure. Gatewood notes, ‘by 1952, eight generation of Lews had been prominent in black civic and social life in the city’. - William B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: the Black Elite 1880–1920* (Arkansas, University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 111.
118 Established in Boston in 1918 by enterprising women Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Florida Ruffin Ridley, and Maria Louise Baldwin, this group emerged out of the social reformist spirit of the black women’s club movement of the ‘Women’s Era’, 1880–1920, and developed significant wealth, political influence, and connections in the city of Boston.
members of their respective race. As Roses and Flemming assert, well-regarded blacks considered social uplift more likely through coalition building and strategic partnerships with dominant whites than through efforts to mobilise their own community. Therefore, work on these people consistently touches on the ways in which aspiring blacks adopted white tastes, practices, and sensibilities. The leading blacks of Boston attended gala performances at Symphony Hall and were regular attendees at Harvard public events. Moreover, they benefitted from better living conditions, lifestyle, and social standing – these are lives far removed from that of the ordinary black Bostonians during the period.

The most notable downside to the limited attention paid to the lives of ordinary blacks in the city during the early twentieth century is that a broad spectrum of individuals within an array of contexts remains largely without consideration. In the spheres of science, technology, and medicine, as well as in law, education, sports, military service and more, many black Bostonians not only contributed to the city’s development but also assisted in nurturing its unique identity. The lives of significant blacks such as Dr. William A. Hinton (1883-1959), who between 1915 and 1949 developed the famous Hinton Test for syphilis have been consistently relegated to underwritten encyclopaedia entries and passing references in textbooks.

In these forms, the lives of many black Bostonians are frequently lost within the myriad of broader and much more embellished national histories that deal with black advancement. This, in part, explains why black Bostonians from the first half of the twentieth century are repeatedly overlooked in discussions on race, culture, and politics for more widely celebrated

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figures. The consistent downgrading of the city’s blacks to the periphery of historical dialogue has restricted the ways in which the community as a whole has been thus far viewed. Unless the histories of black Bostonians from the aforementioned period are developed into more detailed studies, the lines branching out from their lives, the communities in which they lived, and the events they experienced, which are evocative of broader issues, will remain on the margins until they are completely forgotten.126

An exhaustive list of black Bostonians who assisted in fostering the city’s cultural progress would if documented, without question, fill several encyclopaedic volumes. However, much like Dr. William A. Hinton, dancer, Mildred Davenport (1900 - 1990),127 classical concert performer, Roland Hayes (1887 – 1977),128 pioneering playwright, James Henderson (1894-1979)129 and so many others are merely represented by what Joyce Ferriabough terms, ‘bits and pieces’.130 These fragments in the context of the period 1919 to 1929 offer little in the way of cohesion. Thus, one of the core aims here is developing the means with which to fit these fragments together, and in doing so tell a significant but untold past.

It is my contention that a distinctive black Bostonian voice during the period can be located in the jazz music produced by its musicians. In this sense, jazz is viewed not simply as a musical art form but also as the stimulus of social change, and in the present as a portal for historical narrative. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to connect with Boston jazz musicians and present them on their own terms as opposed to recasting them in counterpoise to the dominant culture of white Bostonians.131 In doing so, with much emphasis on the notion of locating voice, the core methodological principle of this work utilises an aspect of Gayatri

127 Mildred Davenport, born 1900, became a trailblazing and renowned dance instructor. In 1938 she danced her interpretation of the African-American spirituals with the Boston Pops.
128 Roland Hayes, who gained national and international fame as a classical concert artist, launched his career in Boston’s Symphony Hall in 1917.
129 James Henderson was a pioneering actor and developer of the Black theatre in Boston during the first half of the 20th century.
Chakravorty Spivak’s concept of subalternity, which emphasises the need to create the space to allow the voiceless to be heard rather than speaking for them.\textsuperscript{132} This is achieved by analysing the multifaceted dynamics of Boston jazz music, drawing on its historical, social, and musicological (including aesthetic and sonal) qualities, within a purposefully fashioned methodological framework that allows for a nuanced means of orating struggle, protest, and advancement.

In a general sense, constructing a history of jazz in the early decades of the twentieth century, or simply tracing its lineage has many problems. Ear-witness accounts of early jazz bands that emerged at the turn of the century, like ‘James Reese Europe and his 369th U.S. Infantry ‘Hell Fighters’ Band’, vary widely.\textsuperscript{133} Nothing that they played was written down and, according to Len Weinstock, even if it had been it would be of little value;\textsuperscript{134} to the present day, no musical notation has yet been devised that accurately describes the feel of an improvised performance.\textsuperscript{135} To compound this, as is noted in Paul F. Berliner’s Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation, early artists, in particular those who toured the vaudeville circuit, often refused to document and/or share their compositions because they were concerned about their material being overexposed, meaning large bodies of work have simply been lost to the past.\textsuperscript{136}

Dealing largely with names of performers and venues – clubs, hotels, theatres, restaurants, and ballrooms – it would take an almost encyclopaedic frame of reference to locate and verify persons and groups that relate specifically to blacks. Within the context of jazz development, this task is all the more difficult because group name changes were

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
commonplace. One week a band was a ‘hot five’ the next a ‘syncopated seven’. Thus, as black Boston jazz players, for example, Charles ‘Skinny’ Johnson\(^{137}\) predominantly excelled as sidemen, tracing their career paths using the groups in which they played as a reference point is no easy proposition. Furthermore, musicians would regularly drop in and out of groups from week to week, swapping and changing roles in the process, while some groups simply came together for one performance and then disbanded.

Tracing the evolution of black jazz in its early years through the music itself is similarly difficult: few physical copies of original recordings remain, and what does exist is only a partial reflection on the music.\(^{138}\) While race labels such as New York’s Okeh Records made advances on the significant, little-tapped market for blues and jazz by black artists in the early 1920s, studio time was a rarity and thus an abundance of fringe performers and travelling bands never committed anything to record.\(^{139}\) Conversely, the issue of absence has meant that segments of the history of jazz’s formative years have been written through a portico of conjecture and assumption. The life of Buddy Bolden (1877-1931), the purported father of New Orleans’ Jazz, is a notable case-in-point. Bolden left no recordings behind; rather he has been revered and memorialised through the recollections of musicians from the time.\(^{140}\) Despite no audial or tangible reference to his work, he is nonetheless remembered for his loud, clear tone, and as one of the finest horn players of his era.\(^{141}\)

While Boston had its own jazz and dance orientated Grey Gull Label, its record output was small and dominated by whites.\(^{142}\) By the mid-twentieth, the label made tentative advances

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into the national pool, releasing records by artists from an array of states. Through Grey Gull, some white Boston players, in particular Phil Napoleon, with the legendary Original Memphis Five, Al Starita and his Society Orchestra, and the aptly named Bostonian Syncopators, repeatedly pitted their capabilities up against a host of rising national artists such as New York’s, Nathan Glantz, and especially Vincent Lopez. When label did record black artists, they were rarely from Boston. For example, Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra, the most popular black jazz group of the era, travelled to Boston from New York in 1923 to record a rendition of Alberta Hunter and Lovie Austin’s ‘Down Hearted Blues’.

When one reflects on the history of Boston jazz, nearly every neighbourhood produced a musician significant enough to be mentioned in Leonard Feather’s ‘Encyclopaedia of Jazz’, arguably the most comprehensive work on the art form to date. From Serge Chaloff to Jerry Gray, and on to Ruby Braff, Feather’s work illustrates the extent to which Boston produced excellent musicians. The problem, however, is that few of the entries relate to musicians active in Boston during the period 1919-1929. A particular oversight is Anglo-American violinist, bandleader, and graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music, Mal Hallett. While he features in entries for Roy Eldridge, Douglas Duke, Gene Krupa, and Massachusetts born multi-instrumentalist, Brad Gowans, he is not afforded his own place in the work. This is surprising, because in the second-half of the 1920s, Hallett’s band was a major draw from Maine to New Jersey and from Boston to western Pennsylvania. His appeal was so great that in 1928 he ranked as the region’s top earner, amassing $60,000 (equivalent to roughly $820,000 today).

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146 Golden Gate Orchestra (Glantz), March of the Siamese. Phonograph. Grey Gull. 5219. 1923.
151 Ibid.
The lack of acknowledgement paid to Hallett in the history books is however indicative of the kind of neglect that has hampered the consideration of Jazz-Age jazz in Boston for almost a century. In reality, ‘an entire generation in the city has grown up largely ignorant of the region’s most significant contributors to American music.’ This problem is reflected in history on the period. Richard Vacca’s concentrated work on jazz in Boston, *The Boston Jazz Chronicles: Faces, Places, and Nightlife, 1937-1962* affords a mere two pages to jazz in the city during the twenties, almost leading one to believe that jazz was somewhat insignificant during this period. And while Mark Schneider has produced several historical studies on Boston and its black population during the early twentieth century, his work *African Americans in the Jazz Age: A Decade of Struggle and Promise*, a study of the music across America, makes only fleeting references to Boston in the form of acknowledging the influence of the NAACP, Urban League, and the Women’s Social Club.

When considering this in the strata of black Boston history focused on the 1920s, a lack of attention is more the norm than the exception. Oddly, in a general sense what research there is into the city’s black community and its activities during the first half of the twentieth century often stops short of or bypasses the decade altogether. Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck’s study in social discontinuity, *Boston 1865-1900: Black Migration and Poverty*, Mark R. Schneider’s,

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156 Founded in 1910, ‘The National Urban League, more commonly known as the Urban League, is a non-profit, multiracial organisation that is dedicated to the elimination of racial Segregation and discrimination and to the enhancement of economic and educational opportunities for African Americans throughout the United States. The Urban League’ – *Gale Encyclopaedia of Law, Volume 7* (Michigan: Gale, 2010). 208.
Boston Confronts Jim Crow: 1890-1920; Joseph Marr Cronin’s, Reforming Boston Schools, 1930-2006: Overcoming Corruption and Racial Segregation, and Anthony Mitchell Sammarco’s, Boston: A Century of Progress, which offers a passing glance at the decade (1822-1922), are notable examples.

Furthermore, these works rarely hone in on the significance of culture in Boston. As such, the significance of jazz and other forms of expression that have been considered national mediums of black protest and means of achieving social uplift during the first half of the twentieth century are overlooked. Rather, the focuses of these works are primarily on the notions of urbanisation, industrialisation, and modernisation within the frameworks of post-abolitionism, economic mobility, independent politics, and family life. Little consideration is given to the quest for black self-sufficiency, and these works fall short of locating a black voice that speaks on its own terms the language of collective locus of agency during the period.

Press reports on jazz are likewise a difficult terrain to navigate. In the first instance, the task of piecing together aspects of the music’s history between 1919 and 1929 using such a medium due to the dilapidated state of the city’s newspaper annals is somewhat of an arduous and unrewarding task. For example, the offices of the Post, the Chronicle, and the Daily Record all closed over fifty years ago and to date there is no archive available in digital or hard copy. In addition, while the Public Library holds archives for over thirty newspapers active during the 1920s, including the black weekly, the Boston Guardian, the collections are for the

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159 Mark R. Schneider, Boston Confronts Jim Crow: 1890-1920 (Boston: Northeastern University, 1997).
most part incomplete. Moreover, of these broadsheets only the leading white papers of the time, the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* are digitised. Thus, the sheer volume of pages of untagged information in hard copy makes searching for specific names and places at the very least, arduous.

Furthermore, the digitised copies of the *Globe* and the *Herald* are not necessarily the most revealing of sources. By the mid-1920s, both papers boasted white ownership and predominantly white audiences, achieving purported circulations of over 200,000 copies daily. With this in mind, it is no wonder that much of what is found in these papers is determined firstly by their target readership, and secondly by who bought advertising. In terms of the latter, affluent society venues, such as Boston’s well-regarded Stadler Hotel at Arlington Street, used column inches to promote their shows. A by-product of this was that their performers, who as the archives show were rarely black, were widely promoted and thus achieved local distinction relatively quickly.

Vacca goes as far as to suggest that nationally the mainstream media during the 1920s pretended the black community ‘did not exist’. In fact, it was not until George Frazier’s column in the *Boston Herald* in 1942, two decades on from the Jazz Age, that black invocations of the music in the city received any kind of significant recognition. Before this time, the Boston press largely fell in-line with the white-led media across America and consistently adopted a stance of indifference. Such a stance time and again resulted in writing that sought to demean jazz as at best an unrefined and at worst ‘dangerous’ art form. Thus, in the midst

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166 Ibid.
167 The Globe and the Herald were Boston’s leading newspapers of the time.
171 Ibid.
of fractured race–relations, the press can be seen to have been largely anti–jazz and used this angle outwardly to propagate anti-black sentiments. The *Boston Globe* went as far as to publish an article that alleged the music was a by-product of African savagery - in particular cannibalism - transported from the continent, declaring it to have been at one time a ritualistic soundtrack to a vicious and barbaric act.\(^{174}\)

While young, emergent black writers in the twenties did pay attention to jazz, with New York-based socialist activist and writer, Langston Hughes being the most impressive example, such voices were few.\(^ {175}\) The writings and publications of the ‘New Negro’ (which feature in chapter three of this thesis) during the decade suggests that although an ambition existed to advance the race through artistic achievement, jazz was largely ignored – an irony, if ever there was one, given the status of Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and musical figures championed by Du Bois and Locke. As Nathan Irvin Huggins, who was particularly critical of the literary productions of the Harlem Renaissance, put it: ‘It is very ironic that a generation that was searching for a new Negro and his distinctive cultural expression would have passed up on the only really creative thing that was going on’.\(^ {176}\)

In Boston, the lack of media coverage and in a general sense writing on black jazz is compounded by the fact that all of its players and the witnesses to the music’s formation years in the city are now gone.\(^ {177}\) Furthermore, there is little in the way of recorded testimonies, and there are not volumes of carefully compiled information,\(^ {178}\) troves of journals, diaries, photographs, and sheet music available. As such, an entire generation of musicians, who often doubled as spokespersons for their race, have been lost.\(^ {179}\) In this sense therefore, all that stands between the present and forgetting is what Vacca describes as a dilapidated public

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\(^{177}\) Ibid.


record, consisting of ‘tattered city directories’, ‘reels of microfilm of varying quality’,\(^{180}\) and an array of assorted but decaying source materials such as Public Library compiled scrapbooks of newspaper clippings,\(^{181}\) turn of the century social studies,\(^{182}\) census data,\(^{183}\) and handbooks of statistics.\(^{184}\)

That said, however, as decayed and potted as this collection of sources is, as an overall body it provides the most viable insight into the principally untapped history of Boston jazz from 1919 to 1929. Thus, more importantly this body assists in the process of repositioning a portion of unheard black voices from the margins. As previously noted, the aim of this dissertation is to transform this body of fragments into a jazz history that not only counteracts the gaps in the historical record but also through a process of methodological construction, forms coherent patterns of historical reflection that connect with and where possible recreate the lives of blacks in Boston. During their lifetimes these individuals were largely unheard and were denied access to lines of social mobility, and they have since that time not been considered to a satisfactory level in the historical narrative. This lack of acknowledgement has thus subjected them to an ongoing double oppression.\(^{185}\) Simply put, therefore, this work seeks to hear these individuals on their own terms.\(^{186}\) As novelist Ariel Dorfman states, ‘People aren’t voiceless; we’re deaf - we don’t hear them’.\(^{187}\)

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\(^{181}\) Boston Public Library, Music Dept: Nonfiction — Call # MUSIC M.474.58, Boston Public Library, "Jazz" Clippings, 1922-1929 (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1930).


3. The History of Subaltern Studies: a Methodological Approach to Constructing a History from Fragments

Beginning in 1987, critical theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has repeatedly developed ideas on subalternity, many of which have come to define the school’s approach to constructing histories of oppressed peoples at the margins of a society. One such example is a process of metonymisation that Spivak refers to as ‘insertion into the public sphere’.188 By this, she describes the relation of academics to their subject(s) and more importantly, the state. In this respect, she asserts that there is an abstract hole that one must fill in order to claim. The need, in this respect, is to understand the part by which you are connected.189 This means that academics must modify their own methodologies and perspective(s) to allow for the differences between their (hegemonically-centred) view and that of their subjects. Furthermore, the key aim in this instance is principally to fashion new relationships between academics and the populations that they are studying.190

Drawing on the ideas of Spivak, this work utilises a cross-disciplinary approach for the construction of a history from fragments. My approach fuses elements of subaltern studies, which are focused on the locating of voice, with notions of musicological close reading to transform Boston jazz musicianship into a form of language.191 Subaltern studies, since its conception, has served as a means with which historians (and theoreticians) have expanded their language. As Spivak notes, the task is not to study the subaltern but to learn.192 In doing so, studies into subalternity have consistently recognised the historically-subordinate position of the lives of various groups of oppressed and underrepresented people. In recognising the

The earliest known usage of the term ‘Subaltern’ was in reference to minor functionaries (English, Indian, and Anglo-Indian) of low rank in the British military forces during its colonial regime in India (1757 – 1858). In the 1920s, the term was appropriated by Italian socialist, political theorist and activist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Seeking to publish work of a political nature while imprisoned, under the order of Benito Mussolini, Gramsci used the term covertly to evade prison censors. In his Notes on Italian History, a six-point project that appears in his Prison Notebooks, ‘subaltern’ was used as a substitute for ‘proletariat’. Furthermore, shortly before his death in 1937, while working on economically disposed peoples, specifically the unorganised groups of rural peasants based in Southern Italy, Gramsci used the term interchangeably to mean subordinate or non-hegemonic groups or classes.

Inspired by Gramsci’s work, subaltern studies began in England in the late 1970s, with a focus on the need to excavate the history of marginalised peoples in Asia. In its earliest forms, a small group, spearheaded by Ranajit Guha (one of the most celebrated historians of modern India) and eight collaborators published a series of studies annually in journal form.

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95 Antonio Gramsci was a pivotal intellectual and politician; a founder of the Italian Communist Party whose ideas greatly influenced Italian communism.
96 Gramsci led a leftist walkout at the Socialist congress at Livorno in January of 1921 to found the Italian Communist Party. He was in 1924 elected to the country’s Chamber of Deputies. In 1926, his party was outlawed by fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, and he was arrested and imprisoned.
98 M. E. Green, Rethinking Gramsci, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 84.
99 Gramsci claimed that the subaltern classes had just as complex a history as the dominant classes. However, this “unofficial” history was necessarily fragmented and episodic since even when they rebel, the subaltern are always subject to the activity of the ruling classes. In Gramsci’s theory, the term ‘subaltern’ linked up with the subordinated consciousness of non-elite groups.
200 Bijay Kumar Das, Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2005), 141.
through the New Delhi branch of Oxford University Press. By the close of the 1980s, the group had produced a total of thirty-four essays and fifteen related books on the subject, including Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s seminal work, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’, considered by many scholars, including Henry Schwarz, and Sangeeta Ray, to be a founding text of postcolonialism.

Out of this strong beginning, with continued mentorship by Guha, during 1982 the ‘Subaltern Studies Group’ was formed. Bringing together an eclectic array of South Asian scholars, this collective primarily sought to enrich Gramsci’s notion of the subaltern by locating and re-establishing a collective locus of agency (i.e., a ‘voice’) in postcolonial India—notably amongst the peasantry, women, tribal communities, and working classes. In doing so, emphasis was placed on the need to redress the imbalance created in academic work that tended to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian historiography that was produced by British colonialists and local bourgeois nationalists. For example, Guha argued that the historiography of the victorious pro-independence movement largely failed to acknowledge or interpret the contribution made by ‘the people on their own’, namely those independent of the elite.

Guha asserts, with specific reference to South Asian society, that subaltern describes a person ‘of inferior rank’, and should thus be used ‘as a name for the general attribute of

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207 The term ‘pro-independence movement’ is related to the ‘Indian Independent Movement’: In short, this movement encompasses activities and ideas that aimed to end East India Company rule (1757–1858), and then the British Raj (1858–1947). The independence movement saw various national and regional campaigns, agitations and efforts of violent and non-violent means.
subordination’. This approach has been adopted and to some extent expanded by the ‘Subaltern Studies Group’, who as a collective have consistently used the term to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes, namely persons rendered without agency by their social status. Thus, subalternity has been seen as the severest form of oppression – oppression absolute. In contrast, others such as Dipesh Chakrabarty and Vinayak Chaturvedi use the term in a more specific sense, referring to the subaltern as a group – for example, Indians under the British Empire, who were unable to express themselves and their culture due to domination.

Today, through a vast and eclectic body of writings – including over two-hundred essays spread over ten volumes – subaltern studies has achieved worldwide status. So much so that over the course of the last 25 years, scholars have appropriated its focus on postcolonial critiques of South Asian and Indian subjects to suit eclectic analyses in European, Latin American, and African studies, as well as feminist and cultural history and more. For example, Nikkita Dhawan in her 2007 essay entitled, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak German? And Other Risky Questions’ discussed aspects of racism, interculturality, and globalisation within the parameters of migrant hybridism and subalternity in a postcolonial German-speaking context. What subaltern studies means in a contemporary sense differs greatly from its original interest in the history of internal and external oppression of subjects rendered without agency in India.

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209 Ranjit Guha states that the aim of the collective is ‘to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies, and thus help rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area’. – M. E. Green. Rethinking Gramsci (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 82.

210 In contrast, Spivak argues that ‘just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don’t need the word ‘subaltern’. . . They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They’re within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse.


215 Ibid.
Intellectuals from various regions and disciplines have adopted similar research projects and modes of investigation, often loosely using Gramscian ideas pertaining to excluded and restricted citizens, class, caste, age, gender, and office as starting points. The term is no longer solely used and defined by acknowledged subalternists and thus subaltern peoples have been reinvented disparately. This has allowed feminist theorists, sociologists, economists, musicologists and others to specifically sub-categorise subalternity into areas such as gender, ethnicity, and social status. A notable example is the contribution of the sociologist, Sousa Boaventura de Santos, who devised ‘subaltern cosmopolitanism’. In this sense, subaltern is used to denote marginalised and oppressed people(s) specifically those struggling against hegemonic globalisation, as seen for example in campaigns against water privatisation in Latin America, or the fight for antiretroviral drugs in Africa.

As a consequence, subaltern studies has increasingly asserted that the principle of identity, explicitly the demand for stable and reasoned characteristics of meaning and materiality, is rooted in the notion of binary logic as a means of establishing difference. Spivak asserts in her work, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ that difference is deemed to be anything deviant from the defining centre; for example, communist opposition to the fascist right, or Negro resistance to white domination in the American South. In short, hegemony and subaltern can be expressed in emphatically spatial terms as the relation between core (or centre) and periphery (or margin). Away from Spivak’s research, this approach is perhaps best exemplified by the work of post-colonialist thinker, Homi Bhabha. While emphasising the importance of social power relations, Bhabba defined subaltern groups as

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oppressed minorities whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group.\textsuperscript{222}

Broadening of this nature, however, has led to disagreements as to whom subalternity applies and has meant that subaltern academics have largely failed to agree upon a workable definition. As David Ludden remarks, ‘The intellectual history of subalternity has emerged outside and in opposition to subaltern studies as much as inside it’.\textsuperscript{223} Mapping its many transitions in terms of cause and effect is difficult. Change has inevitably occurred within the subaltern studies project. In recent years, Spivak has emerged as one of the most outspoken sceptics of the eclectic ways in which the school of thought has been appropriated to fit differing disciplines, subjects, and histories. She notes that subaltern ‘isn’t just a classy word for oppressed, for ‘other’, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie’.\textsuperscript{224}

A notable example of Spivak’s issue with the broadening of subaltern studies is found in her criticisms of the ‘Subaltern Studies Group’ itself. She argued that in re-appropriating Gramsci’s use of the term subaltern, the group, with a view to improving the condition of subaltern subjects by granting them collective speech, ironically subjected them to a double oppression. Unable to speak for themselves in their own environments, subaltern scholars have, in choosing to speak for the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves, repeatedly subjected them to a double oppression. In this sense, the role of the Subaltern Studies Group should not be to give subalterns ‘a voice’ (which Guha saw as the main aim) but rather, as previously noted, to create the space to allow them to speak.\textsuperscript{225}

Spivak best exemplifies this notion in her reflections on sati (also known as suttee) women, who on occasion in the aftermath of their husband’s death engaged in a traditional

\textsuperscript{223} D. E. Ludden, Reading subaltern studies: critical history, contested meaning, and the globalisation of South Asia (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 3.
\textsuperscript{224} S.R. Gnanamony, Literary Polyrhythms: New Voices in New Writings in English (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2005), 269.
practice of chosen self-immolation on the husband’s funeral pyre. Under British colonial rule, however, choice was replaced by use of military force as a means of prevention. In using the example of sati women - women who were assigned no position of autonomy, and worse no position of articulation - Spivak provided a definitive example of hegemonically-restricted subaltern subjects, both in a figurative and a methodological sense. She argued that the British outlawing of the sati ritual had been wrongly celebrated as a positive act, asserting that its ban had the effect of damming the women to a double oppression. Moreover, because sati widows were unable to produce noise – i.e., justification for the perpetuation of the ritual - that was intelligible to both the British and Indian communities, they were – Spivak argued – ‘subaltern’ who were literally unable to speak.

Despite the complexities of definition and applicability, and irrespective of broadening, subaltern studies has consistently focused on people who existed and exist socially, politically, and geographically outside of hegemonic power structures. In the context of her work on subalternity in Haiti, Peru, and Argentina, Illena Rodriguez stipulated that the primary requisite when identifying subaltern subjects is to ‘recognise their refusal to be complicit with the hegemonic production of narratives of heterogeneity as a product of the movement of capital’. In short, emphasis is placed on peoples, regardless of location, who are socially, politically, and geographically detached from yet afflicted by the structures of hegemony. As Spivak states:

Political action is a form of ethical responsibility – actors should not speak on behalf of someone else, representing their claims for them. Rather they should create the

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227 The best-known form of sati is when a woman burns to death on her husband’s funeral pyre. However other forms of sati exist, including being buried alive with the husband’s corpse and drowning.
228 There were many incidences in which Hindu women were dragged against their wishes to the lighted pyre.
space to allow them to represent themselves and be prepared to overcome their own
privileges and knowledge to listen to the subaltern in their own terms.²³³

4. Can the Subaltern Play? Music as rebellion; jazz as voice

4.1. Subalternity and Music

One of the most interesting developments in contemporary subaltern studies has been its
growing engagement with culture. Seeking to combat the ways in which the subaltern voice is
silenced in the local and global arenas, Spivak has argued a case for the use of eclectic forms
of communication.²³⁴ These forms included cultural mediums such as literary texts, films,
songs, and so on.²³⁵ This extension has been developed over the last two decades by scholars
from an array of disciplines, including media and entertainment scholars, Emma Baulch and
Rebecca Romanow. Baulch’s research on heavy metal and punk music in Bali²³⁶ and Rebecca
Romanow’s 2005 study, ‘But... Can the Subaltern Sing?’²³⁷ have both employed notions of
‘comparative cultural studies’,²³⁸ and utilised anthropological perspectives on musical play.²³⁹

Furthermore, in recent years several accomplished studies have discussed the role of
music as a form of protest to subjugation, repression, and as a means of locating voice. Anne
against Apartheid in South Africa’,²⁴⁰ and Megan Sullivan’s 2001 study, African-American

Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2010), 54.
²³⁴ Gayatri Spivak in Rebecca Romanow, ‘But... Can the Subaltern Sing?’, Comparative Culture and
²³⁵ G. C. Spivak, C. M Rosalind, , Can the subaltern speak? - Reflections on the history of an idea, (West
Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2010).
²³⁶ Emma Bauch, Making Scenes: Reggae, Punk, and Death Metal in 1990s Bali (North Carolina: Duke
University Press, 2007).
²³⁷ Rebecca Romanow, ‘But... Can the Subaltern Sing?’, Comparative Culture and Literature. Volume
²³⁸ David Ludden, Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the
²⁴⁰ Anne Schumann, ‘The Beat that Beat Apartheid: The Role of Music in the Resistance against
Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop are two important examples that explore music as an emotive, political tool for uniting peoples in opposition to domination. What Romanow’s work does, however, is appropriate Spivak’s subaltern model into a mode of analysis that focuses on voice through a portal of cultural imperialism; i.e., the ways in which western rock music (The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, The Carpenters, Queen, and Radiohead) has polluted the cultural landscape of the east. Romanow argues that the social and cultural power of exported American and British rock music has created a silencing of non-Western voices in the region.

In addition to Romanow’s work, over the course of the last two decades a wealth of research projects that have focused on cultural analysis via subalternity have been undertaken. These studies have not only broadened the scope of subaltern research but have also, in a sense created a wholly independent strand of research investigation. This stand has at its core an interest in music as a vehicle for political, social, and cultural concerns of voice and expression. An important example is Jesse Samba Wheeler’s ‘Rumba Lingala as Colonial Resistance’, which examines how, through the creation of a new musical style in the late 1940s and 1950s, Congolese Rumba Lingala musicians, contested colonial authority and envisioned an independent future.

The exploration of music and subalternity has also in recent years stretched to considerations of jazz music as voice. Studies such as Nanette de Jong’s 2005 work, ‘We Are Who We Believe Ourselves to Be: Curaco Jazz and the Expression of Identity’ and aspects

244 At the height of colonial oppression, these artists stimulated their compatriots through song to rethink the meaning of being Congolese, a poetic and powerful aspect of the liberation struggle.
of David Yaffe’s 2009 work, *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing* are two examples that use aspects of musicological and linguistic analysis to appropriate the music into a form of dialogue. While contemporary in publication, the impetus for this work, however, can be traced back some two decades to Krin Gabbard’s 1995 study, *Jazz among the Discourses*. In that work, he presented the first tentative marriage of subaltern studies and music, suggesting that ‘It would be possible to extract a voluminous register of the subaltern personnel of jazz history from musical’ recollections, oral histories, and interviews.

However, Gabbard’s assertion lends itself more to the concept of projecting voice rather than locating it. The notion of using only sources that deal with memory, in particular testimony gathered years after the fact, offers only a retrospective smattering of voice over a particular period. In this framework, the Spivakian idea of locating voice and creating the space to allow it to speak is all but rendered redundant. While Gabbard’s approach is useful when constructing fragmented histories blighted by severe erasure (for example, history expunged in the course of dictatorship), writing a history of Boston jazz from 1919 to 1929 can be achieved by working directly with material from the period. As such, musical recollections, oral histories, and interviews serve as supplementary materials to the music itself, which is considered the truest essence of voice available.

### 4.2. A brief history of jazz analysis

The history of jazz analysis has primarily focused on three strands of investigation that deal for the most part with notions of definition, addressing the question, ‘What is jazz?’. In musicological terms, the first strand of analysis reflects on jazz’s key audial elements and

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248 Ibid.
structures. André Hodeir\textsuperscript{249} and Gunther Schuller\textsuperscript{250} for example have consistently discussed jazz within the context of elements such as rhythm, harmony, melody, and improvisation. The second strand is a social analysis that deals with ethnicity, uplift, and cultural value; historian, Scott DeVeaux is a particular advocate.\textsuperscript{251} He argues, using African-Americans as the nucleus of his definition that ‘ethnicity provides a core, a centre of gravity for the definition of jazz’.\textsuperscript{252} Such a definition, however, does not account for how white jazz musicians are to be understood. And finally, there is a historical approach, based on a more linear approach. For example, Mitchell Newton-Matza in his work \textit{Jazz Age: People and Perspectives} focuses on cultural, political, and economic developments during the ‘Jazz Age’, 1918 -1920.\textsuperscript{253}

In terms of elements, from its origins to the modern day, jazz has been presented as a conglomeration of cultures (in the main, African, European, and Caribbean), personalities, skills, and visions fused together to form some semblance of metrical, melodious art.\textsuperscript{254} Combined, these aspects give jazz, especially formative conceptions, its characteristic sound. In the main, jazz music exists primarily in unique moments of spontaneity, which perhaps explains, in part, why definition has become something of a difficult terrain to navigate. Proposed classifications are often either restrictive – overlooking a lot of music we consider to be jazz – or too inclusive – referring to anything and everything as jazz.\textsuperscript{255} Music professors, Henry Martin and Keith Waters note that ‘entire articles have been written on the futility of pinning down the precise meaning of jazz’.\textsuperscript{256}

For over a century, musicologists, music lovers, historians, and others have debated the jazz definition. John Humphries, author of the \textit{Music Master Jazz Catalogue}\textsuperscript{257} remarked,

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{254} R. Lawn., \textit{Experiencing Jazz} (London: Routledge, 2010). 50.
\textsuperscript{257} Music Master., \textit{The Official Music Master Jazz Catalogue} (Sussex: John Humphries, 1990).
‘Ask ten genuine enthusiasts (What is jazz?) and likely you will receive ten different answers’. Early developments in jazz, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, laid the foundations of its craft in the forms of improvised, rhythmical and melodic flashes. Nevertheless, what jazz was in its original forms is certainly different from what it has become. Since its conception, circa 1902, the art form has evolved, mutated and been reconceptualised many times. As such, the avant-garde, improvisational creativity of present day Asaf Sirkis Trio bears little resemblance to the first known jazz recording, a New Orleans-style twelve-bar blues composition by the ‘Original Dixieland Jass Band’ released in 1917.

Ambiguities affecting both the definition of jazz and the music’s canon in a context lacking historical specificity are furthermore reflected in the problematic distinctions drawn together by discographer Brian Rust in the sixties and seventies. Some scholarship makes room in the jazz tenet for American dance bands that emerged in the interwar years, Rust, however, opted to separate them and produced individual catalogues for the styles. While he admitted to much overlap between the two, he often appeared vague about the reasons why certain records were included and others were not. This proves to be somewhat problematic, for instances of dance music do appear in his jazz volume, with Guy Lombardo’s ‘saccharine form’ of the music being a notable example.

In short, Rust appears to have drawn distinctions based on certain adjectives as opposed to, in the words of Leonard Bernstein, jazz’s ‘musical innards’. Dance music was deemed to be ‘commercial’; ‘sweet’; and ‘romantic’, while conversely jazz was seen as ‘unsweet’; ‘unromantic’, and of course ‘not for dancing’. More specific distinctions can

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258 Ibid., 7.
264 Leonard Bernstein in The World of Jazz - Leonard Bernstein: Omnibus - The Historic TV Broadcasts, Directed by Alastair Cooke (E1 Entertainment, 2010; Original 195), DVD.
however be drawn. While jazz was predominantly an African-American art form, dance music was predominantly (although not exclusively) white, which may account for its more popular appeal, especially in segregated southern states. On a more technical level, dance music lacked the syncopated rhythms and foregrounded improvisation of jazz. It was more architecturally formulaic, with heavy orchestration and little scope for improvisation.

One of the first people to focus on the social and political functions of the music was German sociologist, Theodor Adorno. In bypassing the inventory of musical qualities and techniques in pursuit of a non-musical approach, Adorno created a sweeping definition within a cultural context that at the same time attacked the art form. His primary focus was on the decoding of the music’s political implications; presenting jazz as a type of entertainment and ‘dance music’, that first appeared in 1914. Furthermore, Adorno stated that propagandist jazz writers (such as New York’s, Langston Hughes) had perpetuated what amounted to an elaborate misrepresentation of the music, adding that they had put forward a false notion of jazz rebellion against social and political regimentation.

Adorno also argued that jazz functioned as a capitalistic commodity: in specific terms, a form of pseudo-individualisation, disguised in the elaborate trappings of proletarian primitivism and spontaneity. While this approach has its merits, unlike conventional jazz discussions, Adorno provided no specific historical context (and precious few factual examples) for his definition. Furthermore, he did not differentiate between various types of songs such as hit tunes, dance, jazz, and folk, choosing rather to treat them in the main as a whole body devoid of distinctions. Thus, his critique is underpinned by the ambiguous

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characteristic of all mainstream music before him existing in just two categories: popular and serious.272

Similarly departing from a socio-cultural perspective but with more emphasis on historical depth and racial awareness, Kathy Ogren has arguably provided the best rebuttal of Adorno. Ogren has defined jazz in 1920’s America as an Afro-American form of communication, both within the black community and between the races.273 Her focus on the cultural context of black performance practices in the United States during the 1920s suggests an entire level of meaning which Adorno, perhaps deliberately, overlooked. Ogren’s in-depth treatment of jazz in a national-historical and cultural context, which at times can be too broad, does have the capacity to be narrowed so as to focus on specific musicians operating in particular historical times and places.

Since the release of Winthrop Sargeant’s pioneering work on the jazz idiom, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (1938)274 much emphasis in the quest for understanding the music has been placed on defining its key audial elements and where possible its arrangements. This approach has provided a wealth of material that deals primarily with notions of music theory, concepts, and language. In this respect, much work on jazz in a theoretical sense has been undertaken within a strict framework of tradition. To use Edward Shils ‘theoretical definition’ of the terms as a case-in-point, tradition in the context of jazz history is a series of elements ‘transmitted or handed down from the past to the present’.275 Exactly what those elements are in terms of the music’s broad history is, however, consistently up for debate.

William Howland Kennedy stated that a reliance on practiced historical approaches to definition, namely, a focus on primary source testimony such as formative jazz writing – reveals little for first-hand observers and players often avoided formal definitions.276 But jazz critic and writer, Martin Tudor Hansford Williams, while abiding by Hodeir’s notions of a...

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definitive rhythmic essence, suggested that jazz could be defined by ‘a series of examples of musical tradition shaped by selected, musically influential performers’. Schuller, somewhat in keeping, defined jazz by its outstanding practitioners and their shared stylistics. This definition proves, though, in the grander-scheme of things to be all too restrictive, posing the question, should we consider the jazz musicians, jazz groups, and jazz collectives omitted from their analyses, who have built careers on an association with the idiom, to have played something other than jazz?

In the broadest sense of jazz history, however, musicologist Scott DeVeaux argues that the notion of tradition is ‘relational and negatively productive’.\textsuperscript{277} When defined by the rigidity of its emphasised musical characteristics, jazz presents an inflexibility that poses many problems when considering sub-genres that are closely tied to it. For example, jazz fusion, a development of the 1970s, is perceived not to be jazz because it incorporates elements of rock and funk music – such as electric instruments, which include guitars and synthesisers – and employs a different rhythmic approach to conventional styles. Similarly, the avant-garde, which incorporates notions of free jazz, space jazz, and noise jazz – falls short because it often abandons the key element of swing, along with other fundamentals.\textsuperscript{278}

These issues, however, have little impact on jazz from 1919-1929. The reason being that during this period the music relied on a formulaic rigidity. In turn, this rigidity principally gave rise to notions of specific rudiments and thus is the basis for the concept of a jazz tradition. From the mid-forties to the late sixties, discussions between musical commentators such as Sargeant, Hodeir, and Schuller argued what these fundamental elements of jazz were.\textsuperscript{279} Their discussions produced a process of definition that relied on the fulfilment of an inventory of specific musical qualities and techniques. In the main, jazz was seen to consist of a core of rhythms, melodies, scalar structures, blues derivation, harmony, aesthetics, and the

\textsuperscript{277} Scott DeVeaux, Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography. Black American Literature Forum, Volume 25, Number 3 Published: Fall 1991
\textsuperscript{278} Daniel Hardle, Jazz Historiography: The Story of Jazz History Writing (iUniverse, 2013), 263.
\textsuperscript{279} Winthrop Sargeant, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (London: The Jazz Book Club, 1959).
importance of improvisation as a subsidiary of these. Meeting all of these rudiments, jazz music produced during the aforementioned period can be considered the purest essence of the jazz tradition.

4.3. Can the Subaltern Play? Reading jazz as voice and narrative

Beginning in the 1970s and developing throughout much of the 1980s, musical scholars such as Anthony Newcomb, Leo Treitler, and Edward T. Cone have discussed the parallels between non-programmatic instrumental music and literature in eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century European art music. Such parallels built on the work of E.T.A. Hoffman, who in the early nineteenth century discussed the spiritual and mediated effects of Beethoven’s music. However, whereas Hoffman was principally concerned with sublimity – i.e., the realm of the mighty and the immeasurable – Newcomb, Treitler, and Cone focused more on the notion of classical music as narrative. Similarly, Fred Everett Maus, and others including Nicholas Reyland, have argued that from Haydn and Mozart through to Brahms, music invites comparison to drama or narrative.

In this respect, music has the capacity to affect, to move, and to conjure an array of feelings at different moments, including serenity or exuberance, regret or triumph, and fury.

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285 Hoffman reserves his programmatic language not for the music’s narrative, but for its general effect on sublimity. Beethoven’s instrumental music, Hoffman claims, ‘unveils before us the realm of the mighty and the immeasurable.’ including a ‘pain’ in the listener ‘in which love, hope, and joy are consumed without being destroyed’. E. T. A. Hoffmann, E.T.A, Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana; The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.
or delight. In this context, musical composition, notably instrumental composition, has been referred to as ‘extra-musical’, which characterises it in much the same way that poetry is ‘extra-verbal’: i.e., setting a story, a play, an historical event, an encounter with nature, or even a painting program to music.\(^{288}\) In this respect, as Cone asserts, instrumental music has the potential to become language: the expression of thoughts, feelings, emotions, and meanings.\(^{289}\) Thus, it can be argued in the same way that words have emotional connotations so to do musical notes. Simply put, there is a distinguishable interchange between music and language, which conjures instances of parity.

The basis for this approach lies in the mid-nineteenth century dichotomy that existed between absolute and emergent programmatic music (programmusik).\(^{290}\) The former, which can loosely be defined as instrumental, classicist, empirical and proto-formalist in nature was a music free of any explicit or implicit connection with, or reference to, extra-musical reality.\(^{291}\) In contrast, programmatic music, coined by Hungarian composer Franz Liszt in 1855, marked, for critics like Hanslick and composers such as Johannes Brahms, a shift from rigidity, with weight placed on formlessness and the debasement of the purity of instrumental music.\(^{292}\) Significantly, this shift, as Jonathan Kregor notes, ushered in the notion that language and music shared basic processing mechanisms.

The quest for understanding in this respect thus led Cone, Newcomb, Treitler and others in the 1970s and 1980s to apply linguistic theories to music, which include notions of generative grammar, semiotic analyses, and information theory.\(^{293}\) They argue that in a technical, strictly analytical framework, it can be argued that music is in its own right a specialised language. Mostly written, devised specifically for the discussion of musical forms,

it is a descriptive or explanatory language. Examples of this are prevalent in many musical styles, spread across various cultures. One of the most widely acknowledged examples is Western music, which has at its core a reliance on the five-line staff notation and twelve-note scales. Other instances can be considered computer-readable protocols such as MIDI file format, and more commonly guitar tablature. The latter predominantly uses six horizontal lines that represent the six strings of the guitar, upon which are placed numbers to indicate notes, and symbols to signify expressions and nuances such as the bending and muting of strings.

Musicologist, Elizabeth Sara Paley has, through her work on incidental music in theatre and its links between music and language, fashioned distinct relations between textual narrative and classical or romantic instrumental music. These relations have led to one of the most important aspects of ‘music as language’, investigations into recurring elements in plots. Based on the ideas of literary theorists, such as Ernst Behler, Paley suggests that in concentrating on structure at the expense of character or representational detail, the shared qualities of music and narrative can be assessed in a particularly nuanced framework. In this respect, she appropriates Heinrich Schenker’s 1979 work, Free Composition, which details plot structures for tonal music, presenting a list of ‘obstacles, reverses, disappointments’, and so on that enumerate, informally, events in musical plots.

In the art of music, as in life, motion toward the goal encounters obstacles, reverses, disappointments, and involves great distances, detours, expansions, interpolations, and, in short, retardations of all kinds. Therein lies the source of all artistic delaying, from which the creative mind can derive content that is ever new. Thus, we hear in the middle-ground and foreground an almost dramatic course of events.

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295 Format 1 MIDI files consist of a header-chunk and one or more track-chunks, with all tracks being played simultaneously. The first track of a Format 1 file is special, and is also known as the 'Tempo Map'. It should contain all meta-events of the types Time Signature, and Set Tempo. 'The MIDI File Format: Chunks'. Available: www.csie.ntu.edu.tw/~r92092/ref/midi. Accessed: May 12, 2014.
297 Elizabeth Sara Paley, Narratives of "incidental" Music in German Romantic Theater (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin--Madison, 1998), 34.
This approach has at its core a dependency on the notion that music and narrative both involve a succession of events in a regular order, or rather that music and narrative present events hierarchically. Furthermore, and arguably more important here, is the capacity in this respect, of music to express the often inexpressible. For example, in the sphere of classical music, which shares some similarities with jazz, many of the compositional works of Beethoven, Mahler and especially Shostakovich (see Symphony 8: often entitled ‘the Stalingrad Symphony’, which purportedly serves as a memorial to those killed in that battle) mirrored the panorama of the world around them whilst simultaneously capturing some of the conflicts and resulting changes that underlied great historical events.

The phenomenon of music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order of things, including particularly the coordination between man and time. To be put into practice, its indispensable and single requirement is construction...It is precisely this construction, this achieved order, which produces in us a unique emotion having nothing in common with our ordinary sensations and our responses to the impressions of daily life.

Within the context of jazz, however, this poses a particular problem because the music has as a key element, improvisation: ‘the creative activity of immediate (in the moment) musical composition, which combines performance with communication of emotions and instrumental technique as well as spontaneous response to other musicians’. Thus, locating readable patterns of structured and purposefully developed music to analyse in this context is a difficult task, but nonetheless possible. For example, Duke Ellington regularly veered between the lines of jazz improviso and musical composer: many of his early works

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302 Derek C. Hulme, Dmitri Shostakovich Catalogue: The First Hundred Years and Beyond (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 261.


304 Igor Stravinsky in Burton Raffel, Artists All: Creativity, the University, and the World (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2010), 98.

have defined and hierarchically structured patterns, which is why he is often considered to be a jazz composer in the classical sense of the word.

The foundations for reading jazz as narrative and voice can be found in ideas that jazz theorist, Edward O. Bland and composer, Leonard Bernstein were discussing in the 1950s. Both approached the concept of black jazz as more than merely an art form of musical elements. Both interpreted it in a similar metaphorical and narrative framework as that used by Hoffman to investigate the links between narrative and classical music. Bland and Bernstein both place much emphasis on the rhythm of early jazz. More precisely, they focused on swinging rhythms, which in short, consists of a subdivision of each single beat into triplets. This component was integral to the jazz sound of the 1920s and separated it from other musical forms. Previous convention and much classical music often divided the beat into groups of two, or as it is more commonly known, ‘a straight rhythm’. American dhol player, Sunny Jain asserts that ‘The triplet is the basis for the jazz rhythm and feel’.

In this respect, Bland and Bernstein, along with legendary stride pianist Luther G. Williams suggest that jazz was a mobile thing, conceived in transit. A progressive art form, according to Bland and Williams, the jazz sound and its integral rhythm was refined in cattle carts over many years as slave workers sang gospel hymns and experimented with blues tempos while being transported to and from cornfields and factories. In this way, ‘The steady beat of the left hand (in jazz) echoed the rhythm of the factory, machine, and train, but the unexpected accents by the right hand, as well as the fast-paced melodies, announced a refusal to be contained by that steadiness’, supporting the notion of jazz as a form of metaphorical

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306 The Cry of Jazz, directed by John Schlesinger (1959: KHTB Productions, 2004), DVD.
311 The Cry of Jazz, directed by John Schlesinger (1959: KHTB Productions, 2004), DVD.
313 The Cry of Jazz, Directed by Edward O. Bland. 1959. Osmund Music, 2000, DVD.
314 Ragtime — also spelled rag-time or rag time — is a musical genre; the precursor to jazz: bearing the cardinal trait of syncopated (or ragged) rhythm. It enjoyed its peak popularity between 1895 and 1918.
rebellion. By analysing this convention through an appropriated portal of close reading interwoven with musicological reflection, this rhythm takes on a metaphorical significance that draws on the three key elements of jazz analysis: traditional elements, social functions, and history.

In addition, Bernstein stipulated that the tone-colours of jazz – i.e., its exclusive sound values – (while many) are predominantly derivative of the Negro singing voice.\(^{316}\) The saxophone, he adds, ‘is almost a perfect imitation in instrumental terms of this quality: a little hoarse, breathy, and with vibrato—a slight tremor’.\(^{317}\) Therefore, if Ellington was the heartbeat of a social critique through musical expression, or as Albert Murray puts it the foundations beneath the ‘transformation of the American Negro experience’, then his backing musicians, were the orators of his criticisms and protests. The Ellington musical collective, to use the words of Toni Morrison, through their artistry assured that history became a garment they could wear and share, and not a cloak in which to hide.\(^{318}\)

As early as 1928, under the guise of the Washingtonians, Ellington, backed by Carney and Hodges can be heard on songs like *The Mooche* stylistically expressing the richly vivid details of black life. Through menacing sonority, distinct growling trumpets, and chromatic harmonies all underpinned by an unusual (example, 24 bar AAB) structures, such richness encompassed many later Ellington works, including *The Deep Blue South Suite* and *Harlem Airshaft*. Ellington’s ability to craft a distinctive musical mood to tell a story through his band has left an indelible history in composition. His work presents what Bland referred to as the ‘hazards of being Negro’ and the desire to overcome these hazards.\(^{319}\) In this sense, the performativity of this early yet accomplished work is the ‘musical expression of the triumph of the Negro spirit’.\(^{320}\) As Ellington himself asserted in 1931:

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316 Leonard Bernstein in The World of Jazz - Leonard Bernstein: Omnibus - The Historic TV Broadcasts, Directed by Alastair Cooke (E1 Entertainment, 2010; Original 195), DVD.

317 Ibid.


319 The Cry of Jazz, directed by John Schlesinger (1959: KHTB Productions,2004), DVD.

320 Ibid.
'I contend that the Negro is the creative voice of America, is creative America, and it was a happy day in America when the first unhappy slave was landed on its shores...it is our voice that sang "America" when America grew too lazy satisfied and confident to sing.'\(^{321}\)

The significance of the contributions made by Ellington’s band to his jazz, and ultimately as such jazz outright, goes far beyond the immediate value of hearing their nuanced musical abilities. Through their artisanship, they contributed to the committed action of Ellington to give a voice to African-Americans from the stage during a period of unremitting dialogic constraints. As Ellington noted, ‘For a long time, social protest and pride in the Negro have been the most significant things in what we’ve done. In that music we have been telling for a long time, what it is to be a Negro in this country’.\(^{322}\) In this context black music aspired to the condition of language and the musical performances of its players can be seen to have possessed a malleability that enabled it to speak, especially to and for a subjugated people.

By 1931, Ellington and company had all but transformed the jazz sound from the narrow frame of 78-rpm recordings that were limited to three minutes to more elongated, experimental pieces. *Creole Rhapsody*, which builds significantly upon the foundations laid by *The Mooche* is a clear reflection of Ellington’s growing need to express himself in ever larger forms and on a broader scope, articulating the growing stature of the African-American voice as a vanguard means of communication. As Nat Hentoff states, these works are universal expressions of the black American experience. Murray adds:

I don’t think anybody has achieved a higher synthesis of the American experience than Duke Ellington. Anybody who achieved a literary equivalent of that would be beyond Melville, Henry James, and Faulkner. He transformed the experience of American Negroes... in the actual texture of all human existence, not only in the United States but in all places throughout the ages.\(^{323}\)

Connected to the emergent black cultural nationalism movement that developed in cities such as New York, New Orleans, and Chicago in the first half of the twentieth century, jazz was a music forged in protest. The avowed objective of the dramatic innovations that musicians like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and, alongside them, Willy Smith, Benny

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Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Cab Calloway, Chick Webb, Clarence Williams, Earl Hines and more practiced throughout the 1920s was to develop jazz into a medium of spiritual utility and protest. In this respect, these musicians sought to develop the music’s identity, which had been under-construction since the Buddy Bolden years.

When Ellington and company abandoned an adherence to structured progressions, design, and moved beyond the limitations of accepted rpm parameters, tempos and voice-like timbres, they were very deliberately creating a unique canon of artistic expression that was at its core vanguard and in its purpose developing as a form of opposition to hegemonic dominance along the margins of culture. And thus, the actions of these musicians can be seen to have equated to a language of expression built upon the notion of improvised performative protest—a continuation of the African-American desire to voice silence through music. In this context, therefore, jazz should be considered as something more than just a musical art form for the purposes of entertainment.

In this respect, focus should be on its ‘social context’ just as much as its identifying rubrics of varying rhythms, harmonies, melodies and timbres. After all, jazz history is a history of collective activity. As sociologists Irving Horowitz and Charles Nanry stated, behind (jazz) definition ‘there are ideologies, especially of cultural and racial politics’. Therefore, what I propose in this dissertation is not simply a definition but an approach to understanding the music. This approach encompasses both the fundamental elements of jazz music as voice, whilst also analysing the multi-dimensional, socio-cultural contexts of the periods in which it was played. In this sense, historical contexts and the music’s internal aesthetic are held in equal relation.

Jazz, both in a musical and a social sense, is historically transient. In short, it is an ever-evolving art form that continually seeks new connections – social, political, and cultural – that provide creative outlets. As sixties jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp remarked, ‘Jazz is a music itself born out of oppression, born out of the enslavement of my people. It is precisely

324 Nat Hentoff, American Music Is (Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2004), 75.
Therefore, jazz can be seen as a socially progressive form of realism that goes beyond the fusing of particular instruments and the production of a distinguishable sound. Jazz music is steady rebellion, both in terms of its players and its unrestrictive compositional rubrics. In the grander context of jazz composition, its early formations were an uprising against subordination and servitude, and its modern variations (such as jazz rap, jazz metal, noise-jazz) are, to some extent, ‘a rebellion against the popular and the commercial—a committed claim to the legitimacy of a pure and authentic art’.326

In considering Boston jazz from 1919-1929 as narrative, this approach not only draws the city’s black musicians, many of whom operated as sidemen, from the shadows of accompaniment, it also revises their historical significance by transforming their inimitable playing styles into a distinct language that underpins a largely unheard voice of resistance and protest against subordination. In doing so, this approach readdresses the significance of black culture in the city, and intertwines black opposition into the widely-considered fabric of developing local power struggles. As the history books show, discussions of this nature have thus far been dominated by the dynamic between the city’s Brahmin class and emergent Irish, with little consideration paid to the ways in which this dynamic impeded the abilities of blacks to generate social mobility and be heard during a period of strained national race relations.

Chapter Three: Contextualising the Past - Boston, Massachusetts and the Year of Disillusionment

1. Introduction

On January 2, 1919, Calvin Coolidge stood before the joint gathering in the Massachusetts House Chamber, situated down the hall from where he had served for five years as President of the State’s Senate, to take the oath as Governor.327 In his first address to the General Court as Governor, he spoke candidly of the need to move on from ‘the autocratic methods of war’ (World War I was little over five months past) to the ‘democratic methods of peace’, and the necessity for stability (both economically and socially), not just in Massachusetts but also across America.328 Within five years, Coolidge would ascend to the highest plateau of American politics, serving as the country’s thirtieth President, but those years were seldom peaceful and never truly stable. Rather, by the time Coolidge stepped down from the presidency on March 4, 1929, he had in one form or another overseen one of the most difficult decades in America’s history.329

328 Boston Public Library. Nonfiction. BPL - Delivery Desk. Call # J87 .M417 1919. Massachusetts. Governor (Calvin Coolidge), Messages to the General Court, Official Addresses, Proclamations and State Papers of His Excellency Governor Calvin Coolidge for the Years Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen and Nineteen Hundred and Twenty (Massachusetts: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1920), 190.
329 Coolidge is often written about as a weak president. After a promising early political career, he assumed the presidency upon the death of Warren Harding. But a year later, the death of his sixteen years old son, Calvin Jr. overwhelmed him with grief and he lost interest in politics. It has been suggested by Robert E. Gilbert that Coolidge showed distinct signs of clinical depression and that he served out his presidency a broken man. Robert E. Gilbert, The Tormented President: Calvin Coolidge, Death, and Clinical Depression (California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 30.
Synonymous with language that depicts the era as a time of prosperity, extravagance, and lavish excess, ‘the Roaring Twenties’\(^{331}\) (or as it is also known, ‘the Dollar Decade’)\(^{332}\) was a time like no other in American history. In the furore of post-war optimism, factions of the country were swept along by a wave of reckless consumerism, expression, and vigour underpinned by a new and young cosmopolitan, urban populace. However, older citizens felt not only cynicism but also uncertainty about this new America,\(^{333}\) fearing that traditions such as morality, social refinement, and cultural sophistication were rapidly slipping away.\(^{334}\) As such, they clung to memories of simpler times, ‘when life was slower, when values were more certain, and when betrayal was not just around the corner’.\(^{335}\) In doing so, elder Americans adhered to the age-old mantra of prosperity for everyone who worked hard. And in these

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331 The 1920s in the United States is often referred to as ‘roaring’ because of the exuberant popular culture of the decade.

332 The 1920s were labelled the ‘Dollar Decade’ because it was an era of unprecedented prosperity.

333 This America, as Michael J. O’Neil asserts was viewed as ‘moralistic, vulgar, and devoted to business and making money’. Michael J. O’Neil, America in The 1920s (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 30.


perceived difficult times above all else they sought strong leadership; a leader who came from
the people and who shared their ideals. As William C. Spragens notes,

They wanted strong leaders who did not merely play politics-as-usual, but who could
lead them through troubled times. The presence of Calvin Coolidge in the White House
told them that their dreams could become reality.\(^336\)

While disenchantment with the increased tempo and youthfulness of post-war
American life (including newfangled credit-creating habits and glitzy ostentation) created a
generational gap, the strains of political and social upheaval were far more damaging. Central
to this was the Red Scare, a socialist (worker) revolution backed by the perceived political
radicalism of Eastern European immigrants that posed what was perceived to be a more
universal threat to the freedom of all Americans.\(^337\) Recession, revolts, terrorist attacks, worker
strikes, racial violence, and widespread unemployment all swiftly followed the end of World
War I, and all played a significant part in creating notions of fear amongst the population.\(^338\)
This fear soon morphed into paranoia and gave rise to a cynicism that rendered anyone – mill
worker, novelist, playwright, journalist, musician, social critic and more – who dared call into
question American ideals and traditional values a figure to be feared and ultimately
suppressed.\(^339\) This affected those at the forefront of cultural America (Ernest Hemingway,
John Dos Passos, and F. Scott Fitzgerald all fled to France)\(^340\) and more significantly racial
minorities and foreign nationals, including Jewish masses from Eastern Europe and Russia,
who felt compelled to sacrifice their rich, ethnic traditions.\(^341\)

Arguably, no other period in American history was quite as complex as 1919 to 1929.
And in a microcosmic sense, no city epitomised the complexities of this period quite like

\(^{336}\) William C. Spragens, *Popular Images of American Presidents* (California: Greenwood Publishing
Group, 1988), 306.
\(^{337}\) W. Anthony Gengarelly, *Distinguished Dissenters and Opposition to the 1919-1920 Red Scare* (New
\(^{338}\) Boston Public Library. MBLN Central. Microfilm - 1896-1941. Call # News-paper. No Author
Attributed, 'Comb City for Alleged Radicals: Five Men are Sent to Boston', *The Lowell Sun, Mass.*
Published: January 3, 1920. Page. 1.
\(^{339}\) James Ciment, Thaddeus Russell, *The Home Front Encyclopedia: United States, Britain, and
\(^{340}\) Ibid.
\(^{341}\) Harvard University Library. Andover-Harvard. Theology; Harvard Depository. Call # 238.5.
American Jewish Committee. Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems, *Jewish Post-war
Problems: A Study Course, Issues 1-8* (American Jewish Committee, Research Institute on Peace and
Post-War Problems, 1943), 43-45.
Boston, Massachusetts. For while turmoil and a general sense of insecurity and fear dogged much of the country, Boston experienced some of the most notable and certainly the most testing events of the time, including anarchist bombings, a cascade of racially-motivated mob attacks, as well as consistent worker protests, including the now infamous Boston Police Strike of September 1919.\textsuperscript{342} When Coolidge stood before the joint gathering in the Massachusetts House Chamber on January 2, 1919, he took the oath to govern a city about to experience a decade of unpredictable social, political, and economic transition that lent itself more to social upheaval than social uplift.

For blacks in the city of Boston, turmoil and transition rarely presented itself as an opportunity for mobilisation and betterment. While political wrangling and an unsettled labour market fostered disenfranchisement amongst whites from the city’s highest echelons right down to the working classes and unsettled its dominant frameworks of power, blacks remained largely powerless and thus subjugated. In actuality, a consequence of the aforementioned instability was that authoritarianism in Boston was ramped up to new heights, which served to reaffirm notions of subordination and the need for order.\textsuperscript{343} Such authoritarianism used the promotion of fear via constructs such as the Red Scare, principally a media-led assault on civil liberties and the American left, to reaffirm capitalist white superiority through the initiated suppression of America’s immigrant and non-white working classes. This assault included a seemingly undefined yet ostensibly ubiquitous form of black Bolshevism.\textsuperscript{344} In the loosest sense of the term, this equated to any form of leftist leaning amongst the black population, or any criticism of white supremacy in action.\textsuperscript{345}


\textsuperscript{344} The ‘Jazz Age’ itself was partially a media and literary creation, born of ideas and social reflections in fictionalised accounts and narratives. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s romanticised novel, This Side of Paradise (1920) about affluent post-war youth is a particular example. F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

\textsuperscript{345} Elizabeth Betita Martinez, We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 231.
Despite ongoing colour prejudice across America, including lynching, disenfranchisement, and segregation, all of which shadowed the deeper reaches of economic inequality, blacks had rarely sought to sanction racial lines in labour circles. However, the emergence of communism throughout the world suggested to some whites, J. Edgar Hoover included, that exploited workers of all races and nations harboured the potential for revolution.\textsuperscript{346} Such scaremongering coincided with Hoover’s emergence as the engineer of ‘capitalist white supremacist policing’ as he willingly served as technocratic overseer for many of the 1919 actions.\textsuperscript{347} One such by-product of growing racial tension in America was the spectacular growth of the revived Ku Klux Klan. Feeding off racial anxiety, such as that being propagated by Hoover, the Klan (inactive for decades) re-emerged to block many immigrants from entering the country.\textsuperscript{348}

Hoover's brand of policing and the actions of the Klan also coincided with a growing awareness amongst black worker factions, and the American media, of the effect of Anglo-American organisation on the inability of blacks to make inroads in white-dominated worker unions. But while this situation did motivate some blacks to pursue change through more radical (i.e., militant) channels akin to the actions of aggressive Italian and Eastern European socialist factions, there were no substantial connections with the movement.\textsuperscript{349} In a general respect, this was largely because the most influential post-war blacks, such as educator and lecturer, John Wesley Edward Bowen were principally in the process of developing independent conditions for cultural, social, and political uplift, with many blacks finding much potential in the embryonic ‘New Negro’ of Harlem, New York.\textsuperscript{350}


\textsuperscript{347} Elizabeth Betita Martinez, \textit{We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America} (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 231.


\textsuperscript{349} John Arthur Garraty, Mark Christopher Carnes, \textit{American National Biography, Volume 18} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 117-120

While the idea of the ‘New Negro’ originated in the late nineteenth century (it was first mentioned in an 1895 Cleveland Gazette editorial celebrating the passing of the New York Civil Rights Law) it began to amass real significance in Harlem from 1919 onwards. It was there that black literature and music began to dismantle and counteract negative stereotypes and replaced them with images of the developing ‘New Negro’. This innovative approach to being black was underpinned by a desire to move away from the enslavement and disenfranchisement of their ancestors and instead legitimise their place in American society by demanding that their rights as citizens be vouched for by law. By 1919, the ‘New Negroes’ sought to be recognised for their education and refinement (for example, the ability to speak the language of their Anglo-American counterparts) as well as their money, with property rights strongly implied as the hallmark of those with the capacity to demand their political rights. All of this represented a modern black self-confidence and an active refusal to obey post-World War I white oppression (principally Jim Crow laws).

However, in the wake of such perceived advancements, a distance between the ‘Old’ established Negro and the ‘New’ developed. In cities such as Boston, New York, and Chicago for example, the Old Negro existed within the labyrinthine memory of black enslavement and believed uplift only possible when sought in interracial alliance with whites. In contrast, the New Negro was a spontaneously generated and sufficient self-black citizen who was inclined to bring about change through cultural influence, education, and if necessary, militancy (i.e.,

355 Enacted after the Reconstruction period in the Southern United States, Jim Crow laws were state and local decrees enforcing racial segregation. These laws were adopted in part in many northern states and continued in force until 1965.
the firing of guns). In the broader sense of black American life, the dichotomy of new versus old transcended defined generational, class, and geographical boundaries. It was a dynamic that pitted free citizens against slaves, the educated minority against the illiterate masses, the urban against the rural, and the embryonic North against the well-established South.

While at times the New and Old were fused, for the most part they remained divided. In fact, black American educator, writer, and philosopher, Alain Locke went as far as to construct the ‘New Negro primarily through a confrontation with the old’. The main characteristic of this confrontation, simply put, was the shift ‘from passive submission (to the dominant culture of whites) to dynamic agency’. This shift is perhaps best expressed by the standoff that developed in Boston between early twentieth-century civil rights activists, William Monroe Trotter and educator, author, and orator, Booker T. Washington. While the latter and his followers pursued racially conciliatory policies, which amounted to blacks showing themselves to be productive members of white-dominated society (for example, through the promotion of manual training), Trotter opposed all forms of racial discrimination, segregation, and subordination and called for a renewed emphasis on traditional forms of education such as liberal arts.

While the New Negro in Boston did establish some form of social autonomy by 1919, the city’s black race as a whole failed to enact significant change. This was principally because of divisions such as the one between Trotter and Washington split the small black population of the city: as previously noted, 16,350 in 1920 - a mere 2% of Boston’s overall population.

Such division, during a time when the Red Scare had nurtured a climate of increased racial hostility, only served to intensify fragmentation. Unable to sufficiently organise itself in a manner that allowed for the best possible conditions to counteract political, economic, and labour struggles, blacks in Boston found themselves almost directionless. While other cities such as New York did experience similar issues, their 152,467 black residents could withstand division; the New Negro collective there was able to conjure enough support to oppose sanctions, oppression, and the unsympathetic post-war climate.365

This chapter analyses the ways in which the Red Scare, riots, and worker strikes during 1919 contributed to the development of racism towards and the subordination of blacks in Boston over a period of ten years. It is my contention that the city developed a synergy between anti-communist causes, including the media, and racist forces, which gave rise to an imagined form of black Bolshevism. While fear of a foreign, evil empire, in this case Soviet conceptions of socialism, was the rationale for the Red Scare, what transpired in Boston was effectively a witch-hunt that sought to neutralise the entire left, which naturally included blacks and amongst them leading figures who sought to assail racial injustice.366 The Red Scare in Boston was accompanied by a quasi-vigilante crusade against books, the burlesque, and other cultural forms led by the Watch and Ward society, that equated to a new form of Puritanism.367

Moreover, this assault on the left coincided with a change in approach towards its blacks by State Congress and more importantly the Brahmin class. In particular, the latter slowly retreated from their dedication to the principles of racial equality that had been instilled by Brahmins before them such as Garrison, Philips, and Emerson. Instead, the Brahmins of the time adopted the national attitude of codified fear and hostility towards blacks.368 Thus, as the turbulent spring of 1919 gave way, black Boston faced its own 'Red Summer', so

appropriated from the idea of black poet, James Weldon Johnson,\textsuperscript{369} who used the term to refer to bloodshed rather than political conflict.\textsuperscript{370} For in their isolated position in the South End of the city and with little means of establishing a voice amidst the competing narratives of political transition, social change, and ideological doctrine, the black position during 1919 simply became one of preservation rather than elevation, and this position remained the status quo for much of the twenties.

2. 1919: a year of violence and disillusion that defined a Decade

Thirteen days after his opening address as Governor of Massachusetts, Calvin Coolidge faced his first test in office, and arguably one of the most bizarre disasters in American history. During an unseasonably warm afternoon at around 12:30 pm on January 15, 1919, a full-to-capacity storage tank - 50 feet-high, and 90 feet in diameter - belonging to the Purity Distilling Company (a Massachusetts-based chemical firm) burst at 529 Commercial Street in the North End of Boston.\textsuperscript{371} In doing so, the tank unleashed 2,300,000 gallons of molasses, which quickly morphed into a 15 foot high and 160 foot wide dense black wave that tore through the heavily populated area at a speed of 35 mph.\textsuperscript{372} As it did so, it levelled the entire waterfront, which at the time boasted several commercial outlets and a number of neighbourhood tenements.\textsuperscript{373}

Amongst the devastation, which also included elevated rail tracks, and the three-storey Engine 31 Fire House, were various animals (notably several horses and dogs), and 21 dead, including two children of ten years; 150 people were also injured.\textsuperscript{374} As one reporter noted the next day:

\textsuperscript{369} ...and member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
\textsuperscript{372} Molasses was often fermented to produce rum and ethanol. It was an active ingredient in alcoholic beverages and a key component of industrial cleaners and the production of munitions.
Molasses, waist deep, covered the street, swirled, and bubbled about the wreckage. Here and there struggled a form, whether it was animal or human being was impossible to tell. Only an upheaval, a thrashing about in the sticky mass, showed where any life was ... Horses died like so many flies on sticky flypaper. The more they struggled, the deeper in the mess they were ensnared. Human beings — men and women — suffered likewise.\[375\]

While molasses had been a cornerstone of the Boston economy since the colonial era, the city had never had to undertake its clean up on such a large-scale. Crews were deployed en-masse to attend to the gooey substance, first trying to dilute and flush it from the streets using water hydrants.\[376\] When these proved ineffectual, fireboats showered the substance with salt water, which thinned it and eventually ran it into the Boston Harbor.\[377\] For weeks thereafter workers tracked molasses, pumping it from cellars, basements, and the ground floors of an array of buildings.\[378\] To the present day, some residents of the city's North End insist that on hot afternoons the local air is tinged with the feint, cloying scent of molasses.\[379\]

But the true legacy of the Great Molasses Flood lies in the financial impact it had on Boston. In terms of the damage alone, the cost exceeded $100 million in today's money. Furthermore, the flood brought with it one-hundred-and-twenty-five lawsuits against the United States Industrial Alcohol Company (USIAC) and a legal battle that lasted over six years.\[380\] The court eventually ruled in favour of the plaintiffs, asserting that the tank had been considerably overfilled and was for all intents and purposes not structurally sound.\[381\] Despite the conclusion of the court, however, speculation remained rife. While some experts claimed the molasses spill was sabotage, committed by business rivals, the USAIC placed blame on


\[377\] Ibid., 1918-9.


anarchistic factions.\textsuperscript{382} The company alleged that Boston’s North End, which was largely populated by Italian immigrants and Irish-Americans, was an incubator for political radicalism. The aforementioned were considered by political factions and the media in the city to be anti-organisational leftists who advocated direct action, including terrorist violence, in their quest to overthrow the American government.\textsuperscript{383}

Figure 3.2 -Panorama of the Molasses Disaster site: ‘Word of the disaster quickly brought every available rescue agency to the scene. Police, firemen, Red Cross workers, civilian volunteers, and cadets from the USS Nantucket training ship berthed nearby were soon on the site.’\textsuperscript{384}

While Boston in 1919 was truly insular and parochial, it was also much like all major cities across America, recovering from the fallout of World War I. Price inflation and the cost of living had increased far beyond wages. Returning soldiers flooded the labour market; and as factories switched to peacetime production, existing workers sought to renegotiate salaries that had been frozen to help finance the war effort.\textsuperscript{386} As general labour strikes and protests became commonplace across the country, approximately one in every seven workers went


\textsuperscript{386} Beverley Gage, \textit{The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.
on strike during the year,\textsuperscript{387} persistent unrest gradually morphed into local and at times unique forms of class warfare. Such struggles in Boston, including those between radical socialists (both homegrown and immigrant) and government officials propelled the city to the apex of industrial conflict in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{388} This notion was perpetuated and consistently exacerbated by the press – the \textit{Boston Daily Globe} being a particular case-in-point - who consistently pushed an anti-union agenda that held Bolshevism in direct opposition to traditional notions of American law and order.

The 1919 strike wave that engulfed America showed that workers were deliberating their futures in terms that went far beyond the bounds of contracts over wages, hours, and working conditions.\textsuperscript{389} World War I had developed a desire in the American citizen that was driven by a ‘fusion of immediate demands with grandiose social and political goals’ as well as desires to engage in the new forms of consumerism.\textsuperscript{390} While the war had fostered a sense of national cohesion, in part manufactured by President Woodrow Wilson, that saw race, class, gender, and region set aside in the quest to defeat a common enemy, this was lost in the immediate aftermath of the war. What emerged in its place was a violently nationalist populace, aided by industry leaders, journalists, and the US Government, who sought to defend their country against a perceived ‘new enemy’, which was defined as the enemy within: the disgruntled, leftist (and often non-native), working classes.\textsuperscript{391}

The international success of communism, particularly the Russian Revolution of 1917, coupled with the growing influence of socialists such as American Union leader, Eugene V. Debs, nurtured a sense of fear at home amongst many government and corporate leaders.\textsuperscript{392}

\textsuperscript{389} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{392} Anti-war socialists had been brought up in the European tradition of the class struggle, and they viewed the war as the ultimate capitalist deception; Debs denounced the war as such in a speech at Canton, Ohio, in June of 1918.
For example, during 1919 many governmental figures (including President Theodore Roosevelt and Samuel Gompers) feared that growing worker unrest and the potential adoption of the communist ideology by the American left would unite disparate factions (socialists, who had opposed the war, and progressives, who had largely supported it) and embolden them into some form of revolutionary action.\textsuperscript{393} While there was a socialist presence in America, its aims were for the most part different from those of workers affected by a strained labour market. Nonetheless, over time the American government, the media, and many of its citizens came to associate standard forms of labour unrest (such as worker strikes over low pay) with radicalism and the purported ongoing socialist plot to overthrow the U.S. government.\textsuperscript{394}

In Boston, the revolutionary spirit of Bolshevism was being cultivated and disseminated principally by a relatively small group of Italians. Known as Galleanists, this group were supporters of Luigi Galleani, an insurrectionary anarchist active in the United States from 1901 to 1919.\textsuperscript{395} As the editor of \textit{La Questione Sociale},\textsuperscript{396} the leading Italian anarchist periodical in the United States of the time, Galleani opposed militarism and the War, but advocated the use of violence at home under the banner of ‘propaganda by the deed’; i.e., ‘acts of terrorism’, particularly ‘bombings and assassinations’ for the purposes of eliminating ‘tyrants’ and ‘oppressors’.\textsuperscript{397} In this respect, violence was, as some Americans feared, to be used as a catalyst for the overthrow of existing government institutions perceived by prospective attackers to be ‘tyrants’ and ‘oppressors’. In short, Galleani regarded the capitalist

\textsuperscript{394} Rosalind Russell, \textit{A City in Terror: Calvin Coolidge and the 1919 Boston Police Strike} (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 16.
\textsuperscript{395} Luigi Galleani, \textit{The End of Anarchism?} (London: BCM Refract, 1982).
\textsuperscript{396} Harvard University Library. Microforms (Lamont). Latin American anarchist and labour periodicals, 1880-1940; reel 41. Call # anno 1:n.8-10. La questione sociale órgano comunista- anarchico, \textit{Questione sociale}. Published 1880-1940.
system as the enemy of the worker, arguing against the exploitation and oppression of the man by the man.398

The foundations for this supposed revolutionary spirit, while conceived in Bolshevik Russia, had been laid much closer to home. During the year 1912, in the drab polyglot company town of Lawrence, Massachusetts (some thirty-seven miles north of Boston) the textile industry ground to a halt as twenty-thousand mill workers went on strike over unfair wage cuts and oppressive conditions.399 The strike was led by an international, racial labour union founded in 1905, known as the Industrial Workers of the World (also known as, Wobblies).400 Organised by the Wobblies’ one-eyed giant, William ‘Big Bill’ Hayward, the strike brought together Italian anarchists, including orator and labour organiser, Carlo Tresca, poet, Arturo Giovannitti, and workers from fifty-one different nationalities: including Irish, Germans, Syrians, Poles, Lithuanians and more speaking forty-five languages.401

Of the twenty-two thousand workers, fifty percent are believed to have been women and children.402 Common amongst all was malnutrition and disease (principally, Rickets), with premature death being commonplace.403 In total, the strike lasted ten weeks and received nationwide publicity. In the end, management capitulated to the demands of the workers and a new set of laws governing working conditions was accepted following a congressional investigation.404 Far more significant, however, was the way men, women, and children from vastly different backgrounds, hampered by many obstacles (including language barriers), were able to overcome insurmountable opposition and a minimum of resources to accomplish their

401 Elizabeth Boosahda, Arab-American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), 77.
goals.\textsuperscript{405} The Lawrence strike not only showed the importance of ethnic organisation in Massachusetts, it also served to inspire a national generation of the working class into action,\textsuperscript{406} transforming interracial labour solidarity into an essential characteristic of disputes.

This notion is further embellished by a second strike at the Lawrence Mill in 1919. On this occasion, all 32,000 workers at the mill (consisting of Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Russian Jews, Syrians, Turks, Greeks and others) chose to strike, invoking the spirit of Hayward, Tresca, Giovanti and followers before them.\textsuperscript{407} In their quest to reduce their six-day nine-hour week to one of eight hours at the same rate of pay, the 1919 strikers showed that the methods developed in 1912 had not been forgotten.\textsuperscript{408} Spurred on by those with shared experiences of the 1912 strike, such as radical figures, Joseph Salemo,\textsuperscript{409} Annie Trina, Carl Vogt, and Ime Kaplan,\textsuperscript{410} a registered alien of some fifteen years and a member of the Mule Spinners’ Union, strike leaders sent out an appeal in twenty languages, calling all textile workers to cease work.\textsuperscript{411} Unlike Hayward, Tresca, and Giovanti et al in 1912, however, Kaplan and company were this time not so much concerned with working conditions,\textsuperscript{412} but rather saw the whole strike effort as ‘part of a larger pattern of capitalist disintegration preliminary to the seizure of power by the proletariat’.\textsuperscript{413}

Central to this quest for power was also an opposition to and outright dismissal of the American constitution, which was considered, amongst many things, to be prejudicial towards

\textsuperscript{405} Joyce L. Kornbluh, Rebel Voices (New York: PM Press, 2011), 169-70.
\textsuperscript{406} Elizabeth Boosahda, Arab-American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), 76-77.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{409} Along with Salemo and company, -syndicalist labour organizer, Antonino Carparro and local strike leader, Nathan Kleinman assisted in the strikes. On April 6, masked men, believed to be police, dragged both from their beds in the early hours of the morning and drove them out of town. Kleinman was later found alive, with a rope around his neck, while Carparro was beaten half to death.
\textsuperscript{410} David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 389.
\textsuperscript{412} Faced with growing resistance and failing businesses, after 104 days, mill owners bowed to the strikers’ demands and offered a 15% percent pay increase.\textsuperscript{413} This victory marked one of the few that the labour movement experienced in 1919.
immigrants and racial minorities. Nevertheless, this was nothing new. During the first two
decades of the twentieth century, leading black figures such as Du Bois, Trotter, and
Washington expressed opposition to the same constitution, arguing that it constrained blacks.
The constitution, in addition to denying immigrants and blacks many simple liberties, such as
the right to vote, also promoted an unfair legal system. In this respect, for example, an alien
in an immigration hearing was not entitled to standardised constitutional protections, such as
formal indictment, and more importantly the right to counsel. Such restrictions were only
amplified further when in 1917 as immigrants, blacks, and members of the left had sought to
improve the lot of the working American congress passed a series of laws against actions that
they deemed to be against ‘the moral good’. Amongst them was the outlawing of ‘espionage
and sedition’, and the imposition of ‘stringent penalties for speaking, printing, or otherwise
expressing contempt for the government or the constitution or the flag or the uniform of the
army of navy’.  

As Francis Russell asserts, it was under this draconian legislation—unparalleled since
the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798—that Eugene V. Debs and ninety-nine other leftists,
including William ‘Big Bill’ Haywood, were sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten days
to ten years and were given fines in excess of $2 million. The American public viewed these
men in simple terms as slackers while the press largely portrayed them as traitorous spies and

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417 Harvard University Library. Lamont, Microforms. # Microfiche W 2571 (36583). United States. Congress (5th, 3rd session : 1798-1799). Reports of committees in Congress : to whom were referred certain memorials and petitions complaining of the acts of Congress, concerning the Alien & Sedition laws. : And on the naval establishment, the augmentation of the Navy, and the adoption of measures for procuring of timber and other supplies. : Also an answer of the Massachusetts legislature to the Virginia resolutions respecting dangerous aliens and seditious citizens (Richmond: Thomas Nicolson, 1799).
418 Melvyn Dubofsky, 'Big Bill’ Haywood (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).
German agents, deserving of far worse.\textsuperscript{420} This perception is perhaps best exemplified by comments made at the time by Boston’s Archbishop, William Henry O’Connell, who stated:

If only all the parlor philosophers and the parlor sociologists could be ordered to the front and stay there long enough to become genuine and sincere, and lose their halos in the blaze of artillery, the world would be rid, at least for the rest of this generation, of some up-to-date fallacies and cure all sociologies.\textsuperscript{421}

This notion was reiterated on February 23, 1919, when President Woodrow Wilson addressed a ‘middle-class’ audience in Boston on the subject of worker dissatisfaction and the threat of strikes. He remarked that such attempts to destabilise the American economy were ‘not industrial, economic disputes in their origin but were rather results of a deliberate and organised attempt at a social and political movement to establish Soviet Governments in the United States’.\textsuperscript{422} World events, such as the Spartacist revolt in Berlin,\textsuperscript{423} the rise of leftist socialist, Kurt Eisner in Bavaria,\textsuperscript{424} the start of Bela Kun’s dictatorship in Hungary,\textsuperscript{425} and the wounding of Premier Clemenceau in France by a Bolshevik agent only exacerbated levels of alarm in the Western world.\textsuperscript{426} The 1912 strike in Lawrence, the growth of socialism during World War I, and the ongoing labour crisis of 1919 all gave rise to a fear in America that the ‘radical’ left wing in concert with disgruntled workers were plotting revolutionary mass action.\textsuperscript{427}

In its attempts to entrench itself, unionism in Boston adopted the national approach of attempting to sweep the entire production sector into the labour fold.\textsuperscript{428} Strikes repeatedly

\textsuperscript{423} Harvard University Library, Widener. Newspaper Microfilm Reading Room. Call # Film NB 379. No Author Attributed, ””Reds” Start Civil War in Berlin: Machine Guns Rake City’s Streets; Informal Peace Parley This Week”. \textit{New York Tribune}. Published: January 8, 1919. Page. 1.
\textsuperscript{425} Harvard University Library. Widener. Call # Microfilm - Film NC 1. No Author Attributed, ’Bella Kun Falls: Dictatorship in Hungary’. \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}. Published: July 23, 1919. Page, 11.
\textsuperscript{426} Francis Russell, \textit{A City in Terror: Calvin Coolidge and the 1919 Boston Police Strike} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 18-19.
\textsuperscript{427} James Ciment, \textit{Encyclopedia of the Jazz Age: From the End of World War I to the Great Crash, Volumes 1-2} (New York: Routledge, 2015), 145.
took on political overtones, with general committees often repudiated by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the Central Labor Union, and the IWW.\textsuperscript{429} One writer for the \textit{Union Record}, the Utility Workers Union of America newspaper of the time, noted in February 1919: ‘We are undertaking the most tremendous move ever made by labor in this country. We are starting on a road that leads—NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!’\textsuperscript{430} Over the course of the year, that road consistently led to further strikes, which spanned the length and breadth of the country. In total, 90\% of all steelworkers walked off the job, including 60,000 in Seattle.\textsuperscript{431} Furthermore, strikes in the coal, meatpacking, and automobile industries further destabilised an already stretched labour market, with workers in Boston adopting and on occasion leading national worker trends, and in doing so influencing behaviours in neighbouring towns and across the state.\textsuperscript{432}

The year 1919 saw 396 strikes recorded in Massachusetts, the highest figure since the state began keeping records in 1887.\textsuperscript{433} On April 15, 1919, the Telephone service in New England went dead when 20,000 operators, headed by the Boston local of the telephone workers’ union, pulled the switches and walked off their jobs.\textsuperscript{434} In July, Boston’s elevated train workers (8,000 in total) also staged their own protest, costing the city $5,934,255 in lost fares.\textsuperscript{435} In October 5000 New England anglers, many of whom supplied fish to Boston’s


\textsuperscript{431} Harvard University Library. Widener. Harvard Depository - Call # Film NC 119. No Author Attributed, ‘60,000 Will Walk Out: Preparations Now Complete for General Strike’. \textit{Seattle Union Record}. Published: February 1, 1919. Page 1.

\textsuperscript{432} Harvard University Library. Widener, Harvard Depository. Call # Film NC 735. No Author Attributed, ‘60,000 Will Walk Out: Preparations Now Complete for General Strike’. \textit{Seattle Union Record}. Published: February 1, 1919. Page 1.


markets also went on strike. The city’s political and business leaders could see the growing influence of national labour unrest and feared that unless this was curbed it would eventually lead to the disabling of their own businesses and communities. As such, naturally, they were alarmed, and they had just cause to be.

What followed was, without question the most significant and arguably the most noteworthy protest of the year: the Boston Police Strike. While striking steel workers and telephone workers abandoning their posts had a detrimental effect on daily life, the decision of eighty-percent of Boston’s police force to strike left the city open for anarchy. What ensued were swathes of violence, looting, gambling, and mayhem downtown and throughout South Boston which lasted for several days. The local press, once again, rushed to characterise the desire of Boston’s police to redress their grievances as part of a broader Bolshevik plot to destabilise governance in the Commonwealth and nationally; in conjunction, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge described the strike as ‘the first step to Sovietising the country’. In an effort to quell the uprising and restore order, Governor Coolidge ordered out the military guard. The result was five people dead by their hand, and a further three deaths arising from general unrest, including a sailor on Boston Common; in addition, twenty-four people sustained serious injuries.
When the Police Union asked that officers be reinstated to restore order, Coolidge refused, remarking that ‘there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime’.

Instead, Coolidge hired an entirely new force and no striking officer returned to his post. While many post-war strikes in the United States were unsuccessful and contributed to a decade of declining union membership, the Boston police strike did achieve its objectives, just not for the striking officers: ironically, their replacements were granted higher pay and additional holidays. Coolidge’s actions, coupled with nationwide media interest in the strike, propelled him to a position of prominence that facilitated his rise to the White House - a fact he acknowledged in his autobiography.

In one respect, the collapse of the strike sounded the death knell for the early police labour movement, but it came at a price. It would take a decade for Boston's police force to recover: the hasty recruiting undertaken in its immediate aftermath brought in vast numbers of unsuitable men. In the year following the strike, 238 patrolmen resigned (many with only a few days experience) and 73 were discharged, leaving the city vulnerable to criminality such as illicit rum-running, prostitution, and gambling. In a broader respect, the failure of the Boston police strike impacted the overall aims of the national labour movement. Coolidge’s stance sent out a clear message that no longer would America’s leaders tolerate the kinds of disorder and chaos that had been endorsed by the left for over a year. In addition, and more significant, the end of the strike marked the culmination of a year in which the wider Boston community had seen firsthand the extent to which social and real property-

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damage costs from disaster (the Molasses Flood) and unrest hampered daily life. As such, large factions of this community, in particular the middle-classes, quickly grew tired of civil disorder. Linked in with this change were the shifting opinions of many working class citizens, who had witnessed the failure of the police strike firsthand and thus realised the extent to which Coolidge and company were willing to go in order to stifle the advancement of the left.450

3. The Palmer Raids

During the afternoon of April 30, thirty-six bombs addressed to thirty-six wealthy individuals were discovered in post offices along the East and Pacific Coasts.451 Amongst the addressees were progressive and conservative republicans and neutral civil servants such as commissioner general of immigration, Anthony Caminetti, as well as multimillionaire businessmen such as John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan.452 The papers on the morning of May 1 declared that anarchists were planning ‘May Day Murders’.453 The Boston Evening Transcript noted ‘Red Plans for the Most Gruesome May Day tragedy in history’.454 A. Mitchell Palmer, Attorney-General of the United States, and resident of Boston, Massachusetts, charged that the bombs were part of a ‘Bolshevik plot’ to overthrow the government.455 In response to these allegations, The Liberator, a left-wing socialist journal alleged that the bombs were ‘a frame-up by those who are interested in getting the leaders of radicalism, and feel the need of a stronger public opinion before they can act’.456

With tensions high in Boston on May 1, the police attacked 1500 marchers in a parade sponsored by the Lettish Workmen’s Association, Russian-born revolutionaries, many of whom had served with bands of Lettish terrorists in the 1905 Russian insurrection.\textsuperscript{457} The Boston Letts, belonging to the pro-Bolshevik Russian Federation of the Socialist Party, operating out of Roxbury, South Boston, were a tough minded group who provided Soviet Russia with secret couriers, propagandists, and at least two leaders who at various times were in charge of illegal Communist operations in the United States.\textsuperscript{458} In contrast, the police were aided by a mob of civilian bystanders, who had been swept along by media and government hysteria.\textsuperscript{459} The community condoned the actions of the police and thus extra-legal communal social violence for a perceived ‘just cause’ was in this instance deemed necessary.\textsuperscript{460}

This approach to radicalism served only to exacerbate hostilities further and not surprisingly, one police officer was stabbed to death and one civilian was wounded.\textsuperscript{461} In a retaliatory act, civilian mobs proceeded to attack and subsequently demolish the Boston Socialist Headquarters. Furthermore, vigilantes went on the rampage across the city, attacking socialists anywhere they could be found.\textsuperscript{462} In total, 16 May Day paraders were arrested, charged with rioting and resisting the police. Fourteen were found guilty by Boston-born judge, A. Hayden of disturbing the peace and were sentenced to jail terms ranging from six to eighteen months. Predictably, not a single member of the police or the associated community mob was arrested.\textsuperscript{463}

After sentencing, Hayden remarked that ‘Foreigners who think they can get away with their doctrines in this country . . . if I could have my way, I would send them and their families

\textsuperscript{458} Francis Russell, \textit{A City in Terror: Calvin Coolidge and the 1919 Boston Police Strike} (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 11.
\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{463} Ibid.
back to the countries from which they came’.\(^464\) These words were spoken not just in the wake of violence but also in light of conclusions drawn by a Boston-based agent hired by the state to look into the emergence of Bolshevism in the city.\(^465\) The research of this particular agent concluded that Boston had become a makeshift headquarters for the ideology, with thirty-seven notable radical groups posing an imminent threat.\(^466\) The research stated that one such group was an influential circle of Jewish communists who met at Shapiro Hall on Leveritt Street.\(^467\) At different times during the year, this circle is believed to have hosted Bolsheviks and Mensheviks (a faction of the Russian socialist movement), and received considerable finance from overseas backers.\(^468\) The language used by Hayden was dangerous, not only because it served as provocation for further attacks on socialist factions, but it also created a greater sense of racial division and increased tension in the city, conjuring the notion of us (i.e., Anglo-Americans) and them (anyone not of white skin colour).

The inability of leading figures in government and those responsible for law and order in Boston to grasp the complex makeup of the working classes created a greater sense of tension. This tension, as such, propagated a broader issue of racial discrimination, which had a residual impact on the black community. While men such as Hayden saw the benefits of universally stifling the working classes and the poor,\(^469\) many Bostonians, including several Brahmin figures who in the past had sought to assist the left, harboured the profound fear that stifling the left so intensely might inspire hordes of them to veer sharply towards an uncompromising support for radicalism.\(^470\) This fear was never backed up by any significant evidence, but time would prove that the threat of radicalism in Boston was real: for the lengths


\(^{465}\) Ibid.


to which ardent radicals, principally Italian Galleanists, would stretch to in order to be heard were far-reaching and often beyond the comprehension of even the most ardent anti-leftist supporter.

On June 2, 1919, the danger of Hayden’s words was brought to bear. It was on this day that leading figures in Boston, including Hayden himself, were the target of orchestrated terrorist bombings. A little before midnight, the Hayden home of the Roxbury Municipal Court at 11 Wayne Street was almost completely destroyed by a pipe bomb packed with shrapnel and powered by dynamite. No one was hurt in the explosion, principally because the Haydens, their twenty-year old son, Malcolm Hayden, aside, were away at their summer home at the time. While Malcolm was using the house, he had been out for the evening and was some 100 feet away from the blast upon his return. He is said to have seen a car speeding away from the scene, but did not catch a glimpse of the driver.

On the same day, two minutes after midnight, the home of Leland W. Powers, a representative in the Massachusetts State Legislature, was targeted. The bomb used was similar in design to the one that almost destroyed Judge Hayden’s home, and on this occasion tore away one side of the targeted house. Powers, his children, and two house cleaners were home at the time but fortuitously none was seriously injured. In the aftermath of the incident, the Boston police combed the scene around the blast site and made a remarkable discovery:

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the strewn body parts of the man who had attempted to decimate the Powers' home. While it has been speculated by Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas, and Susan Mondshein Tejada that the attack was a suicide mission that fell short of its aims, conversely the police believed the explosive device used had detonated prematurely, significantly reducing its impact and thus sparing the lives of all inside the house.

Also discovered in close proximity to the strewn body parts of the bomber was an Italian-English dictionary, largely intact. While police never positively identified the dead man, there has been much speculation. For example, historian Paul Avrich concluded that much of the evidence, including the dictionary, pointed to Carlo Valdinocci, a one-time Italian resident of Somerville (located two miles northwest of Boston), and a dedicated Galleanist. The FBI has supported Avrich's claim. In a general respect, the presence of Italian paraphernalia at the scene of the crime was in keeping with other attacks carried out across the United States in New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New Jersey. At all of the bombings carried out in these cities, police found leaflets signed by Italian 'anarchist fighters'. The message of the text was consistently plain enough and sobering:

There will have to be bloodshed: we will not dodge; there will have to be murder; we will kill, because it is necessary; there will have to be destruction; we shall not rest until your downfall is complete and labouring masses have taken possession of what rightfully belongs to them...Long live social revolution! Down with tyranny.

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Five days before the attack on his home, Powers had introduced an anti-sedition bill to the Massachusetts legislature. The bill called for anyone advocating or inciting an assault on public officials, the destruction of property, and the overthrow of government by force to be sentenced to three years in prison. Needless to say, this legislation was rejected by anarchists in Boston and can be seen to have instigated the violence. In addition to attacks on the Powers and Hayden’s homes, more followed including the bombing of Harry Klotz’s home in New Jersey. Klotz was the president of the Suanhna Silk Company, a member of the Paterson Manufacturers’ Association’s executive board, and an outspoken opponent of striking silk weavers. Although a number of anarchist terrorist attacks had occurred over the years, June 2, 1919 was noteworthy because it was the first time that targeted bombings, directed at specific government officials and industrialists, were carried out simultaneously over a large area of America. This indicated that anarchism was a national problem, and one that had the potential for great devastation and loss of life.

The response to these attacks came in the form of a large-scale government crackdown on anarchist activities known as the ‘Palmer raids’, duly named after A. Mitchell Palmer. These raids, carried out in late 1919 and early 1920, were the high-water mark of the ongoing conflict. In total, the raids were responsible for the arrests and deportations of up to an estimated 10,000 alien anarchists and communists. However, embroiled in the forays and clampdowns of this new legislation were widespread abuses of police power. On a consistent basis, raids swept up large numbers of innocent people, including many factions of the black

community who were, as previously noted, excluded from constitutional protections and worse, were targeted under the ‘espionage and sedition’ bill of 1917.\textsuperscript{492} In the wake of such harsh treatment, Roger Crownover notes that ‘Americans began to realize that perhaps Palmer and many others had overreacted and that the civil rights of innocent people had been violated’.\textsuperscript{493}

4. The ‘Red Summer’: class prejudice, strike breaking, and the black struggle

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Brahmin elite in Boston had sought to diminish the growth of what they perceived to be the Irish-Catholic rank and file in the city. The 1884 election of the city’s first Irish-American mayor, Hugh O’Brien had signalled the beginning of the end of Brahmin electoral power,\textsuperscript{494} and by 1914, following the majority success of James Michael Curley (who would subsequently dominate state politics), the Irish were in the political ascendancy.\textsuperscript{495} Rather than utilising their channels of influence in government and the media to propagandise anti-Catholic sentiments and promote ‘nativism’\textsuperscript{496} as a means of debasing their Irish counterparts, the Brahmins instead sought to use ‘good politics’ and ‘reforms’ as the main rallying cries against what they considered to be corrupt Irish-dominated ward politics.\textsuperscript{497}

\textsuperscript{492} Harvard University Library. Lamont, Microforms. # Microfiche W 2571 (36583). United State. Congress (5th, 3rd session : 1798-1799). Reports of committees in Congress : to whom were referred certain memorials and petitions complaining of the acts of Congress, concerning the Alien & Sedition laws. : And on the naval establishment, the augmentation of the Navy, and the adoption of measures for procuring of timber and other supplies. : Also an answer of the Massachusetts legislature to the Virginia resolutions respecting dangerous aliens and seditious citizens (Richmond: Thomas Nicolson, 1799).


\textsuperscript{494} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. No Author Attributed, 'FOR MAYOR, HUGH O'BRIEN'. Boston Daily Globe. Published: November 26, 1884. Page 5.

\textsuperscript{495} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. No Author Attributed, 'CURLEY WINS BY 5720 MAJORITY'. Boston Daily Globe. Published: January 14, 1914. Page 1.

\textsuperscript{496} (the policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants) Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. Special Dispatch to the Globe, 'AMERICAN JEWRY IS AGAINST BOLSHEVISM'. Boston Daily Globe. Published: November 26, 1919. Page 5.

While the Irish and the Brahmins rarely agreed on social, economic, and political matters, they shared common ground in their eagerness to prohibit the settling of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia, principally Jews. This ground can mostly be seen to have manifested itself in the belief that Eastern Europeans, Russians, Poles, and the like were inferior people to western whites. While this pre-eminence stemmed in part from different standards of social, economic, and religious standing, with American forms of Christianity, capitalism, and general living standards considered superior, there was a broader political issue at play, too. In this respect, the integration of Eastern Europeans, who had arrived from regions of the world that had close ties to forms of socialist activity, whether in the form of prominent radical groups or more alarmingly, government, posed threats to national security, as perceived by the media and government.

However, the presence of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia in Boston was not something exclusive to the early twentieth century. In fact, the multicultural, multi-ethnic makeup of the city had been under construction for almost one-hundred years. By 1850, for example, the North End was already a melting pot of immigration. In part by design but also as a result of a natural tendency to flock together, this area housed an eclectic array of immigrants, including Eastern Europeans, Italians, Germans, and amongst them some blacks and Irish. In fact, by this time, the Irish, the largest ethnic group in Boston, made up almost

498 The Brahmin notion of nativism can be seen to have extended to the classification of the Boston-Irish as immigrants, they had after all between 1800 and 1850 poured into America by the tens of thousands, the two shared at least some common ground. Harvard University Library. Wiedener Holdings: Vol. I-III (1922-1924) Incomplete. Call # HP 670.1 F. No Author Attributed, 'Erin-Go-Bragh'. *The International Interpreter: The International News Weekly*. Published: April 8, 1922. Page, 71.

499 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. Uncle Dudley, 'What Can we Do? The Eastern front has reappeared and it is hostile'. *Boston Daily Globe*. Published: March 25, 1919. Page 10.


501 The arrival of Eastern Europeans placed a strain on an already exhausted post-war economy.

502 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘1,400,000 TONS FOOD NEEDED, SAYS HOOVER’, *Boston Daily Globe*. Published: January 8, 1919. Page 3.

fifty-percent of the 20,000 residents in the area, were often subject to nativism and anti-Catholicism. For example, in response to the Civil War Draft on July 14, 1863, which did not favour them, Irish men and boys clashed violently with the police and Union Army troops in the area.505

In the wake of mid-nineteenth-century immigration, a group of Harvard graduates of Brahmin stock formed the Immigration Restriction League in 1894, believing that mass immigration throughout Boston was the main contributing factor to social problems – notably urban crowding, poverty, crime, and labour unrest.506 To combat these, the Immigration Restriction League advocated a literacy requirement and eugenic testing for immigrant admission to the United States as a way of limiting entry from Eastern Europe.507 Having achieved the passage of a Congressional literacy bill with the support of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts in 1896, the bill eventually passed in 1918.508 Despite this, however, by 1930 the North End had seen an influx of Italian immigration, with 44,000 packed into an area less than one mile square in size, indicating great levels of internal migration amongst non-natives.509

The movements of the city’s small black population from the late eighteenth century to the start of the Jazz Age perhaps best exemplify this internal migration. Property records indicate that the earliest notion of a concentrated black community in Boston existed on Beacon Hill’s North Slope.510 An area situated around modern day Joy Street and overlooking

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510 ‘One of Boston’s oldest communities, Beacon Hill gets its name from a beacon that once stood atop its hill to warn locals about foreign invasion.’
the nation's first public park.\textsuperscript{511} Beacon Hill housed a mixture of classes, races, and households. Around the mid-eighteenth century, this area was home to an estimated one-thousand blacks.\textsuperscript{512} By the time the first national census of 1790 was conducted, 18,000 blacks were believed to be living in the city, including a small collective of 791 free blacks in the North End.\textsuperscript{513} At this time, Boston was the only city that listed no slaves, with approximately 27,000 free blacks living in the North and 32,000 in the South.\textsuperscript{514} However, freedom did little to assist them in the struggle of finding decent housing, establishing independent supportive institutions, and educating their children.\textsuperscript{515}

Most accounts of the time describe the black community of Beacon Hill as living in relative squalor, amidst a cornucopia of unlicensed taverns and houses of prostitution.\textsuperscript{516} Indeed it was viewed by old line Brahmins and Puritans for much of the nineteenth century to have been rife with excess and sin,\textsuperscript{517} with one city missionary, capturing its Bacchanalian character,\textsuperscript{518} calling it a 'sink of iniquity':

 Five and twenty or thirty shops are open on Lord's Day from morning to evening, and ardent spirits are retailed without restraint, while hundreds are intoxicated, and spend the holy Sabbath in frolicking and gambling, in fighting and blaspheming; and many in scenes of iniquity and debauchery too dreadful to be named.\textsuperscript{519}

\textsuperscript{512} The Americana: a universal reference library, comprising the arts and sciences, literature, history, biography, geography, commerce, etc., of the world, Volume 3., edited by Frederick Converse Beach, George Edwin Rines (Scientific American Compiling Department, 1912).
\textsuperscript{515} Garth M. Rosell, \textit{Boston's Historic Park Street Church: The Story of an Evangelical Landmark} (Kregel Publications, 2010),31.
\textsuperscript{516} Ibid., 43-44.
\textsuperscript{518} Characterised by or given to drunken revelry.
Barbara Meil Hobson notes in her work *Uneasy Virtue* that based on contemporary descriptions, the area resembled 'Hogarth's eighteenth century working class London, with its rowdy street life, nightly brawls, drunks reeling in the streets, and prostitutes calling to passersby'.


Ibid., 5.

which included many of the black leaders of the northern abolitionist campaign, including political writer, David Walker.\(^{527}\)

In conjunction, barbershops owned by black residents, Peter Howard and John J. Smith, located at the foot of Beacon Hill were important meeting places for anti-slavery forces, comprising of leading blacks and white Brahmin figures, including Charles Sumner, and served as stations of the underground railway.\(^{528}\) The willingness of some whites on the Hill to work in interracial alliance with blacks, also offered a small platform upon which the feint murmurings of a black political voice could be heard.\(^{529}\) In fact, Beacon Hill was one of the few places in America during the late nineteenth century where blacks were afforded the right to speak in a political context. As Mark R. Schneider asserts, from 1876 to 1892 at least one black resident from the Beacon Hill area sat on Boston's community council every year,\(^{530}\) and two between 1893 and 1895.\(^{531}\)

However, since the mid-nineteenth century, the area had been undergoing an economic and architectural reconstruction. While Beacon Hill had housed a portion of the city's upper-crust for over a century, they were now being joined by businessmen and professionals (the Protestant gentry).\(^{532}\) To house these individuals, elegant mansions were being built on the east side of the Hill.\(^{533}\) With this influx of wealth and the growing fashionability of Beacon Hill as a place of aspirational affluence and prestige, developers and investors committed to the financial growth of the area feared that disorderly houses (occupied by immigrants and blacks) and criminality were a threat to property prices.\(^{534}\) In an effort to


assist in civilising the area, a group of Boston reformers supported by then Mayor Quincy came together in unified objection to the state of living on the Hill.

While some historians, such as Norbert Macdonald, have suggested that the area at the time was a racially integrated community underpinned by white affluence, education, and strong abolitionist principles, the popular and accepted names for this locality, used by some white residents and many of those looking in, were ‘New Guinea’ and ‘Nigger Hill’. This of course implies an undercurrent of outward racism and discrimination. Thus, it is no surprise, through puritan-style moral coding, policing, and petitions, that white reformers instigated a steady migration of blacks towards the South End of the city, who without legal and congressional defences were seldom able to defend themselves.

In 1895, legislative redistricting in the form of a preamble to later and much more aggressive urban renewal was undertaken. Under this legislation, a renovation policy to replace wooden dwellings with brick housing was enacted. This had the effect of pricing blacks out of the market, which pushed them further into the more affordable South End. In doing so, this migration ended black representation in the area, which culminated with William L. Reed’s race to be elected to the General Court in 1896. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the population of the older neighbourhood in the North End decreased by fifty percent. And by 1919, the south end of the city had come to form a cultural melting pot of

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536 Ibid.
537 This area principally comprised the West End on the other side of Beacon Hill. Dorothee Wagner von Hoff, *Ornamenting the ‘Cold Roast’: The Domestic Architecture and Interior Design of Upper-Class Boston Homes, 1760-1880* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 101.
Armenians, Greeks, Italians, Irish, Lebanese, Jewish, Lithuanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Syrians and many more Eastern and Southern Europeans.\textsuperscript{544} Amongst this collective was a thriving metropolitan community of blacks, with nearby Cambridgeport developing as a centre of colour.\textsuperscript{545}

Along the dividing line of Roxbury and the South End, black Boston (by this time a community of 11,500)\textsuperscript{546} boasted fourteen black churches.\textsuperscript{547} In addition, there were two black newspapers (The Guardian and the Chronicle), two weekly fora, the Women’s Service Club of Boston at 464 Massachusetts Avenue, and the Boston Literary (and the League of Women for Community Service) at 558 Massachusetts, as well as a primitive African Art Centre on Harwich Street.\textsuperscript{548} While this community lacked legitimacy amongst the white population of Boston - Christine Bold notes, ‘none of these items of Black Cultural life in Boston appeared in the Massachusetts Guide’ – they did provide a sense of community structure amongst blacks.\textsuperscript{549} More importantly, this community as Mark R. Schneider asserts was not a ghetto.\textsuperscript{550} Nonetheless, this did not prevent factions of Boston’s white population, in particular those in the higher echelons of the city’s political class and government positions, viewing the area as a ‘stubbornly’ and ‘squalid’ confine.\textsuperscript{551}

A by-product of this view was that despite its multi-national and multi-ethnic makeup, the South End population was perceived as a cohesive immigrant class—one entity. More to

\textsuperscript{545} M. R. Schneider, \textit{Boston Confronts Jim Crow 1890 – 1920} (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 5.
\textsuperscript{547} Four Baptist, three Methodist, two African Methodist, two Episcopal and one each of the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations, as well as many ‘stone-front’ churches of the ‘Holy Rollers, Spiritualists, ‘Wash-foot Baptist’, and the followers of Father Divine.
\textsuperscript{548} Christine Bold, \textit{Writers, Plumbers, and Anarchists: The WPA Writers’ Project in Massachusetts} (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts, 2006), 226.
\textsuperscript{549} Ibid.
the point, the area that they inhabited was viewed, much like the Beacon Hill of old, as an incubator of, amongst many things, paucity, freeloading, lawlessness, but also socialist-inspired radicalism. While blacks across America, including Boston Garveyites, shared some similarities with the aforementioned, few were actors in the ‘Red Scare’. Rather, while Garvey celebrated the Russian Revolution, he was ‘not very much concerned’ with taking part in such revolutions. Blacks largely sought to challenge and change the status quo by exploiting economic opportunities offered by northern cities in postwar need, and thereafter bringing about fairer working conditions and wages. There was little evidence that blacks were active in acts of terrorism and violence that had become the calling card of radical socialism.

The problem in Boston, however, was that the simple approach of blacks to social uplift, that of seeking better wages and standards of living, were now perceived as vaguely coterminous with the overall aims of more fiercely determined factions, such as the Galleanists in the North End. In reality, leading blacks, such as W.E.B Du Bois, were unconvinced by radical unionism. In his autobiography, Du Bois remarked that the terrible Lawrence strike of 1912 had no impact on him as a black man. In this respect he focused on the ways in which black workers were thwarted in their aspirations every step up the ladder of social mobility. In particular, he referred to the fact that factory workers in the Great Lawrence strike of 1912 would not let a Negro work beside them, nor live in the same town, and thus blacks were neither part of the community nor a part of any purported union. As such, they simply lacked the necessary connections to benefit from an association with socialist ideology and practices.

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553 Garveyism: a 20th century racial and political doctrine advocating black self-governance.
555 Ibid.
Despite this, drawing on the cascade of post-war racial violence, national security officials, such as those in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, were adamant that advocates of racial equality, including the Garveyites, had formed links with communists and socialists.\textsuperscript{560} This naturally gave rise to fears that a national uprising of blacks, inspired and led by socialists and communists was well and truly underway.\textsuperscript{561} While there was little in terms of evidence to support this notion, such absence only convinced officials, notably the young J. Edgar Hoover – who, on August 1, 1919, was named head of the Department of Justice’s Radical Division – that they were not looking hard enough.\textsuperscript{562} Driven by Hoover, agents redoubled their efforts to uncover red roots for what they dubbed ‘radical Activities’, and a sustained drive was undertaken by the American security service to disarm blacks because of fears that they were planning violent uprisings.\textsuperscript{563}

There were incidents, however, that gave some credence to the developing fears of the Department of Justice’s Radical Division. During July 1919, the Reverend M. A. N. Shaw of Boston delivered a speech exhorting black men to stand and fight for their rights, sacrificing their lives if necessary.\textsuperscript{564} He added that ten thousand black men should die killing the same number of white men before a racist mob lynched another innocent victim.\textsuperscript{565} Shaw reiterated this sentiment in an address to the annual convention of William Monroe Trotter’s organisation, the National Equal Rights League in October.\textsuperscript{566} In a defiant speech, Shaw predicted that race riots would cease, as blacks educated – and armed – themselves to act in
their own defence. Shaw was careful to advise that blacks should never be the aggressors, but nor should they back down.567

This sentiment was echoed by Matt Lewis, the black editor of the Newport News Star, who stated, ‘we coloured people must hang together to protect ourselves against the whites. If a white man abuses you, knock him down’.568 While black uprisings in Jacksonville, Chicago, and Philadelphia and elsewhere made for compelling national headlines, there was little in the way of actual black unrest in Boston. This, however, did not stop many of the city’s white citizens and government officials from feeding national paranoia that black revolts, as part of the wider issue of worker unrest, were authentic and impending. The utmost fear was focused on the idea that should blacks, in their quest for social equality become fairly well organised, this would pose a serious threat to national security.569 In fact, not since Nat Turner’s revolt in 1831 and John Brown’s raid on the Harper’s Ferry arsenal in 1859 had fears of black uprisings so transfixed and troubled white Americans.570

When unions and working organisations called for strike actions, blacks were often torn between the quest for better pay and working hours and the need to earn. Black workers were, without question, faced with the least appealing and lowest-paying work, and thus stood to gain the most from the potential of a successful outcome from striking. Ultimately, however the need to support their families far outweighed their principled stance against ongoing oppression in the labour market and some blacks simply maintained their posts while other blacks pursued betterment along with whites but broke strikes regularly.571 This naturally added further strain to the climate of race relations across America. In fact, unions used the

567 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Call on Negroes to Kill Lynchers by Wholesale'. Boston Herald. Published: July 14, 1919. p. 2.
desperation of blacks as a tool for nurturing in-fighting. In cities such as Boston,\textsuperscript{572} New York,\textsuperscript{573} and San Francisco, for example, employers actively recruited blacks and black strikebreakers to fulfil the job roles vacated by whites, which only contributed to hostilities, and instigated violence.\textsuperscript{574}

Strikebreaking was, for the most part, encouraged by leading black figures, principally W.E.B. Du Bois, who remarked in 1912 that the strategy of white labour was to 'beat or starve the Negro out of his job if you can by keeping him out of the union; or if you must admit him, do the same thing inside the union lines'.\textsuperscript{575} In 1919, as Mary Beth Norton states, union organisers took no interest in, what they perceived to be unskilled labourers, and intentionally excluded women, blacks, and immigrants.\textsuperscript{576} Thus, as Du Bois notes, the idea of 'interracial solidarity' along the lines of the labour bar was a dangerous illusion in the face of monopolising white labour.\textsuperscript{577} In this respect, therefore, the union white man, who was American, German, Irish and above all else, monopolist, was without question to be viewed as an enemy by blacks.\textsuperscript{578} For Du Bois, the imperatives of race far outweighed those of economics and class,\textsuperscript{579} and he charged that 'If white workers went on strike, then black workers should cross the picket lines to claim their jobs, for the white workers deserved themselves the starvation which they plan for their darker and poorer fellows'.\textsuperscript{580}

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\item[576] Mary Beth Norton, Jane Kamensky, Carol Sheriff, David W. Blight, Howard Chudacoff, \textit{A People and a Nation, Volume II: Since 1865} (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014), 489.
\item[579] Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. INDIANA HARBOUR: on October 3, 1919: Rioting broke out at the Universal Portland Cement plant and a union picket was shot by one of two armed Negroes who, with nearly 25 other Negroes, attempted to return to work. No Author Attributed, NEGRO SHOOTS UNION PECKET, THREE HELD. \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. Published: October 4, 1919. Page 8.
\end{footnotes}
At the heart of white paranoia was a false impression of the New Negro movement. In part, unease over the potential of black uprisings in the wake of riots in Washington, Chicago, and elsewhere stemmed from an understanding that these events were not aberrations. However, such acts were rather carried out in the vein of resistance to anti-black collectivism instigated by whites. Thus in a general respect, therefore, whites consistently misinterpreted opposition and retaliatory violence (which had on occasion been condoned by Du Bois, Lewis, and Shaw) as evidence enough that blacks were revolting and plotting a series of attacks on whites as part of a socialist revolution that was being mounted across the United States. Robert Bowen, a postal official, succinctly expressed this viewpoint in an essay entitled ‘Radicalism and Sedition Among the Negroes As Reflected in Their Publications’, distributed less than three weeks before Washington’s riot.

Bowen remarked that independent black publications, such as the New York Age, The Crisis, and The Messenger, aroused a perilous brand of class-consciousness among blacks that had as its core aim the desire to establish communist rule in America. On this note, he argued that the black masses were being influenced to assume a very dangerous power through these publications. While Bowen acknowledged the significance of black military service during World War I, he disregarded the idea that because they were fit to wear the military uniform of the United States that they were fit for everything else. He embellished this idea by concluding that while blacks had found equal ground alongside whites on the battlefields of World War I, they were not entitled to the same rights as whites on the streets of post-war America—principally because they were neither as educated nor refined as their white counterparts were.

While Bowen at times noted that New Negro authors, such as William M. Tuttle Jr., praised the combative and aggressiveness of militancy in pursuit of democracy, he fixated

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583 Ibid.
much of his essay on A. Philip Randolph’s and Chandler Owen’s (co-founders of the Messenger) support of the radical labor union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In doing so, he argued that because the New Negroes advocated equality and because communists sought classless equality through revolution, all New Negroes were, by default, revolutionary communists. The New Negroes of Boston, however, were during the year 1919 significantly outnumbered (even within the boundaries of the multi-ethnic South End) and greatly outgunned. In this sense, therefore, it is difficult to suggest that black Boston posed any significant threat. Nonetheless, paradoxically the federal response to the rumours of impending black uprisings across America left them largely misunderstood, maligned, and worse feared.

These rumours had the effect of disseminating the idea that the black populace was largely under the guise of a militant ‘New Negro’, that was largely incongruous with conservative elders such as Du Bois. While the prevailing notion amongst whites that blacks were physically and culturally inferior remained in place, fear had somewhat aided the dispelling of the idea that blacks were without much hope of improvement. Rather, whites, including the media, concluded that the ideas of blacks such as Boston’s Reverend M. A. N. Shaw, who advocated ‘violent challenges to the status quo and the destruction of existing ideologies’ that sought to demean and oppress blacks, had given rise to a genuine revolutionary threat. Thus during a period of widespread paranoia, brought on by radical uprisings, worker strikes, and race riots across America, the perceived black menace (i.e., the

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585 In 1919, Randolph and Owen were put under surveillance by the FBI, who feared that their publications were beyond doubt exciting the Negro elements America to riot and to commit 'outrages of all sorts'. Regin Schmidt, Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000),198.
586 Ibid.
590 Ibid.
impending attempt to enact violent and force change in America’s social hierarchy) was seen to be no different to the peril posed by radical Italian socialism.\(^{591}\)

In retrospect, the black population of Boston, despite its small size, could boast neither the required stability nor the unity necessary to conduct any form of revolutionary action. In short, it lacked the cohesive and substantial (in terms of numbers) collective spirit needed to bring about positive change. Internal migration (within the city of Boston) and integration (into an immigrant community in the South End) had somewhat served to fracture Boston’s black identity, while also wiping out its diminutive but symbolic political representation on Beacon Hill. Moreover, Boston’s black population was not collectively organised to counteract physical white oppression, and even less so when faced with more furtive modes of oppression, for instance cultural and social subjugation. Rather, small groups and cooperatives existed within the community that pursued different and in many cases unproductive modes of social uplift.\(^{592}\)

For example, by 1919 more wealthy blacks, such as members of the League of Women for Community Service, continued to pursue advancement in interracial alliance with white Brahmins, despite the fact that the latter was no longer able to consolidate its own position of power in the city against an emergent and rapidly dominant Irish population.\(^{593}\) Moreover, while leading black figures such as Monroe Trotter and Booker T. Washington both desired to improve the Negro’s lot in American life, they similarly split the black population by employing two very different ideologies. The well-heeled, Harvard-educated Trotter spoke out on principle in favour of higher education and voting rights for blacks and vehemently opposed

\(^{591}\) Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Microform only; Call # AN2. M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘CALL TROOPS IN RACE RIOTS; 7 DEAD, 40 HURT’. Boston Daily Globe. Published: July 29, 1919. Page 1.

\(^{592}\) Mark R. Schneider, Boston Confronts Jim Crowe, 1890-1920 (New England: UPNE, 1997), 4-10.

\(^{593}\) By 1919 the Boston Brahmins of Beacon Hill and neighbouring areas were surrounded by the increasingly powerful left: Italians in the North End, the emergent Irish in south Boston, and immigrants and blacks in the city’s South End. While blacks once saw uplift as viably possible in Boston when sought in interracial alliance with Brahmins, such as William Lloyd Garrison, such optimism was no longer justified. Rather, as Brahmins fought to stabilise their waning power in the face of advancing Irish dominance they were unable to carry the weight of supporting the black struggle and almost entirely abandoned their abolitionist efforts. As such, blacks found themselves increasingly isolated in the south end, with little means of uplift.
In contrast, Washington tacitly accepted segregation and promoted self-improvement within such parameters (particularly through basic education, industrial education, and the accumulation of wealth) as the primary means through which blacks could collectively improve their station.\footnote{Stephen R. Fox, \textit{The guardian of Boston: William Monroe Trotter} (Boston: Atheneum, 1970).}

In May of 1919, W.E.B. Du Bois, in a \textit{Crisis} article that responded to the treatment of returning black soldiers, delivered a staunch rallying call to America’s blacks. He stated:

> We are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.\footnote{Booker T. Washington, Louis R. Harlan, Raymond W. Smock, \textit{The Booker T. Washington Papers: Cumulative Index} (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 27-33.}

But divided as they were over the solution to the ‘Negro Question’ and the post-war ideological antagonisms posed by whites, the splintered state of black Boston (when considered in the broader context of racial subjugation that was commonplace during the Red Scare) was not conducive to the fighting of a sterner, longer, and more unbending battle against renewed forms of domination. Instead, splintering simply served to significantly weaken the presence of black Boston and ultimately dilute its voice.

Thus in this respect, the inability of blacks in Boston to be heard in almost every capacity, including the social, political, and labour spheres, cultivated an intense feeling of frustration. By 1920, as blacks in Harlem were beginning to receive national recognition for achievements in the arts and politics, black Bostonians manifested their frustrations in the forms of minor uprisings and sporadic revolts, which were viewed by the Boston media as evidence of their growing radicalism. One such notable occurrence was an attack on Governor Calvin Coolidge at a mass meeting of the National Equal Rights League in Faneuil Hall, on April 20 of that year.\footnote{Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Library Microtext. Call # E185.5.C92. W.E.B. Du Bois, \textit{Documents of the War’, The Crisis}. May 1919. pp. 13-14.} While this attack was billed by the Boston media as an assault carried out by a ‘militant’ band of ‘New Negroes’, it was much more than that.

\footnote{Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Call # AN2 .M4B64. No Author Attributed, \textbf{COOLIDGE ATTACKED AT NEGRO MEETING} Stand on Reorganization of National Guard Scored National Equal Rights League Asks Colored Combat Unit, \textit{The Boston Daily Globe}. Published: April 12, 1920. Page 14.}
This attack, while carried out by a small group, to a certain extent spoke for the black community of Boston in its entirety. Blacks, unable to make inroads bureaucratically following fifteen months of violated civil rights, physically displayed their anger and disenfranchisement before the highest echelon of power in the city in a symbolic uprising. For while blacks were rarely actors in the Boston Red Scare they had consistently, as a result of its handling by leading figures such as Hayden, Palmer, and on occasion Coolidge (all of whom rarely distinguished between unionism, radicalism, and the left), been caught up in the hysterics and irrationality of heightened yet often undefined post-war racial uncertainty. The impact of this exceeded the dynamics of social Boston and stretched, as will be seen, to the cultural sphere.
Chapter Four: Music in Boston, Massachusetts - from colony to community, the first three centuries

1. Introduction

During the year 1938, Robert Ripley, host of NBC’s ‘Believe it or Not’ radio show, stated that W. C. Handy, a celebrated Mississippi bandleader at the turn of the century, was the originator of jazz.\(^{598}\) In riposte, ‘hot tune’ writer and American virtuoso pianist, Jelly Roll Morton addressed a two page letter in Chicago’s music magazine ‘DownBeat’ to the host that stated, ‘It is evidently known, beyond contradiction, that New Orleans is the cradle of jazz, and I, myself, happened to be creator in the year 1902’.\(^{599}\) So assured in his claims, Morton signed off the letter, ‘Very truly yours, Jelly Roll Morton: Originator of Jazz and Stomps, Victor Artist, World’s greatest Hot Tune writer’.\(^{600}\) While Morton’s letter provides an intricate insight into his personality, it also serves as testimony in the form of dates, places, personnel, and styles of the earliness of developed jazz in America.\(^{601}\) Furthermore, while Morton’s claim is a bold one, the impact of his early compositions and small group orchestrations on 1920’s jazz progression at least lends some credence to his claim. As music critic, John Fordham noted, he ‘was the first jazz composer of importance’.\(^{602}\)

While Morton’s claim on jazz has been hotly debated for over half a century, it is widely accepted by many historians, jazz aficionados, and followers of the music that New Orleans was its birthplace.\(^{603}\) During the late nineteenth century, the city became an incubator for the melding of a black Creole subculture with elite European practices.\(^{604}\) In brief, many of the


\(^{601}\) Ibid.


\(^{603}\) H. Martin, K. Waters., Jazz: The First 100 Years (Connecticut: Cengage Learning, 2010). 56

Creoles – French-and Spanish-speaking blacks who originated from the West Indies – because of their pre-civil war status could afford to educate their children in some of the finest cities in the world.⁶⁰⁵ For example, several Creole musicians, including William Blue, Willie Austin, and P. B. Langford received Conservatory training in Paris before returning to New Orleans and playing at the city’s Opera House.⁶⁰⁶ Musicians such as these prided themselves on their extensive knowledge of European music and their superior musicianship. Furthermore, they exhibited many of the social and cultural values that characterised the upper class.⁶⁰⁷ Randall Sandke remarked that New Orleans’ Creole bands had a near monopoly on society work.⁶⁰⁸ For over fifty years, even throughout peak periods of segregation, Creole bands in the city were hired for the most prestigious and lucrative jobs.⁶⁰⁹

In stark contrast were the inhabitants of the American part of New Orleans, who lived west of Canal Street, the city’s principal boulevard – also known as ‘Broadway of the Crescent City’.⁶¹⁰ Inhabited by church people, gamblers, hustlers, cheap pimps, thieves and prostitutes, these citizens were largely poor, uneducated, and lacking in cultural and economic advantages.⁶¹¹ Musicians from this section - often referred to as ‘Black o’ town - were schooled in the blues, gospel music and work songs that they played or sang mostly by ear.⁶¹² Thus, the city had two distinct musical styles and two very different approaches to composition and performance. Memorisation and improvisation characterised the west side bands; sight-reading and correct performance were characteristic of Creole bands. The multiplicity of ethnic, cultural, and musical conditions needed to spawn jazz – i.e., the coming together of

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⁶⁰⁷ S. K. Bernard., Swamp Pop: Cajun and Creole Rhythm and Blues (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 42.
⁶⁰⁸ R. Sandke., Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 12
⁶¹¹ I. Soto, V. S. Johnson., Western Fictions, Black Realities: Meanings of Blackness and Modernities (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2011), 239.
⁶¹² Ibid.
cultures in one place - was unique to the United States, and as has been argued by scholars and commentators, specifically to New Orleans.\footnote{Burton W. Peretti, \textit{The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America} (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 22.}

Widespread focus on New Orleans as the cradle of jazz, however, has often inhibited enthusiasts and more significantly jazz historians from adequately considering the complexities of the music's lineage. Based on the bulk of writing that deals with the birth of jazz, one would be forgiven for believing that it was conceived in a kind of historical vacuum – i.e., New Orleans during the first decade of the twentieth century - in which all of its elements were cultivated and subsequently woven together into an art form. But the reality is far different. In fact, as author and music critic Stuart Nicholson has pointed out, the essential elements fused together to form early jazz compositions – in particular, the blues, ragtime, brass band marches, work songs, minstrel music, spirituals and hymns – were not exclusive to New Orleans. Rather, variations of these styles were abundant in the United States, known well in an array of cities, including Chicago,\footnote{Chicago and the father of ragtime, Scott Joplin: Jazz historian, Floyd Levin asserts that the legitimate descendent of ragtime was jazz, and that its major advocates in the formation years such as Jelly Roll Morton, Tony Jackson, and Clarence Williams all took inspiration from playing styles conceived and developed by Joplin in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chicago.} New York and Boston long before the turn of the century. In some instances, the influences for these forms, notably religious music, can be traced back to the country’s emergent slave trade that began during the mid-seventeenth century.\footnote{S. Nicholson, ‘Fusions and Crossovers’ in M. Cooke., D. Horne., \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Jazz} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 217.}

More importantly, it is here that the cultural and philosophical impetuses for jazz were initially harnessed. The arrival of the first enslaved blacks to the Virginia Colony in 1620, and subsequent influxes to Massachusetts, New Amsterdam (present day New York), and Connecticut brought European and African – both sacred and secular (worldly) - cultural forms into regular contact in the north of America.\footnote{Jessie Carney Smith, Joseph M. Palmisano, \textit{Reference library of Black America, Volume 1} (Detroit: Gale Group, Inc., 2000), 1.} Significantly, at this time music was viewed by the first Puritan settlers in Massachusetts as primarily functional; seeking to civilise
their slaves in the white image, psalmody, as the first musical form accepted in the new world, took on an educational and religious significance. In this sense, the Puritans utilised it in efforts to convert blacks to Christianity: conversion of perceived ‘heathens’ being viewed as a duty to God.

In response to this, the first instance of black resistance came to fruition. In this respect, resistance took on the form of a quest for freedom of individual expression supported by group interaction. This was achieved through private worship, preaching, prayers, writings, revolts and rebellion, chants, African customary law and spirit songs. Whites vehemently opposed many of these practices and blacks were repeatedly punished for utilising them. However, in one form or another they remained a constant in American culture, albeit on the fringes. A testament to the staunchness with which early slaves in Massachusetts perpetuated their heritage lies in the later influence of these heritages on white social and cultural practices such as dancing and singing in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Boston.

In a general sense, influential figures in Massachusetts, and later Boston, played a significant role in the development of music in America during its first three centuries. In addition to the establishment of early standards for religious music by Puritans, during the nineteenth century wealthy Boston Brahmins redefined the cultural field by engaging in dialogue that pertained to not just the place of music in the city but its impact on social dynamics across America. The Brahmin class associated themselves with the Puritanical ideas of their forefathers and determined that certain types of music were enriching and

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618 The general consensus amongst white colonial settlers in Virginia, New Amsterdam, Connecticut, and Amsterdam was that black slaves were soulless heathens, incapable of spirituality.
morally superior. Supporting a pantheon of classical composers - including Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, and Mozart - the Brahmins cultivated and presided over a cultural hierarchy that was underpinned by a perceived canon of superior music. In this sense, the Brahmins, much like the Puritans before them, defined not just good taste and practice but also the cultural margins. These margins remained stable well into the early decades of the twentieth century, and served as the arenas in which perceived unsophisticated and primitive forms of music, such as the blues and jazz were developed in Boston.

This chapter analyses the impact of early psalmody in Massachusetts through to the emergence of instrumental music in the nineteenth century, highlighting the ways in which imported European and African elements were utilised, and subsequently developed and on occasion fused to shape new musical forms and modes of expression. It is my contention that in tracing broader cultural transitions over the course of three centuries, this chapter will show how the early colony of Massachusetts and later the city of Boston played a significant role in shaping and in some instances defining the standards that came to greatly influence white and black music across America.

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2. From Psalmody to Slave Song and beyond: Melding cultures and restricting expression in Massachusetts and New England, 1620-1860

Boston, Massachusetts, was born out of a hope for change, or as Mark R. Schneider asserts, ‘as a result of a dream of purity’. As England plunged into religious strife during the second half of the sixteenth century, austere Puritans of Calvinist faith, believing in the predestination of souls beyond the influence of King or Canterbury sought to move away from monarchical Protestantism and purify the Anglican Church of all vestiges of pomp, Pope, and privilege. Thus in 1620, the first trickle of immigrants, including members of the separatist Leiden congregation, made their way to the new world from Plymouth, England on the Mayflower to establish the aptly named Plymouth colony, some forty miles south of present day Boston. A decade later, wealthy English Puritan lawyer John Winthrop gazed out on the promontory land of the Shawmut Peninsula, an area surrounded by the Massachusetts Bay and the Charles River, and declared to a thousand Puritans before him, ‘we shall be as a City upon a Hill, with the eyes of all people upon us’. This declaration marked the first significant step toward the establishment of a New England.

In a cultural sense, little was new about the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies, however. Rather, their establishment by English pilgrims marked a continuation of European cultural forms being transferred across the Atlantic that had begun with the 1492 Spanish Conquest of America. In addition to carrying drums and trumpets of the period, some of

629 Ibid.
the passengers aboard the Mayflower’s maiden voyage also carried an understanding of standardised western musical attributes that had been developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\textsuperscript{634} This understanding included knowledge of major and minor melodic scales,\textsuperscript{635} modalities, duple and triple meters, and rhythms.\textsuperscript{636} More significantly, however, the pilgrims aboard the Mayflower and the many ships that followed in the years thereafter also carried with them psalm-books from which to sing.\textsuperscript{637}

Scholars, including Hans J. Hillerbrand, assert that the first complete metrical Psalter in England was published in 1562.\textsuperscript{638} Known as ‘The Sternhold and Hopkins’ Psalter, so called because it was started in 1550 by Thomas Sternhold and later edited by a committee chaired by John Hopkins, was transferred from English towns and cities to colonies in the new world.\textsuperscript{639} Psalms were said to have been favoured to hymns, which were also in use in England during the period, because the pilgrims believed that the latter had no scriptural basis.\textsuperscript{640} Notably, the Psalter that arrived in Plymouth on the Mayflower was in its own way unique. It had been specially prepared (i.e., as Timothy Duguid notes, ‘Englished’ in prose and metre, and set to livelier music than had been heard before)\textsuperscript{641} and published eight years earlier in 1612 for the fugitive congregations of Separatists in Holland\textsuperscript{642} by Henry Ainsworth.\textsuperscript{643} Of

\textsuperscript{634} David Ware Stowe, \textit{How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans} (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004), 27.
\textsuperscript{642} Holland being the place where a group of early Separatists had fled persecution in England to live in 1608, before finally settling in Leiden in 1610.
significance here is an entry in Edward Winslow’s *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, where he notes on July 20, 1620 the departure of members of the congregation for the untried shores of America. In addition to recounting the main events of the day, he also makes mention of the important role music played in boosting morale amongst those left behind:

They that stayed at Leyden feasted us that were to go at our pastor’s house, (it) being large; where we refreshed ourselves, after tears, with singing of Psalms, making joyful melody in our hearts as well as with the voice, there being many of our congregation very expert on music; and indeed it was the sweetest melody that ever mine ears heard.

Without question, song in worship was one of the most cherished and characteristic customs of early colonial life. Most who arrived to the new world brought with them affection for psalmody. And while the Ainsworth Psalter at Plymouth was abandoned by members of the settlement when it was merged with the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1692, its seventy-year usage is rather telling. In one respect, the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s adoption of ‘The Sternhold and Hopkins’ Psalter can be viewed as an early example of the successful transference and long-term upholding of European cultural, and of course religious, influences. More significantly, however, the preferred hymnal of the Plymouth colony can also been seen to have served to exemplify the first notion of an independent, self-determining streak amongst the settlers.

Eight years after the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in 1628, the first enslaved blacks, a small group of thirty-nine, arrived in Boston from the West Indies aboard a ship that contained a cargo of cotton and tobacco. Prior to this time, the settlers relied on the slavery of Pequot Indians. The Pequot had laid claim to the land long before the arrival of

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646 Ibid., 7.

647 Ibid., 6.

John Winthrop, but circa 1638, following disagreements over punitive terms, they were vanquished and forced into slavery. However, they made for poor slaves and as a result were shipped to Bermuda in exchange for African bondsmen. Just three years later following the arrival of these bondsmen to the colony, Massachusetts Bay became the first place in New England to accord legal status to slavery. The 1641 ‘Body of Liberties’, a legal code specifically designed to protect individual rights detailed instances of guidance for the courts of the time. Amongst them was the prohibition of bond ‘slaverie’; ‘villenage’; or ‘captivie’ among the settlers. Under section 91, it states:

There shall never be any bond slavery, villeinage, or captivity amongst us unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israel concerning such persons cloth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be judged thereto by authority.

Interestingly, scholars including A. Leon Higginbotham, have noted that while three types of outlawing were present, at the same time three types of bondage were legislatively authorised. Massachusetts colonists could ‘rightly enslave those captured in just wars, strangers who were voluntarily or involuntarily sold into slavery, and those individuals who were required by ‘Authortie’ to be sold into servitude’. As Higginbotham notes, but ‘When did a war become just? And which people were strangers? And under what conditions could the authorities sentence someone to servitude?’ William Sumner, a Liberal American academic of the nineteenth century, argued that bondage and the trading of human beings

653 Ibid
654 Ibid.
morally repulsed the Puritans. However, in considering the aforementioned, such a suggestion is questionable, simply because their willingness to allow a member of the colony to partake in the international slave trade was hardly indicative of a people repulsed.

The significance of the ‘Body of Liberties’ in the broader narrative of America’s long slave history is that it set a precedent for divine law, the will of the people, and the need to safeguard public order that was adopted and appropriated in many northern American towns and cities. In 1643, it was incorporated into the Articles of the New England Confederation, a short-lived military alliance of the English colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven. Ironically, New England had formal, legal slavery a full generation before it was established in the South. Not until 1664 did Maryland declare that all blacks held in the colony, and all those imported in the future, would serve for life, as would their offspring.

The forced migration of great numbers of blacks as slaves to the various parts of America more significantly also marks what ethnomusicologist, Bruno Nettl describes as one of the truly important developments in the history of world music. In conjunction with Nettl, music scholars, including Daniel Hardie, have written extensively about the ways in which forced migration set the stage for the development of folk, Latin, and in particular jazz music. It brought two distinct cultures – European and African – into ‘intimate’ contact in the New World and what evolved from that ‘had an impact on the strata of twentieth-century music in the west and elsewhere’. The widespread musical interchange between Europe and

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America subsequently generated a single transatlantic musical culture throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that was tinged with black influences.\textsuperscript{665} Nettl asserts that African heritages are:

...major forces in everyday musical life; and their effect on composers of art music in the United States and Latin America as well as on such Europeans as Antonin Dvorak and Igor Stravinsky has been considerable.\textsuperscript{666}

Everywhere throughout America from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, black and white cultural forms were in constant contact.\textsuperscript{667} When one reflects on musical acculturation within the context of slave oppression, it can be seen to have taken on three separate forms: the learning outright of white songs and white performance practices; the superimposing of these learned white practices on to black songs; and conversely, the superimposing of learned white songs on to black performance practices. A particular example in this respect is the way in which some slave owners went as far as to have their slaves taught to play European-style music for white audiences.\textsuperscript{668} Conversely, however, there are many instances in which such acculturation served to influence the development of white culture. For example, as early as the seventeenth century, black musicians performed English ballads in a distinctively African-American style, which incorporated nuanced singing, distinct rhythms, and musicianship that was later adopted and appropriated by whites.\textsuperscript{669}

The basis for such acculturation has its roots in the earliest notion of white religious superiority in the New World.\textsuperscript{670} in particular, a desire amongst the first colonial settlers of Massachusetts to uphold a lifestyle that was in keeping with the Puritan frame of mind.\textsuperscript{671} In 1641, minister, Samuel Willard (1640–1707) argued that ‘a contingent of unconverted

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{cromwell} A.M. Cromwell, \textit{The Other Brahmins, Boston’s Black Upper Class} (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1946), 26.
\end{thebibliography}
strangers among Puritans might bring God’s wrath on their holy experiment’.\textsuperscript{672} In light of this, Puritans began converting black inhabitants to Christianity.\textsuperscript{673} At the Puritan Church of Dorchester, then a separate town from Boston, a slave woman belonging to a Reverend Stoughton was baptised.\textsuperscript{674} John Winthrop wrote of this woman that she was ‘well approved by divers of experience for sound knowledge and true godliness’.\textsuperscript{675} Conversion continued into the eighteenth century under the supervision of minister, Cotton Mather (1663 – 1723). Mather was particularly pivotal in establishing rules for the practice, as well as documenting the lives of blacks who had been Christianised in the Puritan image.\textsuperscript{676}

Converted blacks were expected to adhere to a stringent set of rules that included attendance to church and segregated participation in ceremonies, as well as the recitation of catechisms from the New England or Negro Christianised doctrines.\textsuperscript{677} The significance of this commitment to conversion is that it differed from the practices of the mid-Atlantic and Southern states.\textsuperscript{678} Whereas conversion was seen throughout New England as a way to civilise and educate, in the latter regions leaders sought to inhibit religious practice, believing that worship was an unnecessary concession that would eventually lead to unrest and slave rebellion; the duty of blacks was to work and as such, there was little consideration for religious and social conditioning.\textsuperscript{679} As one Anglican clergyman from the Virginia colony noted in a 1670 letter to his English superiors, ‘the vast majority of southern Anglican masters and

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\textsuperscript{676} Harvard University Library: Houghton. Special Collections. Call # *AC7 M4208 706n. Cotton Mather, \textit{The Negro christianized. An essay to excite and assist that good work, the instruction of Negro servants in Christianity} (Boston: P. Green, 1706).
\textsuperscript{677} Toyin Falola, \textit{Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage} (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007) 323.
\textsuperscript{679} Ibid.
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mistresses were not merely indifferent but positively hostile to any and all attempts to convert their slaves'.

In contrast, during his time as Minister at Boston’s Old South Church from 1678-1707, Samuel Willard, remarked that ‘there is a duty of love which masters owe to their servants’. Throughout New England this duty, as Christopher Cameron notes, can be seen to have extended to both the physical and spiritual wellbeing of slaves; i.e., blacks were expected to receive the message of God, be ‘saved’, and thereafter demonstrate their new Christian state by being ‘good’ slaves. While there are instances in which black slaves passionately resisted Christianity, there are also instances in which the gospel message (in both psalmody and preaching) was received in a manner that was not anticipated by the colonists. In this sense, blacks took the liberating word of God and appropriated it into a nuanced form of music, which would later become the black spiritual.

The Negro adoption of spiritual forms suggested to whites a submission to European-based ideology. As such, the black practice of singing the gospel in a distinctive way was considered by many slave owners to be less overtly African and thus in turn less threatening. However, the praise that blacks were expressing towards God in this music was largely superficial. Rather, the freedom of expression that spiritual singing granted them was used as a mean to communicate in their native tongues and through codes subversive messages of support, unity, and revolt—a further example of how blacks imposed their own ideas on to white culture. This practice was refined over a number of decades and eventually came to provide the means in the nineteenth century with which directions for escaping on the

‘underground railroad’ \(^{687}\) - a secret network of people, places and routes that provided shelter and assistance to escaping slaves – were shared.\(^{688}\)

The black spiritual allowed for a back-and-forth dialogue that often-boosted morale, as well as the passing of judgement on their masters and overseers.\(^{689}\) This was achieved through a process of a learned code based on fine distinctions and metaphors, incorporated slants and derogatory slang.\(^{690}\) This approach was largely adopted by blacks across America. For example, animals or figures from the Bible such as ‘Pharaoh’ were used to represent the master and overseer.\(^{691}\) Often unable to decipher the subject matter of the songs, slave owners convinced themselves that the tunes were simply psalms, and the words from hymnbooks.\(^{692}\) In this version of ‘Hoe Emma Hoe’, for example, the overseer is the ‘possum’:

**Caller:** Now see that possum he works hard.

**Chorus:** Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.

**Caller:** But he can’t work as hard as me.

**Chorus:** Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.

**Caller:** He sits a horse just as pretty as can be.

**Chorus:** Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.

**Caller:** He can ride on and leave me be.\(^{693}\)

Analogies in these songs also stretched to connections between potent themes in the bible and the poor conditions of slavery. References to the Promised Land were often used by Southern slaves to denote the perceived safe havens of northern regions, particularly Massachusetts and New England; parallels were often drawn between the Jews’ bondage in Egypt and the plight

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\(^{687}\) The Underground Railroad was operated by prominent black abolitionist and humanitarian, Harriett Tubman. An escaped slave herself, led hundreds of enslaved people to freedom.

\(^{688}\) A notable example the nature of these songs is ‘Steal Away’, which was originally used by Virginia slave, Nat Turner as a signal to call people together to talk about their plans. Harvard University Library. Widener Library; WID-LC. Non-fiction. Call # E450 .H855 2006. J. Blaine Hudson, *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2006), 284.


of the black slave. Professor Lemuel Berry suggests that lyrics such as, 'Deep river, my home is over Jordan, Deep river, Lawd, I wan’ to cross over into camp ground’ defiantly express a desire to escape to the perceived betterment of North America.

This basic tenet of striving to freedom in the north is consistent with more straightforward lyrics from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such as, 'Come 'long gals an' let’s go to Boston'; and, ‘New England! New England! / Thrice blessed and free / The poor hunted slave find a shelter in thee’. Walter F. Pitts notes, that the use of Old Testament references and religious analogies by slaves stems from the earliest times of colonial North America, and in particular the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In seeking to manifest their identity and simultaneously express the reasons why they had sought refuge in the new world, the Puritans often referred to themselves as ‘Israelites’, fleeing from the ‘Egypt’ of despotic England.

The main element of these songs was often a call and response approach to vocal delivery. Such refinement occurred in fields and on plantations, seaport docks, and railroads.

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695 In 1670, Thomas of Boston, a free black man and an esteemed manufacturer of chairs not only established a shop in the city, but also drew up a prenuptial contract which detailed the transfer of his wealth and property after death to then wife, Katherine Negro, despite the fact that neither had acquired a surname. Three centuries on and the idea was still prevalent. In May 1904, the Colored American Magazine reprinted a Sunday Herald article that carried the headline, ‘Boston, the Paradise of the Negro’. (Ibid). The article featured a number of interviews with black Bostonians who supported the idea; while in 1911, William Monroe Trotter at a convention for his National Independent Political League began proceedings with, ‘Welcome to the home of abolition, where it is no crime to be black’. Professor Lemuel Berry in Megan Sullivan, ‘African-American Music as Rebellion: From Slavesong to Hip-Hop’. Available from Cornell University online: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/publicationsprizes/discoveries/discoveriesspring2001/03sullivan.pdf. Accessed: January 3, 2015. P.24.).


across America as slaves toiled rhythmically to songs of labour and sorrow. Historians have not yet been able to be precise as to when and where the earliest forms of slave songs came to life, but they have been credited as the basis for late nineteenth-century ‘Afro-American music’. While call-and-response is deeply embedded in African heritage, its usage and development in the new world was at times a shared practice. In 1670 as the first generation of musically trained settlers in the New England colonies passed away, the Puritans had difficulty delivering the music of the psalms. Jazz historians, Henry Martin and Keith Waters note that at this point psalm ‘lining’ comes to fruition.

‘Lining’ is a practice whereby a line of the psalm is first sung by a Pastor and then repeated by the congregation. Of significance here is that the form became a significant aspect of the long and complex process in which jazz came to fruition. Out of the fusing of age-old African tribal rhythms, seventeenth-century spirituals, and hymns came forms of gospel music; and out of gospel developed the call-and-response strategies of Blues, jazz’s closest artistic relative. From there call-and-response subsequently became one of the main elements in which riffs, an ostinato phrase, was used in support of one of jazz’s fundamental elements, improvisation.

As Gunther Schuller remarked:

The call-and-response format persists in jazz even today (1967) in much modified extensions. Combining with the repeated refrain structure of the blues, it found its way into the marching jazz of New Orleans and in this form began to be known as a ‘riff’.

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700 Harvard University Library: Andover-Harvard. Theology Library; Historical Collections -- Harvard Depository Call # 775. William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, Lucy McKim Garrison, Slave Songs of the United States Originally Published in 1867 (New York: Dover, 1995).
705 Ibid.
707 In addition to spirituals, the gospel, and call and response songs, by the turn of the nineteenth century the black repertoire also consisted of traditional and modified chanteys and field hollers—all of which have since been considered as influences in early evocations of blues and jazz music. Maximillien De Lafayette, Buried History of American Music, Songs and Showbiz Since 1606: The Forgotten Stars (North Carolina: lulu, 2010), 51.
From there it infiltrated the entire spectrum of jazz from the improvised solo to the arranged ensemble.\(^{708}\)

Communication amongst blacks also extended to the use of drums.\(^{709}\) From Barbados to Massachusetts and beyond, drumming provided blacks with a unique voice that was, much like the early spiritual, often indecipherable to whites.\(^{710}\) While the rhythms of African drumming were outside the parameters of religious music, throughout New England and New York in the early eighteenth century, drums became a significant part of regulated but accepted black communal events such as funerals and weddings.\(^{711}\) Drumming along with standard African cadences (distinctive resolution to the harmonies and closure to the piece) and tonality became the backbone of parades that incorporated horns, stringed instruments, and ‘outlandish costumes’.\(^{712}\) As Peter Charles Hoffer asserts, these parades were at times aided by the noise of black onlookers, who added their own accompaniments, which consisted of expressions of joy and at times sorrow through shouting, hand clapping, and singing.\(^{713}\)

However, in the first half of the eighteenth century, drumming became synonymous with revolt, both on land and on slave ships and was subsequently prohibited.\(^{714}\) In 1740, the South Carolina Negro Act was drawn up which stipulated the outlawing of ‘...beating drums, blowing horns or the like which might on occasion be used to arouse slaves to insurrectionary activity’.\(^{715}\) It also added that, ‘It is absolutely necessary to the safety of this province that all due care be taken to restrain Negroes from using or keeping drums’.\(^{716}\) Since most states of the

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\(^{713}\) Ibid.

\(^{714}\) This rhythmical language was on occasion used to orchestrate revolts, both on land and on slave ships, a notable example being The Stono Rebellion of 1739 in the colony of South Carolina. Mark Knowles, *Tap Roots: The Early History of Tap Dancing* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2002). 39-40.


time patterned their laws on those of South Carolina and Virginia, the outlawing of African drumming was far-reaching; in fact, the ban was adopted even as far away as slave-holdings in Jamaica.

The 1740 South Carolina Negro Act served not only to exert white dominance over black slaves by first restricting their abilities to communicate, but also to weaken their ties to musical styles that were intrinsically linked to their heritage. But this did not inhibit blacks; rather it had the effect of compelling them to develop new and often eccentric ways to replenish the void. In particular, slaves across America found that they could imitate the complex polyrhythms associated with drumming by appropriating whatever means of rhythm-making were at hand. Thus, they contrived drum-like rhythms by using household items such as spoons, jugs, washboards, percussive surfaces, and even their own bodies.

This vanguard approach to music making, which brings to mind use of the household washboard in twentieth-century jazz (Spasm Bands), zydeco, skiffle, and old-time music, gave rise to a percussive style known as ‘slapping juba’ or ‘patting juba’. The New England Journal of Black Studies asserts that through simply using their hands, blacks across America were able to drum out intricate rhythms on their thighs, chest, and other body parts in accompaniment to the kicking, stamping, and stomping of feet. As Henry Louis Gates notes, while the ‘juba’ has its roots in West African step-dance, it became the precursor to the

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720 Ibid., 71.
'Charleston' dance, which in-turn became synonymous with flappers (fashionable young women who flouted conventional standards of behaviour) in Jazz Age speakeasies.

The push for stricter regulations on black forms of expression coincided with middle-class complaints about clapping, shrieking, and unruly singing at evangelical revival meetings in New England churches from the 1730s through to the Second Great Awakening. These modes of expression which transcended the spiritual and the recreational (again, the ‘Patting Juba’) were particularly problematic for Puritans in Boston not only because they coupled the emotional ecstasy of black and white conversion experiences but also because it fused elements that were both Christian and African in order to achieve perceived ecstasy. By the 1740s, emotional singing, shouting, foot stamping, and groaning was principally associated with black worship - while the public ritual of baptism to wash away one’s sins was notably a Puritan activity, with baptism seen as the sacrament of initiation or regeneration. Nearly a century after initial complaints, Methodist official and historian, John Fanning Watson in 1819 spoke of a national ‘growing evil, in the practice of singing in our places of public and society worship, merry airs, adapted from old songs, to hymns of our own composing’ mainly by blacks.

Restrictions on black worship occurred at a time when general limitations on noise were also coming into effect throughout New England, with the passing of certain laws establishing the criminalisation of noise. This process came to be viewed as a means of

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727 The policing of singing during worship ceremonies, again, had its roots in the previous century. For example, the singing of Quakers in 1680s New England was met with objection and attacks from Puritans. Such singing was seen to link the Quakers to the anarchical English Civil War sect, the Ranters. Harvard University; Episcopal Church—Periodicals. Call # 1853-54. The Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register, Volume VI.--1853-54., 193. Harvard University Online; Episcopal Church—Periodicals.
729 Ibid.
730 Harvard University; Episcopal Church—Periodicals. Call # 1853-54. The Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register, Volume VI.--1853-54., 193. Harvard University Online; Episcopal Church—Periodicals.
establishing civility and as a way of maintaining orderly conduct.\textsuperscript{732} For example, on October 8, 1838, Boston passed into law an ordinance that stated:

> No person shall ring or cause to be rung any bell, or blow or cause to be blown any horn or other instrument, in notice of the sale of any article, or for any other purpose, in the said streets or elsewhere, unless duly licensed by the Mayor and Aldermen.\textsuperscript{733}

This measure served to police the aural environment of public places and spaces, notably the street, which was the primary stage of expression, and in some instances a means of livelihood, for a number of the city’s performers, both black and white.\textsuperscript{734} During the same year, a satirical group, the Anti-Bell-Ringing Society was formed in protest.\textsuperscript{735} This group purposefully ridiculed the ‘spirit of ultraism in legislation’ by bringing frivolous noise suits to the police courts, thus taking anti-sound laws to their extreme.\textsuperscript{736} Nevertheless, the influence of such legislation on sound in Boston and New England was felt far and wide; by 1913, every major city in America had some law against noise on the books.\textsuperscript{737}

From the moment that the first settlers established the Plymouth colony, New England, and later, Boston can be seen to have played a significant role in the shaping of America’s musical identity. In one respect, the Puritanical ethos of early pilgrims, coupled with sermons, tracts, and writings about good music, had a great impact on American cultural standards and development – perhaps more so than anything composed and performed by its inhabitants during this time.\textsuperscript{738} In another instance, however, the melding of European and African ways of life and cultures in New England ultimately gave rise to distinctive forms of


\textsuperscript{733} Dale Cockrel, Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 143.

\textsuperscript{734} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{737} Andrew William Kahrl, On the Beach: Race and Leisure in the Jim Crow South (Michigan: ProQuest LLC, 2008), 113.

expression, such as black spiritual music.\textsuperscript{739} In conjunction, black efforts to perpetuate the musical nuances of their heritage over the course of three centuries served as the foundations for the ingenuity and verve that came to fruition with the dawn of emancipation.\textsuperscript{740} For example, in the aftermath of the civil war blacks found that an array of instruments, including the clarinet, the trumpet, and the bassoon were sold cheaply by disbanding military units, and were thus for the first time more available to them.\textsuperscript{741} Greater access to instruments combined with the sudden liberty of leisure time that came about with emancipation thus presented blacks during the 1860s with the first opportunity to freely conceive new musical ideas based on a heritage of distinct rhythm and tonality.\textsuperscript{742} Many of these ideas, which drew on three centuries of musical evolution, gave rise to forms such as ragtime, the blues, and of course jazz. Concurrently, however, these black forms of musical expression because of their lineage were considered by whites to be a product of slavery and black subordination. As such, they were viewed as inferior to all forms of music practiced by whites.


\textsuperscript{740} African-American musicologist, Eileen Southern stated that the ability of blacks to engage with and master new instruments following the end of the American Civil War ultimately gave rise to early evocations of black music troupes and innovative forms.\textsuperscript{740} Southern asserts that the music of plantation combos during antebellum days was a forbearer of both jazz and blues. During this time, she suggests that a standard three-piece group often consisted of Fiddle, Banjo and Drums. By the late 1890s and early 1900s, however, these groups had undergone changes that are in line with the greater availability of instruments previously unattainable by blacks. Notably, the fiddle disappeared, while the clarinet and trombone were added. Furthermore, on occasion, these instruments were backed the brass bass of a tub, as well as banjo, cornet, cello, and upright bass. Harvard University Library. Tozer - Harvard Depository TOZ-LC, Call # E185.89.A7 Z99 1990 FOLIO. Eileen Southern, Josephine Wright, \textit{African-American Traditions in Song, Sermon, Tale, and Dance, 1600s-1920: An Annotated Bibliography of Literature, Collections, and Artworks} (California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990), 210.

\textsuperscript{741} Furthermore, blacks also came upon many instruments such as the bugle and the fife that had simply been abandoned on the fields of battle. Roxbury Community College Library, Boston. Non-fiction; Reference - In Library Use Only Call # Z1361 .N39.S56/C.1. Dwight La Vern Smith, \textit{Afro-American history: a bibliography, Volume 2} (California: ABC-Clio, 1974), 42.

\textsuperscript{742} Ibid.
3. Boston, Massachusetts: initiating taste culture - high-art and the emergence of Cultural Capitalism

Contemporary popular music is made up of an array of distinct genres – rock, pop, dance, and so on - that consist of diversified styles. Within the sphere of jazz, for example, there exist formulations such as Cool, Bebop, Hard bop, and Swing as well as more eclectic forms, including Jazz Punk and Ska Jazz. But of all the differences between genres and within genres, arguably as Michael Broyles notes, the greatest distinction of all exists between the entirety of popular music and classical music, with the latter existing in a category by itself.\textsuperscript{743} Since the nineteenth century, classical music in the west has been surrounded by an aura of respectability that has given it a special kind of mystique.\textsuperscript{744} While popular music, notably in the modern era, serves the demands of the economic market, as Onno Bouwmeester states, nobody measures the worth of classical music in terms of its monetary value.\textsuperscript{745} Insofar as ‘Musicians in the popular music field are respected for their entertainment value but less venerated’,\textsuperscript{746} classical music is valued for a belief in its moral superiority to all other forms, and thus its players are considered to perform a purer art form.\textsuperscript{747}

The early twentieth-century idea that classical music was enriching and morally superior stems from twentieth-century scholarly interest in the purposes and uses of culture. Prior to this, as David Nicholls asserts, ‘all music (excepting sacred) was principally entertaining. While some white forms were considered durable or deemed ephemeral and thus to an extent superior, largely the evaluation of music lay in its purpose as opposed to its inherent quality—or as Nicholls asserts, ‘all music (including sacred) was considered functional.’\textsuperscript{748} The emergence of defined musical distinctions is largely considered to have

\textsuperscript{745} Onno Bouwmeester, Economic Advice and Rhetoric: Why Do Consultants Perform Better Than Academic Advisers? (Gloucestershire: Edward Elgar, 2010), 16.
been an outgrowth of the philosophical movement known as German Romanticism which occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{749}  

Romantic thought in Europe, aided by literary-minded composers and critics such as Berlioz and Schumann, assisted in glorifying the symphony as the most morally uplifting form of instrumental music,\textsuperscript{750} which inspired its adoption in America.\textsuperscript{751} As DiMaggio stipulates, the emergence of European art music in urban centres during the early nineteenth century was one of the critical turning points in the development of an American musical aesthetic.\textsuperscript{752}  

European Romantics placed great value on the natural world, idealised the potentialities of the common man (at times depicting him as a Promethean figure), and stressed the importance of emotion in art.\textsuperscript{753} Seeking to elevate symphony music to a position of secular and upright standing, critics, and propagandist writers, including 'Turnvater' Jahn and Ernst Moritz Arndt, carried the music's torch to the masses with great effect. By the mid-1840s, the symphony orchestra was considered to be on a level above all other music.\textsuperscript{754}  

The basis for such idealism principally stems from the notions of German self-learning through culture, which Thomas Mann described in 1931 as the 'Universal ideal of the private man'.\textsuperscript{755} On this note, Esteban Buch and Richard Miller assert that ‘The image of the “cultivated man” achieving personal freedom through a study of the arts and sciences had taken shape in the days of the great Weimar classical writers’, which almost certainly began with the recognition by priests of the value of personal religious experience.\textsuperscript{756} Thus, the arts

\textsuperscript{750} Harvard University Library. Widener; Harvard Depository: Phillips Reading Room. Call # KSH 128.  
\textsuperscript{751} No Author Attributed, ‘Correspondence’. \textit{The Reporter}, Volume 7. Max Ascoli Reporter Magazine Company, 1952. 36.  
\textsuperscript{756} Thomas Mann in Arnold Bauer, \textit{Thomas Mann} (New York: Ungar, 1971), 79.  
and sciences became a corpus of extra-religious values, and in theory, this corpus was
considered to be above political divisions, in addition to being available to all. However, in
practice, this approach simply served to generate the means for demarcation; i.e., the basis to
differentiate the cultured and the elite from what was perceived as the subordinate.

In looking to the past for musical tastes and standards, nineteenth-century scholars,
the high-born, and wealthy philanthropists created a cultivated pantheon of composers, which
included Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, and Mozart, to revere, and these composers
subsequently became the barometer by which all music was judged. While this pantheon
has been reconceptualised many times since and challenged just as much, the fundamental
notion of a superior canon of musical tastes and musical institutions, via the presence of a
cultural hierarchy, has persisted. In the nineteenth century, as Wiley Hitchcock asserted,
the vernacular tradition of utilitarian and entertainment music was essentially 'unconcerned
with artistic or philosophical idealism'. As such, the cultivated tradition of fine-art music,
which was significantly concerned with moral, artistic, or cultural idealism' which stemmed
from European art music stood alone because it espoused idealistic concepts of progress and
moral improvements. As Michael Broyles notes:

Thus in the extravagant world of late nineteenth-century ostentation, the classical
canon of music served as a suitable means with which those who wished to
demonstrate a connection with the arts could also simultaneously believe they were
fulfilling an ethical duty. A person in such circumstances need not have a clue about
the inner nature of the music or feel any direct response from it. That it was morally
superior was sufficient ground for supporting it. And European music seemed all the
more exotic because it was three thousand miles removed and had by the late
nineteenth century come to represent the same foreign elements. Perceptions about

757 Esteban Buch, Richard Miller, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History* (Chicago: University of
758 John Sullivan Dwight, *Dwight's Journal of Music, Volumes 5-6* (South Carolina: Nabu Press, 2010),
4-7.
760 Arguably the best explanation of this duality was written in 1969 by Wiley Hitchcock, a pioneer in
Szabo-Knotik, "Tradition as a Source of Progress: Franz Liszt and Historicism" in Michael Saffle,
Rossana Dalmonte, *Liszt and the Birth of Modern Europe: Music as a Mirror of Religious, Political,
Cultural, and Aesthetic Transformations: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the
the nature of instrumental music can be traced to ideas that pertained to music and religion in antebellum writing.\textsuperscript{763}

Music culture thus took on the form of being a struggle between democratic leaning versus aristocratic leaning class groups, underpinned by the interests of hymnodic reformers. The latter argued strongly for the improvement of taste through the cultivation of superior culture, which would in turn contribute to the betterment of individuals. The reticence of distinction in music and class has led Paul DiMaggio to describe such tendencies as the ‘sacralisation of art’,\textsuperscript{764} and Lawrence Levine similarly, ‘the sacralisation of music’.\textsuperscript{765} By this, both refer to the ‘the process by which aesthetic experiences, once valued as enjoyable and diversionary, came to harbour the religious attributes of purity, edification, and worship’.\textsuperscript{766} DiMaggio’s work in particular was the precursor to Pierre Bourdieu’s argument that these elements fused together gave rise to notions of high culture superiority, which was used as a device by the dominant classes in America to invoke the ideas of Buch and Miller and similarly discriminate against and exclude perceived inferior classes.\textsuperscript{767}

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4. The Brahmin Model and its impact on black cultural production

At the beginning of the 1830s, psalmody still prevailed in Boston. Secular instrumental concerts, largely based on the adoption of European classical music, could not be sustained.\textsuperscript{768} The latter posed a problem for leading religious factions in the city because it did not conform to the functional (educational and religious) nature of psalmody or spiritual music.\textsuperscript{769} It was deemed abstract in nature and unfettered by words; i.e., it was believed to have little fundamental – educational, religious - value to society.\textsuperscript{770} However, in the second half of the eighteenth century intellectuals and hymnodic reformers in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts appropriated ideas based on German Romanticism to elevate the position of instrumental music.\textsuperscript{771} Interwoven with notions of literary transcendentalism, a theological movement based on the idea that God is an internal force, these intellectuals emphasised notions of abstractness over the direct communication of psalms, and thus the concept slowly became an idealistic current that ran through music and subsequently the entirety of American culture.\textsuperscript{772}

At the core of this current was a desire to sustain music believed to be written in a more ‘correct’ and ‘scientific’ style.\textsuperscript{773} As Broyles notes, the terms ‘scientific’ and ‘correct’ are the reformers’ own and European music served as their models.\textsuperscript{774} In conjunction, Boston intellectuals and hymnodic reformers were assisted in their efforts by the city’s wealthiest

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faction, the Brahmins.\footnote{Paul DiMaggio, ‘Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: the creation of an organizational base for high culture in America’, \textit{Media, Culture, and Society}, 1982 4, 33-50.} As a collective, their influence had the effect of establishing a classical, Eurocentric canon of legitimate culture in Boston, which all but ended the dominance of psalmody.\footnote{Ibid., 163.} The most significant factor here is not so much the extent to which psalmody and sacred music was resisted in Boston during the first half of the nineteenth century, but rather the extent to which it was ignored.\footnote{The term Boston Brahmin refers to individuals of great wealth, political influence, and old New England roots. Boston Brahmins frequently intermarried, founded and patronised Boston cultural institutions, and had strong connections with Harvard University.}

In 1882, Boston music critic Louis Charles Elson stated that orchestral music in Boston was principally conceived in the Old Academy of Music. Founded in 1833 by Messrs. William C. Woodbridge, Lowell Mason, and George J. Webb, and at ‘the end of nine years it was resolved to change the character of the institution’. Instead of continuing its vocal psalmody concerts in which it cannot do more or better than its neighbours, the academy has concluded to engage the best orchestra it can afford, and give classical instrumental concerts. This proceeding meant a great deal. It practically sealed the fate of psalm singing as the chief music of Boston, and simultaneously substituted the symphony for the weaker music, which had obtained up to that time.\footnote{Louis Elton in John Sullivan Dwight. ‘Boston Music Hall’. \textit{Dwight’s Musical Journal}. Published: Saturday, September 3, 1881. Vol. Xli, No. 1051. Available, the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/dwightsjournalm20dwiggoog. Accessed: June 1, 2015.} Elton’s characterisation of psalmody as the weaker music summarises the bias of his generation, but more broadly the change in public preference for symphony music.\footnote{Harvard University Library: Loeb Music Library. Call # Mus 105,63.10. Louis Charles Elson, \textit{Famous composers and their works: Musical forms} (Boston: J. B. Millet, 1900).}

Aided by the industrial revolution and the subsequent creation of a defined middle-class in America, many white Bostonians found themselves beneficiaries of a new economic power. With greater wealth and more importance placed on the advantages of leisure time, the Brahmins took full charge of the baton they had shared with intellectuals and hymnodic reformers and transformed culture into a form of capital. By 1870 supported by its symphony orchestras and chamber-music ensembles, the Brahmins were spearheading a superior
national taste culture (high-art) that was both economically profitable and considered to be culturally superior.\textsuperscript{780} Boston thus embraced the music of Hector Berlioz, and later Brahms and Wagner, artists who were able to convert standard orchestral forms into canvases for abstract, vanguard expression that pushed the limits of performers, instruments, performance spaces, and the tastes of audiences.\textsuperscript{781} The Boston Symphony Orchestra, in a concert programme from 1967, reminiscing about its rise remarked:

The industrial Revolution was fostering bourgeois communities. The prosperous tradesman, or more probably his wife, was found cultivating the arts. There began to accumulate a new phenomenon in the Western World—a potential concert public, a public in complete contrast to the social gatherings in the mansions of Vienna or Paris.\textsuperscript{782}

The Brahmins made use of their wealth to establish influence in leading Boston institutions, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.\textsuperscript{783} In addition to serving the high tastes of the Brahmins and Boston’s wealthy, these institutions also served to give the city a certain distinction in the fine arts.\textsuperscript{784} The Brahmins played on this and used regard for the aforementioned institutions and their cultural preferences—principally high-art, such as the symphony—to develop a cultivated sphere.\textsuperscript{785} In its establishment, this elite sphere also had the effect of defining the vernacular;

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\item \textsuperscript{780} Music History and Literature San Francisco Conservatory of Music, John Spitzer Chair, Neal Zaslaw, \textit{The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution, 1650-1815} (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2005), 338.
\item \textsuperscript{782} Harvard University Library. Loeb Music Library; Harvard Depository. Call # Mus 55.1 Boston Symphony Orchestra, 'Boston Symphony Orchestra: The Beginning', \textit{Boston Symphony Orchestra Concert Programs.}, Volume 86, 1967: 1062
\item \textsuperscript{783} The distinction between the cultivated and the vernacular did serve throughout the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth to discern between arenas of societal significance. As such, the difference between these two forms has, for example, been used to distinguish the political from the economic. On this note, court music has been considered as different from the music of the market place, while in a similar respect, cathedral music differed from the music of the parish church, and aristocratic opera differed from folk play. Such juxtapositions have likewise been used as a tool with which people have classified themselves into elite categories; classical music has a certain synonymy with high-culture tastes and sensibilities, and thus has often been the musical choice of the elite and upper class.
\item \textsuperscript{784} John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, Ming-cheng Lo, ed., \textit{Handbook of Cultural Sociology} (New York: Routledge, 2010), 369.
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i.e., perceived unrefined and unwanted forms of culture, that were commonplace amongst non-elites, especially the working classes.\textsuperscript{786} In view of this, the Brahmins and much of the wealthiest factions in the city treated black forms of expression such as the Blues and later Ragtime and jazz in much the same way as psalmody – they chose to all but ignore them.\textsuperscript{787}

On this note, by the late 1890s cultural wealth in Boston had extended into the South End, with the opening of theatres and several venues offering musical entertainment to an immigrant population, in the main made up of blacks. Amongst these establishments were three first-class theatres, comprising the Columbia, the Grand Opera House, and a smaller version of the latter, known simply as the Grand.\textsuperscript{788} By the close of 1897, however, all three of these venues had ‘failed’.\textsuperscript{789} Writing at the time, Robert Archey Woods noted that the collapse of these venues ‘illustrates very forcibly the distinctness with which the district is set off from the so-called better parts of the town’.\textsuperscript{790} He further added that the black working class population of the time needed guidance and refinement through culture far more than the residents of more favoured areas of the city.\textsuperscript{791} An 1898 settlement study conducted by The Residents and Associates of Boston’s South End House notes:

Love of really good music does not yet exist to any great extent amongst local people. Their demands are fairly well satisfied by the street pianos, the band concerts, and the efforts of the poorly trained singer and musician such as are found in the cheapest amusement places.\textsuperscript{792}

While entertainment trends around the turn of the twentieth century suggest a developing metropolitan community of blacks in the South End, the development of culture


\textsuperscript{789} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{790} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{791} Ibid.

in this community can be seen to have been handled somewhat poorly.\textsuperscript{793} Woods notes that much blame for this rested at the feet of venue organisers. In the first instance, poorer blacks were often perhaps priced out of the leisure of entertainment, and thus it is no surprise that they were often unable to meet the price demands of the aforementioned theatres.\textsuperscript{794} Secondly, the black population in this South End was relatively small, and thus the establishment of three first-class venues in close proximity to one another meant that limited ticket sales were shared.\textsuperscript{795} This was compounded by the fact that residents of wealthier areas, in particular whites from the Back Bay and neighbouring suburbs were rarely induced to visit the South End to be entertained.\textsuperscript{796}

The main problem, however, was that whites responsible for the running of these venues were unwilling to adjust their taste sensibilities to find a satisfactory way to reach and entice the black people in their vicinity. The assertions of The Residents and Associates of Boston’s South End House that black tastes were unrefined and primitive was based on the subjective notion that white forms of music were of course in contrast superior. Furthermore, the claim that street performers and musicians in poorer venues delivering primitive musical forms satisfied blacks is perhaps correct; the reality is that black street musicians had nowhere else to perform. While black jazz musicians were on the stage of the Opera House in New Orleans, in Boston such an opportunity would not arrive until after the Second World War. Finally, insofar as some blacks may have taken an interest in first-class theatre and white forms of concert music, their principle interest was on the music of their heritage, which had been perpetuated over the course of three centuries.

Thus in a general respect, The Residents and Associates of Boston’s South End House pay attention to the inability of blacks to assimilate and conform to the standards that were being cultivated and championed by whites rather than their staunch efforts to continue the

\textsuperscript{793} This community emerged in the South End of the city and nearby Cambridgeport throughout the nineteenth century
\textsuperscript{795} Ibid., 184-90.
\textsuperscript{796} Ibid., 184-6.
development of their own culture. This notion permeated much of the early twentieth century in Boston, and became particularly evident in the 1920s. For when blacks were seen to partake in the cultural preferences of whites, they were often accepted, sometimes even lauded. Black Spiritual singer, Paul Robeson, and composer and tenor singer, Laurence Brown both received praise from the *Boston Globe* in 1926 for their contributions to music,\(^797\) with the latter referred to as a ‘unique figure in American life’;\(^798\) while in 1928, leading white composer, Rubin Goldmark delivered ‘A Negro Rhapsody’ to a full-house at Symphony Hall. The *Globe* referred to it as an ‘eloquent performance’, language incongruous with that being used in relation to blacks involved with jazz.\(^799\)

5. The Black Brahmins: Boston’s Black Elites and Culture

Studies of black communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries acknowledge the existence of class differences. In his 1899 study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois noted the presence of what he defined as a small upper class of blacks, which included caterers, government clerks, teachers, professionals, and small merchants.\(^800\) Many of these individuals had significant wealth, elite education, political influence, and connections.\(^801\) Similarly, Adelaide Cromwell, in her work *The Other Brahmins: Boston’s Black Upper Class, 1750-1950* notes similar professional trends in Boston, adding that the black upper class in Boston, on average, around 2% of the black population, belonged to an upper crust that was principally college-educated, attended churches, and included community leaders.\(^802\)

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798 Ibid.


801 Ibid.

This collective had, according to William B. Gatewood, ‘a reputation for exclusiveness that went even beyond those in cities such as Washington or Philadelphia’. Wealthy men, including merchant, John H. Lewis and the baker, Joseph Lee promoted old-line black families of less means like the Ruffins, Ridleys, Duprees, and Haydens. This group established a genteel way of life, complete with white servants, musical training for their children, and membership into exclusive clubs that were modelled on those of their white counterparts. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the cultural life of black Boston began to be dominated by this small collective of individuals and their social clubs and links to leading cultural figures and organizations.

While the leaders of black cultural movements across America throughout the first half of the twentieth century were predominantly men, in Boston it was an all-female collective known as the League of Women for Community Service (LWCS) that made the most telling impact. Emerging out of the social reformist spirit of the black women’s club movement of the ‘Women’s Era’ (1880–1920) the LWCS, originally known as the Soldiers’ Comfort Unit, was founded in 1918 to render ‘much needed services to Black soldiers stationed in and near Boston after World War I’. After the war, its head figures - including African-American educator and civic leader, Maria Louise Baldwin, suffragist, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, and newspaper editor, Florida Ruffin Ridley - turned their attention to the black community in

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Boston. In this respect, the LWCS began to undertake ‘civic, social, educational, and charitable work’.811

As blacks of status during 1920, members of the LWCS worked in conjunction with members of Boston’s small black elite, which included the likes of William L. Reed,812 and their husbands to finance the purchase of a five-storey brownstone house, located at 558 Massachusetts Avenue.813 This was a strategic purchase, for the address lay just south of Huntington Avenue, described by Lorraine E. Roses and Crystal M. Flemming as, ‘the invisible demarcation between ethnic diversity and white homogeneity in early twentieth-century Boston’.814 This avenue was home to many of the city’s structures of secular and religious culture, such as Horticultural Hall, the Christian Science Mother Church, and of particular note, Symphony Hall.815 The League’s proximity to these venerable white institutions overstepped traditional cultural and social boundaries. The move was a clever one, however, and served to support an integrationist philosophy on the part of the founding members.

In the wake of this move, the LWCS, operating primarily as a non-profit organisation, amassed much respect and exercised significant leadership within black civic life in Boston.816 On one hand, they continued to fulfil the role of providing comfort and aid to those in need, assisted new mothers, co-operating with the National Civic League in distributing school luncheons, and also running a daily soup kitchen, which served the needs of some ‘two hundred little boys of all races and creeds’.817 However, they also utilised the space available to them at their 558 Massachusetts Avenue headquarters and offered a recreational and educational centre for young, aspiring blacks. They provided choral classes, girls’ clubs, social

817 Ibid.
evenings, and talks on moral education.\textsuperscript{818} The group actively pursued citywide recognition by organising an array of cultural projects aimed exclusively at figures of elite, academic and financial status in the city.

These projects included academic lectures, culture shows, charity functions, musical revues, and more.\textsuperscript{819} Many of these events attracted in excess of two-hundred esteemed guests, and assisted in promoting the LWCS to a position of prominence in the city, especially within the South End community.\textsuperscript{820} The importance of the LWCS is reflected in the illustrious figures - politicians, university chairmen, reverends, anti-racialists and more, both white and black - who visited 558 during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{821} At the formal opening of the brownstone, the League hosted guests such as former United States assistant attorney general, William H. Lewis, District attorney Pelletier, and three years before ascending to the United States Presidency, the then governor of Massachusetts, Calvin Coolidge and his wife.\textsuperscript{822}

From this beginning, the LWCS pursued more elaborate explorations into the expression and celebration of black America. In March 1922, they offered up a room for a public exhibition in honour of its late and beloved president, Miss Maria L. Baldwin.\textsuperscript{823} The exhibition was a platform for the ‘collection and the preservation of material relating to the history of the Negro and those who have stood for justice to the Negro’.\textsuperscript{824} At this exhibition and several others like it, speakers included reverends, such as Samuel M. Crothers, and Pitt Dillingham, President Emeritus of Harvard, Dr. Charles W. Elliot,\textsuperscript{825} and leading academics.

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\textsuperscript{819} No Author Attributed, ‘Members of the League of Women for Community Service’, \textit{The Boston Herald}. Published: March 12, 1922. Page 5.
\textsuperscript{821} President Emeritus Charles W. Elliot, Reverend Samuel M. Crothers, and William H. Lewis are but three examples. No Author Attributed, ‘Members of the League of Women for Community Service’, \textit{The Boston Herald}. Published: March 12, 1922. Page 5.
\textsuperscript{822} No Author Attributed, ‘Governor and Wife at Formal Opening’, \textit{The Boston Herald}. Published: March 20, 1920. Page 11.
\textsuperscript{823} No Author Attributed, ‘Exhibition at 558 Massachusetts Avenue’, Boston Herald. Published: March 12, 1922. p. C5.
\textsuperscript{824} Ibid., C5
\end{flushleft}
counting Harold K. Estabrook, and Mr John Graham Brooks.826 In providing a platform for intellectual discussions, poetry readings, musical revues, and short plays, the LWCS provided an arena for black expression at a time when most mainstream organisations excluded blacks.827

While in many respects the LWCS bore little resemblance to white Brahmins - they can hardly be considered ‘entrepreneurial’ in the economic sense of the term – they were able to construct a professional and privileged black elite, and can thus be considered ‘culturally entrepreneurial’.828 These LWCS, in a similar vein to white Brahmins, used their status and modest financial resources to encourage the cultivation and professional nurturing of sophisticated black artistic expression. In ways that mirror the work of the Brahmin founders of the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the women of the LWCS shared a broad, ambiguous commitment to communitarian outreach, and in conjunction created a non-profit, charitable organisation that contributed to the construction of aesthetic distinctions between the cultivated (high-culture) and the vernacular (popular culture).829

There are, however, obvious differences between the two groups of entrepreneurs. The LWCS were not nearly as financially advantaged, socially connected or influential as their Anglo-American counterparts were. White elites were centrally located at the heart of Boston’s power structure while black elites were relegated to the periphery. As such, they were much more constrained in their ability to redefine the cultural field. Whereas white Brahmins successfully institutionalised their aesthetic sensibilities, black Brahmins were limited in the symbolic and material resources they had at their disposal. Where white elites were able to convert economic and social capital into durable cultural institutions, non-dominant African-

826 No Author Attributed, ‘Exhibition at 558 Massachusetts Avenue’, Boston Herald. Published: March 12, 1922. p. C5
829 Ibid., 368.
American elites were much more likely to bring about change through coalition building and, more infrequently, strategic partnerships with dominant Brahmins.\textsuperscript{830}

This approach naturally had implications on the development of the Boston scene. In their efforts to propel culturally profitable black art forward and simultaneously attract the attention of Boston’s white elites, the LWCS can be seen, perhaps inadvertently, to have contributed to the stifling of black cultural forms deemed low-end culture. Thus, instead of working collaboratively with the likes of band booker Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, the LWCS pursued acceptance and social uplift in Boston through a commitment to establish ‘good’ black ‘culture’ that was acceptable to the tastes of elite whites. Thus, while the LWCS had the capacity to shape black contributions the cultural landscape of 1920’s Boston, by opting to promote and present culture that was socially acceptable to the powerful and wealthy, they ultimately projected an outward indifference towards mass and popular culture.

In general, nineteenth-century reformers believed that musical developments followed a relatively straight line of progress; i.e., newer music was deemed qualitively better than the music it replaced. In Boston, Brahmin interest in the arts, coupled with their efforts to create a cultural hierarchy of distinction, narrowed the boundaries between aesthetic and moral value. In doing so, they redefined the cultural sphere to suit their own tastes and preferences, and purposefully ushered unrespectable and unwanted cultural forms to the margins, where they were largely ignored. The predominance of European music in Boston can thus be viewed with both approbation and dismay. In one instance, it raised tastes and standards, and gave Boston, through philanthropy and esteemed institutions, a cultivated sphere that rivalled the best in Europe. However, the dominance of white culture in the city, accompanied by elitist attitudes, and the willingness of leading blacks to embrace said culture in the hopes of achieving a modicum of social uplift can be seen to have somewhat stifled burgeoning cultural developments amongst its small black population, which had great impetus in jazz. While in

New York, the gap between ‘good’ cultivated music and the American vernacular decreased, in Boston black musicians in the latter sphere had to overcome the limitations of not just racial discrimination, a lack of musical infrastructure, and the smallness of their community but also the perpetuation of a longstanding white concept of what good music was.
Chapter Five: constructing a history of jazz in Boston, 1919 – 1929.

1. Introduction

As has been indicated earlier, when one thinks of cities that provided a platform for the evolution of early jazz, Boston, Massachusetts rarely springs to mind. A person need only refer to the indexes of the vast array of far-reaching and overarching works that have captured the growth of the music during its halcyon period (1919-1929) to realise that the city is, for the most part, without consideration. This, of course, means that many Boston-born and Boston-based jazz players, bookers, and aficionados from this period (both black and white) are largely absent from the annals of jazz history. In light of this, one might conclude that Bostonians, such as saxophonist, Robert ‘Bobby’ Johnson, bandleader, Joseph A. ‘Joe’, and trumpeter, Jabbo Jenkins simply did not measure up musically to players heard in the margins, on the stages, and along the ethers in New Orleans, New York, Chicago and similarly potent jazz cities of the era.831 But this is not the case. Nor is it the case that such Bostonians have been written out of history. Rather, the reality is that to date nobody has written them in.

As argued, the task here is above all to collate and order the many unsown fragments of Boston’s early jazz past and thereafter weave them together to offer insight into a largely untapped history that deals with jazz as music and as a class symbol. In the main, this will be achieved by employing, essentially, a dualistic approach to retelling that touches on Boston jazz during the formative years, its social functions and its overall legacy. Attention therefore is given first to the notion of construction. In this respect the aim is to curate an anecdotal and where possible analytical history of localised players, localised perceptions, and the impact that key events in the city – such as the 1919 murder of James Reece Europe, the then purported king of jazz – had on the music’s broader (citywide and national) appeal and development.832 In addition, emphasis is placed on the notion of locating, in the midst of these

anecdotes and analyses, significant aspects of black artistry and where achievable the presence and, significantly, the denial of a black voice. In the context of jazz culture, this is presented here as a social construct. Principally one that was perceived quite differently by those who championed the music in the city (players, promoters, listeners) and those who opposed it (the cultural elite, including the Watch and Ward Society, and the police).

2. **The formative years: turn of the century musical developments in Boston, Massachusetts**

The exact moment when the blue touch paper that ignited the jazz phenomena of the early twentieth century was lit is, despite many claims to the contrary, untraceable. While the foundational origins for the music can be identified as occurring at some time during the first half of the seventeenth century, the conceptual impetus for Jazz Age jazz debatably lies somewhere in amongst Emanuel Perez’s emergence as a trumpeter virtuoso in 1898, the release of Scott Joplin’s ragtime composition, ‘Maple Leaf Rag’ in 1899, and the surfacing of Buddy Bolden, ‘The blowingest (sic) man since Gabriel’ and the first purported King of jazz in 1900. This, of course, poses a particularly telling problem in terms of historical specificity. So much so, to counteract such ambiguity, many jazz historians and enthusiasts alike simply choose to bypass the discussion of origins outright and instead focus solely on developments in the Jazz Age era.

Alternatively, again sidestepping jazz’s beginnings, weight is sometimes placed on identifying the period when the music moved from an embryonic concept in the developmental phase of construction to a constituently definable art form. In this respect and in principle, many musicologists and jazz historians, including Karl Koenig find the syncopated precursors to jazz appearing towards the close of the nineteenth century in

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numerous places. For example, it has been argued by James N. Gregory and others that Scott Joplin transported Ragtime up the Mississippi river in the late 1890s, performing the music in St. Louis and Sedalia, Missouri, and then Chicago. From there, sometime after the turn of the century the syncopated beat commonplace in ragtime found its way into countless Tin Pan Alley compositions and vaudeville shows, raising the tempo of American popular music to something more akin to the appropriated *moderato* and *allegro* cadences used in early jazz forms.

To what extent Joplin influenced the purported sounds that emanated from Lincoln Park in New Orleans circa 1900, or the piano play of a rambling Jelly Roll Morton heard in Alabama, Texas, California, and up the Mississippi Delta during 1902, one can only speculate. But while it is not possible to identify exactly when, where and by whom the blue touch paper was lit, an elementally stable form of jazz music was almost certainly present in New Orleans and perhaps across several parts of the American south circa 1901. The consensus amongst jazz and cultural historians, including Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, is that a similar form of the music, principally consisting of early New Orleans’ bands tunes and piano pieces, did not reach the East Coast and cities such as New York and Boston until a decade later.

Any suggestion to the contrary, such as Stu Vandermark’s contention that ‘jazz or some form of proto-jazz existed in Boston (and elsewhere) at approximately 1900 and that it was distinct (something like the differences among Territory Bands a couple of decades later)

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from New Orleans jazz’ is sadly tenuous. While turn of the century musical handbooks and directories, including those collated by the Boston Musical Bureau, list a number of active and on occasion professional cornetists, trumpeters, and double bassists and so on - instruments now synonymous with formative jazz - these players are always listed as players in chamber concertos, orchestral societies, or vaguely characterised as ‘performers in small musical associations’. The 1904 city musical directory lists eight centrally located saxophonists, all of whom were cited as members of unlisted military bands and orchestras.

In reality, it is not surprising that such sources and many alike offer little evidence that jazz was under construction in Boston, New York, and other cities along the East Coast in the first decade of the twentieth century. In its seminal days, North American jazz was a music lacking legitimacy, with few players considered accomplished enough to be deemed professional let alone worthy of inclusion in a musical directory. It was a music first and foremost fashioned in the unregulated arenas of social evils, including many brothels and gambling dens. Meg Greene asserts, for example, that in dozens of unfettered and unpolicied houses of ill repute in Storyville, the red-light district of New Orleans from 1897 to 1917, an array of musicians evolved Ragtime forms into jazz forms while simultaneously over two-thousand registered prostitutes plied their trade. Naturally, when the music arrived on the East Coast, it settled, once again, in houses of assignation and ill repute, which posed a particular problem for Boston’s cultural, puritan-inspired, patrons, the Brahmins.

On a national level, employment records indicate that the only place in America where black musicians were registered as professionals at the turn of the century was Chicago. Amy

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843 Vandemark, Stu., stutoyu@hotmail.com, Boston Jazz, 1900-1929. Personal email communication. September 28, 2014.
845 Ibid., 76-81.
Absher and Thomas J. Hennessy state that in 1900, two-hundred-and-forty-six black Chicagoans (including forty-nine females) listed their occupations as musicians. In 1901, members of the Eighth Illinois band led by Alex Arment, a Creole, organised the all-black Local 208 of the American Federation of Musicians in response to ‘implacable opposition from white musicians’ to the admission of blacks to Chicago’s AFM Local 10. Through the process of enforcing standards for membership, the setting of pay scales, and the monitoring of working conditions, Local 208 legitimatised black musicianship in Chicago. This action set a precedent that was later adopted by locals across America.

While the first Ragtime recording, ‘Creole Belles’ written by J. Bodewalt Lempe, appeared circa 1900, and recordings of Cakewalks and Banjo Jigs even earlier, the first jazz record, a composition by the all-white ‘Original Dixieland Jass Band’, did not appear until 1917. When this is considered in the broader context of elementally stable jazz being present in America by 1901, sixteen years elapse before any music is committed to record. This not only reaffirms the notion of a music produced outside the framework of mass culture – unrecorded, rarely committed to print, and ushered, out of earshot, into houses of assignation – it also lends some credence to the idea that jazz and its inherent identity was perpetuated by

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854 Jass before Jazz. The initial spelling of Jazz was Jazz. But mischievous people were making a habit of scratching out the ‘J’s on posters advertising the The Original Dixieland Jazz Band’, which then, unfortunately, advertised ‘ass bands’. No Author Attributed, *Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, *Record Research*. Issues 48-74. Published 1963. 39.
855 The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who billed themselves ‘The Creators of Jazz’, have long been dismissed as the White guys who copied African-American music, and called it their own. Colin Larkin, *The Virgin Encyclopedia of Jazz* (London: Virgin 2004), 667.
the musicians and groups from which it originated. During those sixteen years, one can only speculate as to how many musicians in however many cities, from Kansas to Boston and beyond, passed without leaving anything tangible behind. That said, one might also conclude that the legacy of such musicians lies in the way that they acted as a vessel for the developing jazz idiom from circa 1900 onwards, influencing a new generation of developing musicians (Jazz Age musicians) along the way.

One such musician was black, Boston-born multi instrumentalist and musical director, Tom Whaley. Born in 1892, Whaley appears, like so many Boston players, as an abbreviated footnote in the successful career of a national jazz icon. In this instance, that icon was Duke Ellington. From 1941 to 1968, Whaley operated as chief copyist for the many invocations of Ellington’s touring band, scoring arrangements for rehearsals and impromptu jam sessions and later assisting with choral conducting. Whaley’s career, however, began some thirty years before his association with Ellington. During the year 1912, as he worked as a sit-in jazz musician in several bands, none of which achieved great notoriety, in Boston’s South End. Nonetheless, Whaley’s testimonial recollections of his experiences at this time, along with those of early jazz pioneer and drummer, George Latimer (born 1891), from the same time are to date the earliest evidence of jazz music in Boston.

Of particular note in the accounts of Whaley are references to the inroads made by a small collective of like-minded, entrepreneurial and indomitable black Bostonians, all of whom mostly emanated from the South End of the city. One such Bostonian was a relatively unknown saxophone player named Bill Smith. Aided by band-booker and bandleader, Harry

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858 Brian Rust, *Song Title Index. Volume III Of Jazz And Ragtime Records 1897-1942* (Denver: Mainspring, 2004).
863 Vandermark, Stu., stutoyu@hotmail.com, Boston Jazz, 1900-1929. Personal email communication. September 28, 2014.
'Bish' Hicks, Smith formed a small but significant local musicians union for blacks in the city during the year of 1912.\textsuperscript{864} The foundational activities of this organisation, which were, it seems, principally to support black musicianship in the South End through union connection, were conducted out of a small music store located on Westfield Street in the neighbourhood of Roxbury.\textsuperscript{865} Some time before 1915, records indicate that the union relocated to Tremont Street, near Mass Avenue, occupying a venue known as Hicks’ Harmony Store. It was at this time that Harry Hicks took over sole management of the union.\textsuperscript{866}

Supported by two associates, Vernon Eaton and Dave Laney, Hicks is said to have adopted and where necessary appropriated the model of practice utilised by the white Musicians’ Association in Boston, Local 9, which received charter status from the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) in 1897.\textsuperscript{867} This explains why the Harmony Store became a collective hangout and practice space for aspiring black musicians as well as a base for the administrative aspects of the union membership. In terms of the latter, Hicks provided a platform for sustenance (the Harmony Store doubled as a booking office for bands on the local college and dancehall circuit) and on occasion, much needed financial aid.\textsuperscript{868} According to George Latimer, the first significant jam sessions consisting of discernible jazz musicians in the city were held at the Harmony Store: ‘Every Sunday afternoon all the cats used to bring their instruments and we’d have a jam session, with the door wide open and the crowd in the street getting a load of it’.\textsuperscript{869}

In 1915, the union took on the title of ‘Local 535’. Significantly, during the same year it received charter status from American Federation of Musicians.\textsuperscript{870} This naturally gave ‘Local

\textsuperscript{864} James P. Kraft, \textit{Stage to studio: musicians and the sound revolution, 1890-1950} (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 211.
\textsuperscript{865} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{866} Vandermark, Stu., stutoyu@hotmail.com, Boston Jazz, 1900-1929. Personal email communication. September 28, 2014.
535' professional status, which in turn projected an air of purpose. Perhaps more important, however, was the fact that legitimacy was achieved at a time when blacks in Boston, including the city’s branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), had taken it upon themselves collectively to oppose the release of W.D. Griffith’s film, ‘Birth of a Nation’: originally titled ‘The Clansmen’. Griffith’s work not only reinforced notions of black and white difference, principally through the process of dehumanising blacks, but it also helped to hasten the re-emergence of and the perceived need for a recharged and more determined Ku Klux Klan. ‘Birth of a Nation’ became, as W. Bryan Rommel Ruiz notes, ‘a symbol of the triumph of white supremacy’.

While there had been references to the Klan in American cinema before ‘Birth of a Nation’, those references had not piqued the interests of right-wing factions in such a fashion. In city after city, from Boston to Portland, Oregon, screenings of the film heightened racial tensions, and on many occasions incited racial violence. Wherever it was shown – from Boston to Philadelphia and on to Chicago - NAACP branches mobilised community support in an effort to picket theatres and where possible prevent screenings, while whites flocked in their hundreds to view it. On April 17, 1915 in Boston, one week after the film had premiered in the city, five hundred angry black protestors clashed with droves of white filmgoers and two-hundred-and-sixty police deployed to keep the peace outside the Tremont Theatre.

The next day, Boston’s Mayor, James M. Curley held a public meeting at Faneuil Hall to discuss the future of the film. An estimated 25,000 blacks, including prominent members

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872 ‘In an era marked by gradual advances in Negro literacy and economic independence, Birth of a Nation vilified black people, portraying them as little more than vicious animals who posed a tangible threat to white civilisation.’ Elizabeth McHenry, Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies (Duke University Press, 2002), 178.
874 The US-based National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were lobbying the courts to ban the film on the grounds that it incited racial tensions.
of the Boston branch of the NAACP, including Monroe Trotter, attended the meeting.\textsuperscript{877} Hearing their protests, and taking into consideration the views of the Boston Literary and Historical Association, who saw the film as the most destructive representation of blacks and their history ever created, Curley duly banned the film - but only for one day.\textsuperscript{878} Dissatisfied with this outcome, hordes of protestors moved to the Boston State House and demanded that Governor David Walsh ban the film indefinitely across the state of Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{879} Walsh drew up a censor bill to prohibit the film and all racially provocative films, but it did not pass a legislative vote.\textsuperscript{880}

In the immediate aftermath of this failure, the Boston branch of the NAACP held no further protests of the feature, but did succeed in suppressing the film six years later in 1921.\textsuperscript{881} While the eventual success of the Boston branch of the NAACP to ban the film did open the door for bans on the film in other cities, including New York, its failure in 1915, as Melvyn Stokes notes, served to emphasise divisions in the pro-black community of Boston.\textsuperscript{882} Retrospective analysis of the initial campaign highlighted that while the overall aim of the Boston branch of the NAACP was to prohibit the spread of ‘Birth of a Nation’, the organisation had failed to work in alliance with similarly interested and determined groups, notably The National Equal Rights League (NERL), and had instead pursued its own, ultimately divisive and unsuccessful path.\textsuperscript{883}

\textsuperscript{878} Elizabeth McHenry, Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies (Duke University Press, 2002), 178.
During a time when more established and prominent black voices in Boston were being drowned out and thus failing to assist in achieving the conditions for universal black uplift, Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks and Local 535 developed somewhat under the radar. With sanctioned status accrued, the union was not only able to provide representation to blacks at a time when membership in any such cultural organisation in the city was almost unheard of, but it was also able to evolve and expand to accommodate a much more illustrious clientele. Building on solid foundations and based on committed leadership, Local 535 not only authenticated its standing as a professional organisation but it simultaneously established itself as one of the most capable services for black jazz performers in Boston and soon thereafter all of America. From the start of the Jazz Age until a court-mandated merger with Local 9 (the city’s white union) in 1970, Local 535 operated as the top black musicians’ union in the country, catering for the needs of esteemed entertainers, including Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Earl Hines, and Jimmie Lunceford amongst many others.

Furthermore, not only did Hicks mentor black musicians, pioneer Boston’s band booking business and instigate unionisation, he also inspired the emergence of new generation of pioneers, including many Jazz Age band bookers. Operating from offices in downtown Boston, black Bostonians, such as Walter Johnson, Clarence Cummings, and Skinny Johnson, established themselves as agents for the elites of the city. While their clientele was more discriminating, their status of respectability meant that on occasion accomplished black Boston musicians were granted opportunities to perform for the most esteemed factions of Boston society - and receive above average pay for doing so. By the mid-twenties, their bookings included some of the finest hotels in Boston, with the Ritz Carlton Roof a particular venue of note from 1927 onwards. As George Aaron Cundy notes, arguably ‘no musician had a more significant impact on the development of jazz in the city’.

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The accomplishments of Hicks and company proved a particularly telling point in Boston: notably that black Bostonians, away from NAACP and NERL divisions, did have the organisational capabilities and entrepreneurial nous to succeed independent of white influence. As a result, Local 535 emerged as an organisation with a clearly defined path, and as such, it was able to set the tone in Boston and to an extent across much of America for pioneering race-based jazz standards. In the grander scheme of early jazz history, those standards, without question, had a hand in many of the racially pioneering cultural events that occurred in Boston soon thereafter. For example, the city was the first place where a racially integrated group performed in public: Leo Reisman and the Hotel Brunswick orchestra appeared in 1928, while during 1935 in Boston, Duke Ellington became the first black musician to lead an orchestra.

3. 1919 – ‘The King of Jazz is Dead’: opinion as fact - James Reece Europe, the darling of the Boston media

Of all the intriguing stories that have been told about the early years of jazz, few are as captivating as that of American ragtime and early jazz bandleader, arranger, and composer, James Reece Europe. Born on February 22, 1881 in Mobile, Alabama, to musical parents, Europe’s melodic development was one that began in childhood and thereon spanned the duration of his life, which remarkably included military service during the First World War. In 1891, Europe and family relocated from Mobile to Washington D.C, and it was there that he took up the violin, studying under the assistant director of the Marine Corps Band, Enrico Hurlei. At the age of 22, Europe, seeking a career in music, relocated to New York and undertook the task of playing piano in a cabaret. By 1907, he had signed on as musical director

https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ahnBsroCy4oC&pg=PT1&lpg=PT1&dq=george+aaron+cuddy+boston+hash&source=bl&ots=wDLVCi79GZ&sig=d4JkQEtbbNo-WC-SVQ5OTUXgWhqI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjbzuecy-TNAhUmCcAKHfECBjUQ6AEIHDAABw&f=false. Accessed: July 1, 2013.

889 William C. Banfield, Black Notes: Essays of a Musician Writing in a Post-album Age (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 124-127.
for Cole & Johnson’s ‘Shoo-Fly Regiment’, a musical comedy for the stage equipped with a company of sixty black comedians, singers and dancers. Soon thereafter, he also directed the musical ‘Mr. Lode of Coal’ for Bert Williams, one of the pre-eminent (black) entertainers of the Vaudeville era.

From these self-effacing and steady beginnings, Europe developed an aspirational approach to performance and music making that consistently set precedents for black players as well as devising a means of self-promotion and representation, at a time when blacks were unable to attain mainstream support. In New York during the year of 1910, for example, Europe, building on the work of Ernest Hogan, a musical innovator and the first black entertainer to produce and star in a Broadway musical show, fostered the creation of syncopated orchestras. Fusing the great three fashions of the time, orchestras, ragtime and blues with a repertoire of light classics, popular songs, spirituals, waltzes, and one-step tunes, Europe gave rise to a new form of black popular music. This music was rich in African-American lineage whilst also being somewhat derivative of the military marches that were commonplace in his history. What exists of this body of work has been considered the first instance of symphonic jazz.

At this time, it was uncommon for black musicians in Broadway pit orchestras and dance bands to command a decent salary for their skills. Remarkably, Europe broke new ground when he established the Clef Club of New York, arguably one of the most unusual black organisations of the time. It was unusual because the Clef Club was part fraternal and part union, making it unlike any other organisation in the country at the time. Europe acted as lead

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894 Ibid.
conductor for its symphony orchestra, and more significantly, he was elected as its first president.896

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Figure 5.1: Clef Club with James Reese Europe, 1912. Courtesy Eubie Blake Collection, Maryland Historical Society

In a model that later inspired many jazz performers, including Thomas ‘Fats’ Waller, Willie ‘the Lion’ Smith, Eubie Blake, Luckey Roberts,898 and Boston’s Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, its operations hub, a building on West 53rd Street, served both as a club and as an office for bookings.899 Noteworthy here is that when a musical act was booked through the Clef Club, they were hired as ‘entertainers’ and duly received a respectable salary, as well as transportation costs, room, and board.900

The model of business established by Europe proved exceptionally successful. At its height of popularity during the second half of the 1910s, a year of bookings generated over $100,000, with subsidiary shows appearing in London and Paris.901 Europe’s orchestra developed such a reputation that it was hired to appear at Carnegie Hall (a venue that catered to American cultural elitism) on May 2, 1912.902 This was the first concert by a black ensemble

at the esteemed venue, or any venue of this magnitude in fact, and they made a considerable impression. They were so well received that they returned in 1913 and 1914.\textsuperscript{903} While these performances can be considered the first instances in which black popular music invaded the concert auditorium, their significance went far beyond the realms of entertainment. The concerts were a political act of desegregation – the first defiant challenge to the early twentieth-century dominance of white American music, carried out at a time when blacks were largely without a platform for – political, social, and cultural – expression. As Europe remarked:

As composers, no matter what else you might think, we have created an orchestral language that is unique and distinctive and lends itself to the peculiar compositions of our race.\textsuperscript{904}

Europe’s ability to challenge the racial status quo and conquer new ground for black artistry in America continued when he was employed as bandleader by the most widely known and imitated exhibition ballroom team in the United States.\textsuperscript{905} Vernon and Irene Castle, residents of New York, met Europe at a private society party where the Clef Club Orchestra was playing.\textsuperscript{906} So impressed with his musicianship, they hired him and his associate, black composer and conductor, Ford T. Dabney, as their musical arrangers for all future dances.\textsuperscript{907} It was in this role that Europe played a significant part in the conception of one of the most important cultural creations of the time: the fox trot – without doubt, the most popular dance of the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{908} While Europe acknowledged that the musical impetus for his creation was down to ‘a young Negro from Memphis, Tennessee’, the great W.C. Handy

\textsuperscript{903} Dave Gilbert, \textit{James Reese Europe: The Emergence of the Black Professional Musician and the Creation of a Modern American Music} (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2003), 41.

\textsuperscript{904} William C. Banfield, \textit{Black Notes: Essays of a Musician Writing in a Post-album Age} (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 126.


(adapted from his hot tune, ‘Memphis Blues’), the Castles nonetheless credited their creation (and many more, including the Castle Walk and The Castle House Rag) to the rhythmical uniqueness of Europe’s playing.\textsuperscript{909}

More significantly, he signed with Joseph W. Stern & Company, one of the biggest publishers of sheet music.\textsuperscript{910} In the spring of 1914, Stern issued fifteen compositions by Europe (many of them co-written with Ford T Dabney), including Vernon and Irene Castle’s signature dances, such as \textit{Castle Perfect Trot}, \textit{The Castle Combination}, and \textit{Castle Innovation Tango}.\textsuperscript{911} The collaborative success of the Castles, Dabney, and Europe had cross-pollinated ragtime with the cut-a-rug vanguard movements of contemporary dance and had brought new vigour to the ballroom.\textsuperscript{912}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{Figure 5.2: A poster promoting the ‘Trot and One Step’ composed by James Reece Europe and Ford T. Dabney}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{912} Moreover, in addition to composing many great, and much loved, songs, including the ‘Charleston’ which became a national dance fad, Europe also initiated many innovative and stylised musical progressions: notably the pioneering of a stride style of jazz piano.
The ongoing success of this collaboration served to catapult all parties to the pinnacle of the entertainment world. International success in performance, vast sheet music sales, and a flurry of Viktor record releases in New York, Paris, and London, not only broke boundaries, but also presented the first instance of a widely palatable black music that also appealed to factions of the American middle class, who had previously strongly opposed many forms of black cultural expression.\textsuperscript{914} A 1913 \textit{New York Herald} editorial remarked:

Can it be said that America is falling prey to the collective soul of the Negro, through the influence of what is popularly known as Ragtime music? If there is any tendency to such a national disaster, it should be definitely pointed out and extreme measures taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger. Ragtime music is symbolic of the primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the Negro type.\textsuperscript{915}

Europe's national and commercial success was soon thereafter halted by World War I: in the year of 1917, he enlisted as a private in the army. It did not take long for his commander, Colonel William Hayward to learn of his musical abilities, however, and he was duly asked to form a military band as part of the combat unit.\textsuperscript{916} That band was the 369\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Regiment Band. In the formation period, Europe felt - despite his own actions - that few musicians would be willing to leave high-paying jobs in cosmopolitan centres, such as New York. He was instructed, as such, by Hayward to bring in musicians from wherever he could, and he did. He went as far as Puerto Rico to recruit eighteen woodwind musicians of African or mixed ancestry, including Rafael Hernandez, 'composer of some of the most beloved popular ballads and dance tunes in Puerto Rico and Latin America'.\textsuperscript{917} When the unit arrived in France on New Year's Day 1918, it was the first all-black combat unit to set foot on French soil. Subsequently, the band entertained troops and citizens in twenty-two cities,\textsuperscript{918} and were always received with...
great enthusiasm.\footnote{Floyd Levin, \textit{Classic Jazz: A Personal View of the Music and the Musicians} (California: University of California Press, 2000), 67.} Noble Sissle remarked at the time that Europe had hit France with the ‘jazz germ’, and it spread everywhere he went.\footnote{‘The jazz germ hit them and it seemed to find the vital spot, loosening all muscles and causing what is known in America as an ‘Eagle Rocking Fit’. Jeffrey H. Jackson, \textit{Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris} (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 18.}

Triumphant in war, Europe and his band returned to New York on February 12, 1919. Feeding off their success in France and having accrued significant interest from the United States’ media as a result, Europe and his band, seeking to cash in on their popularity, immediately hit the road to tour some of the major cities in their homeland. In keeping with the opinions of the general public, the national media view on Europe was almost entirely positive - even in Boston. In the past, the Boston press had gone to great lengths to dissect ragtime, vaudeville, and the earliest invocations of the jazz idiom, often presenting unconstructive and ill-mannered perspectives. For example, the \textit{Boston Daily Globe}, unable to write consistently about the aforementioned forms on a local level broadened its reportage to stories gleaned from England, France, Russia, and Italy. These stories included condemnations from respected national and international academics, classical musicians, and on one occasion, an unnamed English priest.\footnote{Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext., Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, 'Ragtime is Barred'. \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. Published: November 11, 1915. Page 5.}

However, the Boston media, and in particular the \textit{Boston Globe}, welcomed Europe and the 369\textsuperscript{th} Infantry, with a stream of reports rich in glowing terms and upbeat phrases about the man himself and, even more surprising, his music. Headlines such as ‘Jim Europe’s Band Jazzes Deliriously’\footnote{Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext., Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Jim Europe’s Band Jazzes Deliriously’, \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. March 29, 1919. Page 2.} and ‘Jim Europe and his Negro high priests of Jazz’,\footnote{Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext., Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, Famous Jazz Band Returns Tomorrow, \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. Published: May 8, 1919. Page 18.} suggest that jazz was not just welcomed in Boston, but wanted too. This is reinforced by the fact that Europe and his musical entourage were booked to play several dates in the city as part of a nationwide...
tour. Lasting just shy of three months, the band appeared at the Parker Hill Hospital,\textsuperscript{924} Dorchester High School,\textsuperscript{925} the Boston Navy Yard,\textsuperscript{926} the Strand Theatre,\textsuperscript{927} Keith’s Theatre,\textsuperscript{928} the Colonial Theatre,\textsuperscript{929} and several times at the Boston Opera House.\textsuperscript{930} Europe had become, without question, the darling of the Boston media and a revelation on the city’s touring circuit.

During a time when blacks in Boston could feel fortunate to be seated in even the cheapest balcony seats of any esteemed concert venue, Europe repeatedly found himself centre stage of many white run, principally white frequented venues of esteem in the city.\textsuperscript{931} Europe’s universal appeal can principally be attributed to his unique ability to amalgamate black and white cultural tastes into one palatable form for both. In the writings and pronouncements of his compositions, he shrewdly utilised the great traditions and customs of his own people, as well as those of his white contemporaries and their influences. Working back and forth to fuse black vernaculars with Classical, Western European Romantic, and avant-garde traditions, Europe developed a competent and unique musical approach to performance. This approach included the performance of niche ragtime appropriations of music written by composers such as Bach and Brahms.

In doing so, Europe had found a unique way to bridge the gap between Anglo-American high-art and black modes of expression, while simultaneously conjuring an inimitable take on a developing contemporary black American music (jazz). This dynamic ultimately served, albeit temporarily, to make jazz music somewhat pleasurable for traditional concertgoers in

\textsuperscript{929} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Boston to have an opportunity to hear the famous United States Navy Jazz Band at its best’, \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. February 23, 1919. Page 34.
Boston. From his position of good standing, Europe, rather than appealing above all to white
Boston, instead actively used his status forcefully to project the word jazz into the conscious
psyche of middle-class America, and in doing so compelled it to acknowledge its validity. This
group was consistently referred to as the ‘Navy Jazz Band’, he willingly accepted the title of
‘the jazz king’, and often emblazoned the word on banners raised aloft on the stages upon
which he performed. On March 29, the Boston Daily Globe wrote a figurative piece on his
music drenched in commendation:

Lieutenant ‘Jim’ Europe’s 369th U.S. Infantry Band, which played the ‘Hell Fighters’ to
the battle fronts in France, last night wrote “JAZZ” in capital letters all over the stage
of the Boston Opera House. Emblazoned it on the walls, and with it chased long
lingering silence out of the corners and filled them with echoes of brass band
bombardment.932

It seemed fitting, following his great success in Boston that his scheduled 1919 national
tour would conclude on May 9, at the city’s Mechanic’s Hall.933 News of the show was relayed
by the Boston Globe to ‘hundreds of devotees of ‘jazz’ who had tried to buy, beg, or wheedle
their way’ into a sold out show at the Boston Opera House a number of weeks earlier.934 Once
again, as was commonplace by now, the reports of Europe’s imminent presence in Boston
oozed with praise; Globe reports referred to the upcoming performance as, amongst many
superlatives ‘a festival, a carnival, a machinegun orgy of ‘jazz’ delivered by ‘Jim and his spine-
gingling, feet-wigiling outfit of ebony artists’.935 However, on the evening of May 9, Herbert
Wright, one of the so-called ‘percussion twins’ in Europe’s touring band purportedly took
offence to the strict direction of the celebrated bandleader and violently attacked him in his
dressing room during a scheduled intermission with a knife.936 Noble Sissle, who was
backstage at the time, recalled:

932 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Jim
933 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Famous
934 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Famous
935 Ibid.
936 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Wright
Jim wrestled Herbert to the ground. I shook Herbert and he seemed like a crazed child, trembling with excitement. Although Jim's wound seemed superficial, they couldn't stop the bleeding, and as he was being rushed to the hospital, he said to me: 'Sissle, don't forget to have the band down at the State House at nine in the morning. I am going to the hospital and I will have my wound dressed....I leave everything for you to carry on.'

Europe's jugular vein had been severed. The next day the papers carried the headlines: 'The Jazz King Is Dead'.

In the context of black figureheads and spokespersons of the time, James Reece Europe can be considered one of the most significant. Jazz pianist, Eubie Blake remarked years after Europe’s death that, ‘People don’t realise yet today what we lost when we lost Jim Europe. He was the saviour of Negro musicians... in a class with Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King Jr’. These lofty claims were echoed by Europe’s biographer, Reid Badger, who noted in his book *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe* that the then ‘King of Jazz’ received the first public funeral for a black man in New York City (May 13, 1919). Thousands of fans, black and white, turned out to pay their respects, clearly symbolising the impact that Europe had in using music as a means of transcending the clearly defined racial boundaries of the time, which had been reified by the Red Scare and subsequent re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan.

While cities such as New York and Chicago could count on flurries of emerging jazz performers who were readily equipped to step up and fill the void left by Europe, in Boston his death, in a bizarre twist of fate, marked the end of jazz’s brief venture into the city’s

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940 Ibid.

mainstream. Europe’s unique abilities had transformed ragtime and early conceptions of jazz from a perceived corrupting influence on Boston’s young into an acceptable, and on many occasions celebrated, form of entertainment. However, by unfortunate association, Europe’s death at Mechanic’s Hall lingered long over Boston and its jazz scene. The Daily Globe referred to the murder as ‘the most sensational killing in the history’ of the city, and almost overnight, the music was cast aside and thereon quickly ushered away once again towards the margins, where it remained for much of the nineteen-twenties.

In the immediate aftermath of Europe’s death, Boston’s once praiseworthy (white-led) media were suddenly awakened to the perceived barbarity and savage nature of black culture. A consequence of this was an almost wholesale swing to negative tones when discussing black jazz music and its players, which allied the views of the Boston Globe with journalistic tracts found in the Pittsburgh Press, and the Southeast Missourian amongst many others. Such tracts unfoundedly tied jazz to shortcomings such as mental illness, matricide and sexual promiscuity. Again, drawing their material from across the globe, Boston’s press similarly tied jazz’s influence to acts of murder, cannibalism, burglary and its negative effects on health, adding these factors to harmful links attributed to the music’s New Orleans’ heritage, including criminality and worse, the social evil: prostitution.

943 No Author Attributed, ‘Fate of Dorothy Perkins Soon to be in Jury’s Hands’, The Pittsburgh Press. Published: June 16, 1925. P. 3.
944 United Press, ‘Jazz Girl’ is Found Insane: Dorothy Ellingson Not to be Tried for Murder of Mother, The Southeast Missourian. Published: April 9, 1925. P. 1.
946 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. Capt Jean B Le Meitour, ‘Our French Captain Is Razzled by the Jazz Crazy Band Music Rules the Roost in Paree; and He Discovers Its Terrible Origin’- Pussyfoot and Jazz, Boston Daily Globe. Published: December 28, 1919, 56.
Thus as the Jazz Age got underway, efforts to make the music respectable in Boston revolved more and more around the negative arguments put forward by vocal white factions, including those in the media who came to echo the views of the city’s higher echelons, Brahmins, as well as white culturists and academics, including Boston University professor, H. Augustine Smith. The views of these people, conversely, also had a profound effect on the ways in which the city’s black upper and middle classes (including the LWCS) came to view the music. Fearful of the damage that an association with a somewhat secular, uncontrolled, and largely stigmatised music might have on efforts to project an aura of black civility and professionalism, leading blacks in Boston, including the LWCS, all but rejected jazz. At the same time, the music was taking hold in Harlem. In Boston, this shift ultimately created a schism in the cultural sphere between the black upper and middle classes and the working classes.

4. Liquor Light: Banned in Boston – The Watch and Ward, the Social Evil, and ‘the End of Nightlife’

Social historian, Alexander W. Williams stated that ‘the most dreadful curse that any people ever voted upon themselves, wilfully, stubbornly, and with open eyes, was surely that of prohibition’⁹⁵⁰: an amendment to the U.S. Constitution ratified in 1918 that forbade the ‘manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcoholic beverages for consumption (repealed in 1933).⁹⁵¹ While life in a dry country posed particular problems for its citizens, they nonetheless found ways to skirt the law, with some bootleggers profiting handsomely from the illegal running and sale of alcohol. One such individual was Charles ‘King’ Solomon, a Jewish-Russian mob boss with an interest in several clubs in Boston.⁹⁵² Aided by Joseph Linsey, with partners Hyman Abrams and Louis Fox, Solomon established himself as the leading figure in

New England rum-running, monopolising much of the illegal enterprise, paying off and bribing law officials as and when was necessary. As such, buying alcoholic drinks on the black market for home consumption was relatively easy on the East Coast, if you knew where to go.

However, if the private citizen was able to get along, in a fashion, the majority of Boston bars and clubs did not fare so well in their precarious position vis-a-vis the law. Rather, what occurred in Boston was the development of an underground network of speakeasies – illicit drinking clubs – that were ‘more grungy than glamorous’ but ultimately loaded with alcohol. Circa 1920, there were an estimated 4000 of these types of social venues in the city – interestingly, more than anywhere else in the United States. Naturally, prohibition and the existence of an underground network of speakeasies had a detrimental effect on the legitimate and dry club sector, which in contrast boasted around, only, 1000 venues. Amongst these venues were, of course, high-end run and respectable establishments, including The Latin Quarter, The Coconut Grove, and Fox and Hounds, that were struggling because of the sheer volume of illegal nightlife in the city.

Wrapped up in this period of proscription was the additional anti-alcohol push of Boston’s temperance factions. Amongst them were the city’s Watch and Ward Society, a powerful band of Brahmin moral crusaders, who presided over and outlawed all things obscene by suppressing anything, from indecency in books, pictures, and performances, as well as gambling, prostitution and drug use – in short, anything deemed insalubrious by their standards. The Watch and Ward Society continued in the same superior vein as Boston Puritans, and any other figures of temperance before them. The society spent some 80

years, from 1878, outlawing ‘immoral’ books, leading raids on burlesque houses and gambling establishments and making the words ‘Banned in Boston’ a national catchphrase.\textsuperscript{958}

A roll call of the Watch and Ward reads like a roll call of Brahmin aristocracy, including such familiar names as Coolidge, Lodge, Lowell, Peabody, Saltonstall and Weld.\textsuperscript{959} Moreover, these individuals inspired a wealth of likeminded organisations. From The Boston Young Men’s Temperance Society, whom through motives of 'self-respect, self-preservation, patriotism and a duty to Christianity' sought to maintain moral purity, to Cora Frances Stoddard of the Scientific Temperance Movement, who at the turn of the century and well into the Jazz Age sought to rationally show that alcohol was bad for society and generated much of its ills. In short, the city nurtured many evocations of Watch and Ward-inspired Puritanism that ultimately came to underpin the era of prohibition.\textsuperscript{960} As Neil Miller asserts:

The Watch and Ward’s purview was wide...and nothing seemed too small or unimportant to engage the society’s interest, ranging from paintings and photographs in shop windows to theatrical posters and especially anything that even faintly smelled of a raffle or lottery, from the lowliest church bazaar to the most obscure agriculture fair.\textsuperscript{961}

The Watch and Ward Society emerged at the same time that the Boston Brahmin stranglehold on the city’s politics and social activities was beginning to wane.\textsuperscript{962} This society boasted an array of powerful and influential figures in Boston’s communities and it appealed on several levels to many of the city’s residents, notably through its affluence, status, and links to local churches. From the Archbishop, Phillips Brooks to Bishop Lawrence and Endicott Peabody of Groton, the Watch and Ward’s church factions sought to question the reading


\textsuperscript{960} Boston Young Men’s Temperance Society, \textit{Address of the Young Men’s Temperance Society to the young men of Boston: to which is annexed the constitution of the Society} (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832).


habits and social activities of Boston citizens. In a general respect, this society was elitist in makeup and exclusive in its ideas; its members ‘spoke only to each other and to God’. Through such discussions, however, it developed an ultimately imperceptible yet strangely well-known demarcation line between acceptable and uncouth conduct.

While Boston had upheld many licence and prohibition ordinances since 1852, it was not until the mid-1880s that temperance found its way to the centre of political discussion. From this time up until 1920, efforts to maintain social order in Boston stretched to efforts to medicalise habitual drunkenness in the city. While statistics show that insofar as public fears about the consumption of alcohol in the city increased during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, alcohol consumption remained moderately stable. Thus the attempt to medicalise heavy drinking in Boston can be seen to have amounted to a moral panic – ‘brought on by a condition, episode, person, or group of persons that pose a threat to societal values and interests’ – over alcohol and habitual drunkenness that underpinned much of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

Boston elites, principally Brahmins with close ties to temperance and the Watch and Ward, feared America’s nourishment of burgeoning social behaviours and diversity and ultimately considered them beyond the pale. With alcohol’s close ties to the saloon and regular street bar, by 1919 the perils of drunkenness had become inextricably linked to gambling, vice, and hostility, which were all tied by the mainstream Boston media to the perceived Irish menace. Ongoing sectarian tensions and anti-Catholic violence only exacerbated the fears of leading Brahmins, who felt that not only was their political grip on the city of Boston slipping,

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964 Harvard University Library, Law School; Red Set. Call # Special Collections; Box 366 Folder 10 Student Papers. Wallace French Whitney, Jr., 'The New England watch and ward society : A study of a private censorship organization,' Typescript, submitted to the Harvard Law School. Third year essay paper; Published: April, 1967.
967 Paul S. Boyer, Purity in Print: The Vice-society Movement and Book Censorship in America (New York: Scribner, 1968), 187-188.
but the laws and regulations by which they had governed for so long were diminishing too. Thus private vices quickly became threats to the conservative quest for social control, the religious desire for conformity, the reformist search for social uplift, and of course public customs; under the strict control of the Watch and Ward Society, Boston — the formerly enlightened epicentre of the American Revolution—was reduced to a cultural backwater.

Not before long, a ban on alcohol in the city soon led to restrictions of licensing hours. For much of the Jazz Age, ‘Boston dance halls and restaurants were required to close by midnight, and public dances at hotels by 2 am’. Henry Harris of the New York Times remarked that there was literally no place in the city to go for those who wished to continue the party. However, this was not necessarily the case. Certain clubs did find ways to prolong their entertainments by establishing a membership card scheme, whereby all clientele in company after closing time were asked to purchase a loyalty card. These cards skirted the law, somewhat, by transforming several of Boston’s entertainment venues into borderline legitimate social clubs that promoted shared activities such as chess, cookery, and life drawing. But such status was often short-lived and these venues were consistently placed under investigation by the police and the city’s para-police force, the Watch and Ward.

While Boston’s various strands of Puritanism and stringent restrictions on gambling, burlesque and prostitution assisted in making the city the most straitlaced in America, these conditions were not conducive to the growth of a jazz scene. After all, jazz is a music that is well known to have been conceived in the bars, honky-tonsks, and houses of prostitution that lined the streets of New Orleans’ red light district, Storyville. Jazz greats, including Louis Armstrong, Earl ‘Fatha’ Hines, and ‘Jelly Roll’ Morton all got their starts playing in brothels.

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970 Ibid.
In fact, many variants of black music were refined on the stages of houses of assignation, even well into the 1970s: for example, James Brown worked as an entertainer in a bordello in Georgia.\textsuperscript{974} In reality, places of vice with a particular penchant for prostitution, alcohol, gambling, and violence were the vibrant arenas of cultural openness where jazz was allowed to flourish – the very places that Boston Brahmins sought to stifle and where possible eliminate.

In 1919, West 131\textsuperscript{st} street in Harlem emerged as a hotbed of illegal gambling, alcoholism, and more significantly sexual activity, with speakeasies showcasing ‘questionable women’ and brothels such as Peg Smith’s at number 40 offering escort services for $5 ($2 for the room per night).\textsuperscript{975} A 1927 study conducted by the Bureau of Social Hygiene, and carried out by Raymond Claymes, the committee’s first full-time black investigator, concluded that ‘prostitution was four to five times more prevalent’ in Harlem ‘as in other sections of the city’.\textsuperscript{976} Claymes remarked that he was approached by prostitutes, homosexual men, and white female visitors; a prostitute, allegedly, solicited him at Small’s Nightclub for six dollars.\textsuperscript{977} Claymes’ report also noted that several notable entertainment venues that accommodated black jazz music were also present on the street. The mix of often-packed venues, including the Bandbox, Connie’s Inn, the Lafayette Theatre, and the Rhythm Club, alongside many houses of ill repute saw to it that Harlem had, either by chance or design, replicated the model that had helped jazz to flourish in New Orleans circa 1902.\textsuperscript{978}

By 1919 in Boston, however, Watch and Ward pressure had resulted in the almost entire eradication of the traditional brothel. In fact, the society were so anti-sex that they even

went as far as to ban the mention of abortion, which was the main reason they did not want Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* 979 (released in 1925) sold in Boston. In place of brothels emerged society ‘cafés’ – venues that projected an image of sophistication such as the Florence Hotel in the North End, but where beneath the veil of projected refinement, were places where women nonetheless furtively solicited men for sex. 980 These ‘cafés’ emerged coincidentally in the wake of a 1915 regulation enacted by the Boston Licensing Commission that ‘prohibited male patrons from entering a public room where liquor was sold and where women were allowed, unless the man was accompanied by the woman’. 981 In order to enforce this regulation, in 1916 the Watch and Ward president Frederick B. Allen, recognising that the society cafes were skirting the rules, called for partitions to be erected so as to separate men and women. 982 He remarked at the time:

There must not be places where men and women are openly and defiantly inducted to lead lives of shame. 983

By 1918, after a conference of civil and military authorities, mass arrests were carried out in the city of Boston with a view to eradicating prostitution once and for all. On June 11, 1918 thirty-four women were arrested and taken into custody for being ‘idle and disorderly’, while on the next evening, a further sixty-one were arrested for being perceived ‘street corner loafers’. Arrests continued again on June 13, with a further thirty-four women and 11 men this time, believed to have been men profiteering from the sexual activities of the women, arrested in thirty minutes. At this stage, the *Globe* reported that ‘It is understood that several women of the underworld have fled to other cities and towns, where they will remain until the Boston Crusade dies out’.

983 Ibid., 68.
The Watch and Ward, however, continued to pursue an end to prostitution in Boston through the courts. On March 22, 1919, they successfully lobbied Boston magistrates to close Revere House, situated in Bowdoin Square at the north side of Beacon Hill – a place equipped with a downstairs cafe that was used for immoral bargaining, and rooms on the ‘third floor of the hotel’ used almost continuously for immoral purposes. As prohibition took effect, the remaining elements of prostitution in the city were amalgamated with emerging speakeasies – an almost forced unity. As Jack Beatty asserts, Boston’s ‘Huntington Avenue quickly became ‘lined with speakeasies cum bordellos’. However, these establishments, ruled by the crooked laws of illicit activity, relied on the corruption of police officers who were willing to offer protection for money and where necessary to turn a blind eye to prostitution.

While some of the venues and speakeasies in Boston in 1919 shared similar characteristics to the more questionable venues of New York – notably a mix of alcohol, gambling, and prostitution – the overall dynamic of nightlife in the two cities was vastly different. Aside from the concentration of speakeasies cum bordellos on Huntington Avenue, Boston lacked a defined cultural epicentre where jazz music could flourish. Black jazz in New Orleans and New York prospered in the often unregulated and illicit climates of compacted geographic spaces, such as Harlem. Conversely, Boston’s jazz scene was principally spread over a multitude of areas, including the North End and South End, as well as venues in Greater Boston and further afield across the state of Massachusetts. Logically, this dynamic fragmented the overall scene itself and consequently assisted in diluting the black voice inherent in its black jazz of the time. Thus, the compacted Harlem scene of New York can be seen to have used its nightlife to cultivate an innovative and shared black voice. In Boston, however, restrictions on nightlife and a lack of solidity on licensing, ultimately served to thwart any such presence.

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5. The Lambs’ Club, the Phalanx, and the Pickwick: three case studies on Boston Nightlife at the mid-point of the Jazz Age.

Before Wally’s Café (established 1940), located in the South End of Boston and formally titled America’s oldest jazz club,\textsuperscript{985} the city was home to the Pickwick Club, located at No. 12 Bench Street. During the early years of the 1920s, it was a popular meeting place for young dancers and jazz fanatics. On July 4, 1925, however, it became better known as the place where forty-five people lost their lives and over fifty were injured as its core structure gave way to the weight of a large jazz crowd inside.\textsuperscript{986} Press reports describe the scene: as revellers danced without warning the fifth floor of the building collapsed, carrying with it the fourth and third floors. Within moments, tons of stone, plaster and bricks crashed through to the second floor where 150 merry makers were enjoying an evening’s entertainment. Unsurprisingly, due to the added weight the second floor quickly gave way and carried down into the basement a cargo of dead and dying.\textsuperscript{987} Amongst the departed were famous boxer, Neddo Flanagan,\textsuperscript{988} and local Police Inspector, Alexander Benjamin.\textsuperscript{989}

\begin{thebibliography}{989}
\bibitem{987} Ibid.
\bibitem{989} No Author Attributed, ‘Remove 41 Bodies from Boston from Boston Ruins’, \textit{The New York Times}. Published: July 5, 1925. Page 1.
\end{thebibliography}
Two days later, on Monday, July 6, District Attorney Thomas C. O’Brien, supported by Governor Fuller, Attorney General Jay R. Benton, Secretary of State F.W. Cook, and Commissioner of Public Safety, Alfred F. Foote, launched a grand jury (Suffolk County) investigation to look into the cause of the collapse. In addition, all nightclubs and resorts in the centre of the city, as well as some further afield were shut down, ‘pending further inspection’. The next day, Henry Harris writing for the *New York Times* declared that ‘Night Club Life’ in Boston was all but over. While evenings in the city would eventually return to some semblance of normalcy, the disaster only served to support the sentiments of Boston officials, the Watch and Ward Society, and members of the public who viewed the Pickwick and similar clubs in the city as arenas for vice, gambling, and general criminality. Worse still, the collapse was used by the Boston media and city elites as a means to attack jazz culture and associated new-age social conventions such as dancing.

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At the start of 1925, Boston nightlife principally revolved around three venues: the Pickwick, the Phalanx, and the Lambs’ Club. Inside fifteen months, all three were gone, barring desperate attempts to reopen the latter two. While the city boasted an additional array of barrooms and ballrooms, the aforementioned were the ‘big three’ venues in the city. While they all, to at varying degrees, catered for the dance craze culture of the Jazz Age, each club was quite different from the other in its makeup, rules, and clientele. Yet all operated on the same fundamental principle of membership, late night dancing, and a turn-a-blind-eye attitude to the sale of liquor on the premises by third parties. As Harris noted, ‘It was possible that someone might be on the premises with a suitcase of liquor for sale. Yet it was impossible, if the club was raided, that the management knew anything of liquor-selling, even if the same man brought the same suitcase to the same club with the same kind of liquor every night for a month’.

While all three clubs serviced the interests of ‘respectable’ clientele at times, the Lambs’ Club on Landsdowne Street was principally billed as the ‘aristocratic’ venue; the atmosphere at the Pickwick and the Phalanx were perceived to be venues dominated by criminality. The Lambs’ Club, situated on the second floor of 42 Lansdowne in a block of ‘Garage buildings’ had an air of esteem about it. It was described as a particularly ‘hard place to enter’. Entrance was only granted if a person purchased membership at $3 per head, while the food was described as ‘expensive’ and the entertainment – orchestral music, as well as cabaret and tap dancing – ‘above average’. Its general clientele base was entirely white and largely male, consisting of theatre professionals, athletes, and university students from Harvard. As a rule, women were not granted entry unless they were escorted by a male. However, those that

993 Ibid.
did attend were described as ‘prettier and more expensively dressed’ than the women that frequented the Pickwick and the Phalanx.996

The membership cards handed out at the Lambs’ Club originally carried the name of ‘The Charles River Athletic Association’. It is believed the club’s board, including president, Joseph L. McCarthy, Treasurer, Thomas Kind, and Secretary, John McGrath,997 bought up the charter of a relatively unknown and defunct organisation and operated under its name to navigate around the strict trading hours imposed on Boston clubs and barrooms. In this way, the Lambs’ Club was able to operate until the hour of 3 am on a consistent basis.998 However, despite its air of sophistication, the Lambs’ Club came into public notice on several occasions between 1923 and July 7, 1925, and as a consequence, the club also came under the disapproval of the Watch and Ward Society, which obtained wholesale indictments to prevent McCarthy, Kind, and McGrath et al from operating.999

For all of its ostensible sophistication, The Lambs’ Club faced a particular problem in Boston, principally that its clientele, comprising of white, refined Americans were the closest group of entertainment seekers in the city in terms of social standing to members of the Watch and Ward Society. Thus, the behaviour of those who frequented the club and partook in recreational activities, both legal (dancing) and illegal (gambling, drinking) were closely scrutinised and liable to evoke negative responses. For the Watch and Ward viewed the actions of somewhat well regarded and perceptibly respectable white Bostonians as detrimental to their own position of high regard and eminence. Alcoholism, gambling, and vice were largely deemed commonplace in the poorer areas of the city and therefore were expected—these were people perceived to be in need of guidance and uplift. In contrast, the aforementioned white

social set was expected to fulfil the role of paragons of good taste and conduct—and in doing so inspire those beneath them.

The Phalanx Club, or as it was also known ‘The Black and White Club’ - so called because its client base consisted of an even mix of blacks and whites, mostly from the South End of the city 1000 was consistently described in the Boston press as the most famous club in the city. It was not famous so much for its decor, entertainments, and fine foods, but rather because police raids were a recurrent theme at the venue. 1001 In fact, the club was raided by ‘police and agents of the Watch and Ward’ for liquor on at least six occasions in between 1924 and 1925. On one particularly noteworthy occasion, during the early hours of January 19, 1925, agents of the Watch and Ward raided the club, arresting six men and a twenty-year old woman, in the process of seizing four gallons of liquor, which was allegedly on sale to guests. 1002

A trial ensued on April 16, 1925 in the Superior Court, represented by Assistant District Attorney Leonard, who offered evidence provided by the Watch and Ward and the state, brought charges against all six men. The state had on six previous occasions failed to convict anyone of liquor-related activities in the courts. In addition, on this occasion, once again, even with the support of the Watch and Ward, the state once more failed to bring about minor convictions. Phalanx heads C. F Sheridan and George Robinson, charged with keeping a disorderly house and maintaining a liquor nuisance, were found not guilty. Similarly, club members, John Davis, Louis Bennett, and Lincoln C. Pope, charged with an array of liquor related offences, including keeping and exposing liquor, and either selling or being complicit in the sale of liquor on the premises, were likewise found not guilty. 1003

The failure of the police and the Watch and Ward to bring about convictions and enact any influence over the Phalanx gave the venue an air of almost invincibility. As a result, it quickly developed into a kind of insular microcosm of South End life. It was multicultural, prone to illegal activities, and a haven for the social and cultural elements that the Watch and Ward were trying to eradicate. But their efforts to expose, through employed agents, the untoward activities at the club thrust many of the negatives that the Watch and Ward were trying to eradicate from Boston life into the media and the consciousness of everyday Bostonians. With regularity, stories that pertained to violence, vice, drunkenness and worse, interracial dancing at the Phalanx appeared in the *Boston Globe* and on several occasions further afield in the *New York Times.*

These stories told of how a lower court found a guest of the club guilty of being ‘idle and disorderly’ (the newspaper cited drunkenness and unsatisfactory dancing) and sentenced her to a term in the Sherborn Reformatory. On another occasion, a patrol officer at the club, trying to stop a disturbance was set upon by three men and seriously injured. Furthermore, while giving evidence at a previous liquor trial, a prohibition officer recalled that he visited the club and, spying a conviction, gladly accepted a glass of gin from a waiter. Moments later he claims his eyes began to burn, his skin prickled, and soon thereafter, he could not see anything. Purportedly, while in that condition he was robbed of $100.

In a general respect, the clientele at the Phalanx appear to have been fiercer and much more excitable than those at the Lambs’ Club. Without question, fighting was commonplace, so much so that the management and guests did not seem to make much of them. A story was told that on one night a man hit another reveller in the jaw and knocked him senseless, his head striking and breaking a railing before he hit the floor. Two black bouncers stepped forward and led the aggressor out. Two more carried away the unconscious man. Another man,

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1006 Ibid.
with a hammer and some nails, repaired the railing, and the dance went on as if nothing had happened.\(^{1007}\)

In the year following the Pickwick collapse, the Phalanx would continue to be raided by agents of the Watch and Ward. It was also closed on the grounds that it was unsafe for dancing and its owners were ordered to undertake repairs;\(^{1008}\) and by September of 1926, after several closures, the club failed in its efforts to attain a city licence. While the club could continue to operate on the original charter granted to it by the state, no music, singing, or dancing could be permitted without a city licence. The licensing board gave as its reason for the refusal, four closely typewritten pages of complaints against the club written by the police and evidenced by the Watch and Ward. Unable to thwart the club in the courts, the Watch and Ward had succeeded in silencing the Phalanx through the simplest of measures, by denying it the right to provide the very entertainments upon which it appealed to its client base.

To a certain extent, the Phalanx and the Pickwick were similar. Both clubs hosted, according to the *Boston Globe*, questionable audiences - the Pickwick was, it appears, all-white - and both clubs were raided on several occasions for liquor related crimes, while the police were regularly asked to visit both premises to intervene in disturbances. One might conclude, however, based on press reports, that in fact the Pickwick was considerably more violent than the Phalanx. On February 9, 1925, a special officer of the headquarters liquor squad, John Laidlaw, was struck and almost knocked unconscious by a reveller.\(^{1009}\) On another occasion, on March 23, 1925, a man was stabbed in the leg during a small riot at the club.\(^{1010}\) At the same time, several men, including one Mr James Montrose, were arrested for drunkenness.\(^{1011}\) The Pickwick was, by no means, a reputable venue.


\(^{1011}\) Ibid.
In the immediate aftermath of the Pickwick disaster, the Boston media speculated over the reasons for the collapse. Official investigations and several disaster probes would eventually reveal, in the courts, that the building’s structure had been weakened due to excessive amounts of water: some 10,000 gallons had been used to put out a fire at the club on the night of April 13. Initial reports, however, placed blame on an unruly cosmopolitan crowd, which quickly morphed into a disorderly crowd buoyed by jazz music and a black form of dancing.\textsuperscript{1012} In fact, the day after the collapse, the Boston Post and the Boston Globe both led with stories that accused excited revellers, whipped into frenzy by live jazz music, of literally shaking the walls to the ground by frantically dancing in unison. Such a claim was given credence when a singer at the club made claims to support the aforementioned: \textsuperscript{1013}

Dancing was going at a furious pace and everybody was having a lively time when without warning the plastering began to crumble. – Rocco Carparto aka ‘Teddy’ Williams Carparto.\textsuperscript{1014}

Soon thereafter, critics honed in on specifics of the dance itself and concluded that revellers had been engaged in the ‘Charleston’, a fast fox trot introduced by black lyricist, Cecil Mack and musician, James P Johnson, in the all-Negro revue Runnin' Wild.\textsuperscript{1015} The Charleston would become the signature dance of the Jazz Age, easily eclipsing the bunny hug, the turkey trot, and the shimmy. In Boston, however, the dance’s vigorous movements were blamed for the Pickwick collapse, and it was subsequently referred to as the ‘death dance’. Allegedly, some club patrons asserted that revellers had danced the Charleston so frantically that they had caused the lights on the dance floor to cut out in the immediate moments before plaster began to rain down on to the dance floor.

\textsuperscript{1013} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Call # AN2. N7N56. No Author Attributed, ’35 Victims Identified: Cause of Crash still in Doubt: singer at club thinks Building was Shaken Down by Leaping Dancers’. Boston Daily Globe. Published: July 6, 1925. Page 1.
The fact that no blacks were in the Pickwick at the time of the collapse counted for very little. For simply having an established association with the Charleston, blacks had inadvertently been burdened with the blame. The Boston Globe, in an effort to evidence such claims even went as far as to publish the sheet music for a jazz song they declared to be the last ‘Heard by the Pickwick Club Victims’. In the popular mind, the Charleston Dance and the Pickwick Collapse became interwoven in a cause-and-effect relationship. While city-wide club closures would only last for a short while, city officials, including members of the Watch and Ward, took the drastic step of banning the Charleston Dance outright, citing the Pickwick disaster. For years thereafter, as jazz swung and echoed loudly in other cities, in Boston bandleaders were told to turn it down when the dancing got too vigorous.

6. Speaking for blacks in Boston: early radio voices and developments toward network broadcasting

Don Slater suggested that the 1920s were the first times in which people believed themselves to be modern, inhabiting modernity; i.e., ‘a contemporary state, not one being striven toward’. This concept was underpinned by the transformation of America into a consumerist society during the decade. As new products were launched on to the market, the dominance of machines and the ideology that supported them became central to economic growth. Devices such as the toaster, the washing machine, and the vacuum cleaner promised an easier life and thus one that was more enjoyable. The purchase of new technologies rapidly became the focus of national expenditure. Higher wages for average Americans meant that for the first time in the country’s history, ‘spending, rather than saving came to be identified with prosperity’, earning the twenties the title of ‘The Dollar Decade’.

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It was also a period of great cultural change. Jazz historian, Thomas J. Hennessey notes that the decade transformed America from a ‘local, rural, homemade culture into a mass-produced, national, urban, media culture’. With this shift, American literature emerged from the monotonous tradition of naturalism into the daylight of modernism; and Hollywood found its voice and with it the commercial ascendancy of a medium that spoke directly to young people. Furthermore, with the advent and subsequent rise of the radio from a hobbyist’s plaything to a staple of the American household, technology and culture were brought together in a way like never before. For the first time, leading musical acts such as Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra were thrust into the living rooms of all who owned a receiver. As Michael John Haupert asserts, ‘no longer was it necessary to go out to the crowds or travel great distances to be entertained’.1021

The radio’s impact on America is perhaps best exemplified in the way it changed the makeup of the family home. In the second half of the 1920s, it became a central piece of furniture in many households across the country, and greatly impacted the dynamics of an average day. Families would gather around the device and fall silent to hear news broadcasts, their favourite radio features, and popular music of the time. This in turn meant that for entertainers the radio quickly became a vital resource for transforming their cultural artistry into a means of livelihood. By the end of the decade, for example, radio had significantly assisted in the process of carrying the music of jazz artists such as Bix Beiderbecke, Earl Hines, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington from the cultural margins to the mainstream, transforming their compositions into an economically viable art form of commercial appeal.1022

Central to early radio exploration and development was the city of Boston. Insofar as the success of the medium during its formative years was, for the most part, a national

progression, arguably nowhere else were the foundations for its success more decisively laid than in Boston. Through its hobbyists, early wireless clubs and societies and on to its pioneering amateurs (Harold J. Power)\textsuperscript{1023} and leading entrepreneurs (including merchant, John Sheppard III) the city can lay claim to its share of pivotal advances in the growth of the medium: the first known continuous transmission, the earliest daily news program, the initial chain broadcast (Boston to New York), as well as occasional openings for black performers, notably African-American vaudeville stars Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake.\textsuperscript{1024}

However, in a general respect, opportunities for blacks across America in terms of work in broadcasting, performance, and technological advancement were few. As a microcosm of this, Boston radio during the period can be considered, through taste preferences and programming, to have reinforced notions of white cultural dominance and superiority. While, moreover, through entertainment such blackface minstrelsy, popularised by ‘Amos ‘n’ Andy’, the medium of radio was also utilised to promote appropriated white forms of black musical, theatrical, and literary expression, such as vaudeville, ragtime, and jazz. In one respect, this form of entertainment and others like it, assisted in transforming black forms of expression principally deemed uncouth and base by the city’s media and wealthy into forms that were more palatable for mainstream white audiences. Conversely, however, this phenomenon only served to subject black art in the city to a double oppression. Not only did they deny blacks the right to expression, they also appropriated their nuanced forms of artistry into a voice that was anything but their own.

Central to the wealth of material that exists on the early history of radio broadcasting is the idea that the people who orchestrated its birth and subsequent growth were white and male. This as William Randle Jr. asserts, is principally because a lack of attention has been
given to the role of black Americans in the mass entertainment industry, notably by specialists. The task of constructing a black history during the formative years of radio is furthermore hampered by the nature of available source material. Whilst there is a wealth of history in newspapers and radio magazines from the period, abstracting specific black entertainment from the mass of schedules contained within these is a formidable proposition. Whilst ample in volume, the listings are largely indistinct. If not well established, names of engineers, broadcasters, and entertainers were regularly unpublished. As an example, instead, all-encompassing headings such as ‘Musical program’ and ‘jazz performance’ were used to denote the type of entertainment a listener could expect to hear.

There was also rarely a defined formula for the broadcasting of recorded music. Radio stations in general appear to have presented a medley of styles from concert and classical bands to jazz and blues hits. Between 1922 and 1925, Greater Boston’s WGI (operated by Harold J. Power), and competing stations, simply classified time allotted to this kind of radio play under non-descript headings such as ‘Program of Selections on the Phonograph’, which offered nothing specific in terms of content. The only indication that jazz was a feature on Boston radio in the early years of the 1920s, for example, stems from the numerous objections that were printed in press reports from disgruntled members of the public. Such reports consistently pertained to what the public perceived to be the growing dominance of jazz (a base, black-heavy artistic form) over the airwaves, with one report declaring that ‘Being Deaf has Compensations in these Radio Days’.

Consistent moans in these reports stated that owing to the airing of jazz, the ‘classics’ – such as ‘Tchaikovsky’ - were being abandoned.
Jazz’s strong presence in radio programming also prompted an array of objectionable comments from well-regarded individuals – which were duly printed in the Boston press. These include members of the Massachusetts Women’s Federation Board; director of the Bureau of Investigation, Herbert Hoover; and high prelates of the Vatican. In March of 1924 then director of WGI radio, H. D. Miller addressed an audience at the city’s State House and remarked that ‘Radio had drained jazz dry’, adding that ‘Talk on fish is worth more to a broadcasting station today’. Thus, insofar as evidence – data collated from local broadcasts in the early years of programming – indicates that classics outnumbered jazz almost ten to one on Boston’s airwaves, jazz nonetheless had enough of a presence to at least generate objections.

While jazz was, arguably, a black music, it was whites who consistently achieved the greatest successes for the genre. For example, popular artists of the jazz genre up until 1927 who appeared on Boston radio were almost always white: Paul Whiteman, Ted Lewis, and Guy Lombardo, Gene Rodemich, and Jean Goldkette. The biggest local selling artist of the decade was white violinist, Malcolm Gray Hallett, closely followed by Toots Mondello. It is difficult to establish with any certainty a consistent black presence for jazz on Boston radio before 1927; thus one can only speculate, based on the varied forms of black entertainment provided by WGI, WNAC, and other Boston stations whether some forms of black jazz would

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1030 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Criticises Jazz and Radio Programs’, Boston Daily Globe. Published: October 31, 1924. P. 13A
1031 Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext,. Call # AN2.M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘How to make Radio Worth While is the Real problem, says Hoover’. Boston Daily Globe. Published: December 14, 1924. P. A4
have featured in general phonograph programs and during segments allotted to live performance.

In a general respect, away from jazz, Boston’s major stations did provide airtime to blacks, and on occasion set precedents in doing so. Wealthy radio entrepreneur and store owner John Sheppard’s WNAC, operating out of the fourth floor studios of the Sheppard Department Store in downtown Boston,1037 brought the black musical ‘Shuffle Along’ by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle to the city in early November of 1922.1038 As Donna L. Halper asserts, this is believed to have been the first live radio performance of a Broadway musical on American radio.1039 In the same year, WGI gave African-American actor, Charles Gilpin, appearing on the Boston stage in ‘The Emperor Jones’ (a 1920 play by American dramatist Eugene O’Neill) a platform to read prose on air;1040 while in the following year, WGI broadcast Davis Risdon’s play, ‘A Black Trump’, described as a Negro comedy.1041

Furthermore, while broadcast listings for WNAC, WGI and also another Boston station, WEEI (printed regularly in the Boston press) offer little in terms of what they broadcasted in the way of jazz, they do show that these stations intermittently broadcast some forms of black music, with the most prominent form being ‘Negro Spirituals’. Broadcast compiler Lloyd G Greene’s publications in the Boston Daily Globe between 1923 and 1929 show that Songs like Swing Low, Sweet Chariot;1043 Ol’ Man River;1044 and All God’s Chillun` Got Wings1045 were featured on WNAC, WGI, and WEEI with some regularity. However,
insofar that these were black forms of musical expression, on repeated occasions the task of delivering them was attributed to whites rather than blacks.\textsuperscript{1046} Individuals such as Anglo-American tenor, Frederick Gunster, were referred to in scheduling lists as interpreters of ‘American Negro Music’ and presented the forms through a portal of white hegemony, which in turn denied blacks the right to orate the struggles contained within those songs on their own terms and in their own voices.\textsuperscript{1047} This practice was extended to ‘Negro Rhapsodies’ performed by whites such as Rubin Goldmark at Symphony Hall,\textsuperscript{1048} and later radio chatter on the ‘Negro Dialect’, which was delivered by ‘a charming (white) southerner’, Mrs Mary Chesley.\textsuperscript{1049} The purpose of this approach to entertainment by whites was billed as an opportunity to soften prejudice against black entertainment forms but also to broaden the white repertoire, offering something new that might pique ratings. Overall, this approach merely serves to clarify just how inconsequential Boston’s black population was considered by radio heads and broadcasters.\textsuperscript{1050}

One of the most popular radio acts of the time was Harlem based, Amos ‘N’ Andy. This duo, a blackface minstrelsy act that regularly appeared on Boston’s WEEI station, consisted of two white actors.\textsuperscript{1051} Their brand of entertainment principally comprised ‘song and chatter’ comedy routines presented in Negro dialects of the South, and would permeate much of the latter twenties.\textsuperscript{1052} ‘Amos’, whose real name was Freeman Gosden, was raised in Richmond, Virginia, and developed a purported ‘thorough knowledge of Negro ways, talk, troubles, joys, and mental slants’ in childhood before teaming up with fellow Anglo-American, ‘Andy’, aka


\textsuperscript{1047} In the same way that radio magazines of the time refrained from showing black engineers at work undertaking what were deemed to be white jobs, radio stations saw fit to employ leading white entertainers to fulfil black entertainment requests.

\textsuperscript{1048} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Call # AN2 .M4B64. No Author Attributed, ‘Negro Rhapsody at Symphony Concert’. \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. Published: October 20, 1928. Page. 5.


\textsuperscript{1050} Boston Public Library. BPL - Central Microtext. Call # AN2 .M4B64. No Author Attributed. ‘Negro Increase in Boston 20 Percent’, \textit{Boston Daily Globe}. Published: February 26, 1921. Page. 3.

\textsuperscript{1051} Mordaunt Hall, Amos ‘N’ Andy Open Mayfair Theatre: Radio Team Cause Hilarity in Check and Double Checkat R.K.O’S New Cinema. \textit{The New York Times}. Published: November 1, 1930.

Charles Correll. The appeal of the duo was great, particularly amongst younger audiences. For example, English Grade students in Jerseyville, Illinois voted ‘Amos ‘N’ Andy’ into the top twelve greatest Americans in a school-organised poll, just behind Lincoln and Washington but ahead of the General Grant and many other esteemed individuals.

In August of 1929 the duo signed a long-term contract with networking broadcaster, NBC to appear nightly for fifteen minutes at 11 pm Central Eastern Time. Radio moguls, seeking to capitalise on Amos ‘N’ Andy’s youth appeal, however, moved their slot to a more family orientated time of 7 pm in December. This change, however, caused issues on the West Coast. 7 pm in Boston meant 5 pm in the Rocky Mountain regions and 4 pm on the Pacific Coast – times when most were still in the office and the factory. More than 100,000 letters, telegrams, and telephone calls poured in to the sponsors of the show ‘Pepsodent Toothpaste’. Protestors warned they would boycott the company if ‘Amos ‘N’ Andy’ were not put back on the air at a ‘decent hour’. Even the Secretary of State of Colorado joined in the protest. The resolution to the issue was that the duo was asked to perform twice, broadcasting from 7:00 pm to 7:15 pm over the Eastern Network, and 10:30 pm to 10:45 pm on the Western network. This proved, somewhat, how appealing white appropriations of black entertainment forms had become in Boston and across America; to an extent, whites preferred to hear an appropriation than an original expression.

While a large volume of active amateur and developing professional broadcasters was beneficial to the development of radio in 1910 and similarly by 1920, in the year of 1925 the medium had outpaced the technicalities of usage allowances as per the vague guidelines of

1057 Ibid.
congressional regulation, established in 1912 when radio related simply to ship-to-shore broadcasting. At the close of 1925, the American government allocated a mere eighty-nine wavelengths for broadcasting, over which operated 15,111 amateur stations, 1,902 ship stations, 553 land stations for maritime use, and 536 broadcasting stations. Radio’s open forum had, in the short space of five years, become unmanageable, with established, professional broadcasters such as WNAC being impeded by a melee of lesser stations. As the New York Times noted, the radio signal almost anywhere on the dial sounded like ‘the whistle of the peanut stand’.

This posed a particular problem for entrepreneurs such as John Sheppard III who had invested in the delivery of a more stable radio service, which had assisted in the development of the first radio network. In 1926, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), led by David Sarnoff, built on the foundations that had been laid by WNAC and refined the linked broadcast into a business model of unprecedented success by creating a national radio audience. In addition to streamlining the sale of advertising, NBC established contracts with affiliate stations, such as Chicago’s WMAQ, across the country to provide an audio feed of its programmes through a telephone line, which was then distributed to the general populace by the station’s radio transmitter. Emphasis was thus on the professional notions of delivering a functional and consistent service.

While at one time, the ‘undisciplined and unregulated’ voice of the amateur had assisted in the rapid development of radio, by 1927 it was causing much public outcry, with stations such as Boston’s WEEI and WNAC both considering moving their antennae from the city to counteract strained airwaves. The amateur was also now interfering ‘with corporate

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goals of delivering programming and advertising on a dependable schedule to a mass audience’.\textsuperscript{1063} As an unregulated service, radio provided a platform to anyone with the required know-how and equipment to reach a forum with twenty-five million listeners. This was exploited by corporations such as automobile dealerships and was even utilised by churches, schools, local governments, and on occasion local, touring, and travelling jazz bands.\textsuperscript{1064}

The growth of the radio medium in Boston, from its vast amateur interests to its more refined entrepreneurships, presented both opportunities and restrictions for black citizens. In one respect, the unfettered and unregulated arena of amateur radio provided the opportunity for the everyman to be heard by as many people as could be reached in any one evening of broadcasting. However, reaching people was, above all else, one of the main problems of existing in the unregulated arena of amateur radio. Unable to achieve consistent airtime on more powerful and far-reaching stations, such as WNAC, blacks were left to jockey for space on unstable and often congested airwaves, which meant their music either did not carry to any audience, or was intermittently heard because it was cut short by more powerful broadcasts that crossed over its ether.

In 1927, an Attorney General’s decision declared that the Radio Act Written in 1912 did not give the Secretary of Commerce authority to assign wavelengths. In order to end the chaos, congress hurriedly passed the Radio Act that remains in effect to the present day.\textsuperscript{1065} The Act established that the federal government had the authority to regulate the nation’s airwaves. The Act also revoked all existing licences, and required that all stations as a condition of possessing a licence serve ‘the public interest, convenience or necessity’.\textsuperscript{1066}

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decade, over three million homes were receiving orchestral performances, jazz concerts, vaudeville routines, and musical revues.

Nonetheless, for some blacks, the medium opened up the possibility for their literary expressions and music, such as jazz, to be heard nationally. Between 1927 and 1930, following the shift of radio to a broadcast-networking format, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra delivered over ninety live performances for American radio stations, such as WABC, New York;\textsuperscript{1067} WEAN, Providence;\textsuperscript{1068} WEEI, and WNAC, Boston.\textsuperscript{1069} During this time, Boston-born saxophonists Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges became full-time, essential members of Ellington’s Orchestra. In the years 1927 and 1928, Ellington and his Orchestra achieved five top twenty and one top ten hit. By 1930, they were sat atop of the billboard charts with the song ‘Three Little Words’, proving that blacks and jazz had a place in the American cultural spectrum.

By 1929, African-Americans like Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong were mainstays on leading radio networks. In this respect, the radio provided Anglo-Americans, who were otherwise reluctant to veer out of their social sets or communities to receive alternative culture, the opportunity to experience black music and performance in the comfort of their homes. Thus, in addition to the stage, and in conjunction with the development of record production, the radio served as an additional medium for the projection of the black voice, both in a literal and a metaphoric sense. Whilst the limited airtime that was offered to blacks during the formative years of radio did reinforce notions of white dominance, when they were heard it brought a culture that otherwise existed on the periphery into the mainstream. As such, the radio assisted in transforming black music like the blues and jazz into a dialogue: speaking requires not only that someone listen but someone reply, too. In this respect, even if the response was a rejection of the art, it had still been heard and provoked a reaction.

\textsuperscript{1068} Ibid.

The general opinion, cited by jazz historians such as Thomas J. Hennessey\(^{1070}\) and Keith Waters,\(^{1071}\) is that the American 'East Coast jazz sound' was born in New York and that Harlem subsequently became its cradle. In principle, this particular sound abided by the core elements of New Orleans’ jazz - improvisation along the melody line, syncopation, and a soulful swing – whilst developing rudimental nuances based on rich, spiritual dimensions (the proselytization of the music to religious audiences) in conjunction with the emergence of ‘syncopated orchestrations’.\(^{1072}\) In this respect, for example, ragtime was appropriated in a manner that made standard chords 'stride'\(^{1073}\) through a particular tune, giving rise to Harlem Stride Piano playing: an elaboration on existing rags by adding melodic embellishments and increasing the tempo of the music.\(^{1074}\) One of the most famous pieces of this kind was James P. Johnson’s *Carolina Shout*,\(^{1075}\) which was rooted in the ring shout dance of West Africa.\(^{1076}\)

In addition to Johnson, the aforementioned amalgamation assisted many musicians plying their trade on New York’s stages, including Ernest Hogan, James Europe, and the great pianist, Thomas Fats Waller during the 1910s.\(^{1077}\) Many of their compositions pooled ragtime, stride, and early jazz inflections to conjure up-tempo pieces that would become the trademark of the brash spirit and optimism of black cultural development in New York during the Jazz Age. This development assisted in broadening the boundaries of jazz beyond 1920s styling:


\(^{1073}\) ‘Many technical definitions of stride piano dwell on the left-hand pattern. The current popular definition asserts that ‘the stride effect is produced by the left hand hitting a single note on the first and third beats and a chord of three or four notes on the second and fourth beat.’ James P. Johnson in Scott E. Brown, Robert Hillbert, James P. Johnson: a case of mistaken identity (Maryland: Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, 1986), 120.

\(^{1074}\) ‘Stride had an oompah sound in the left hand and a structure that was like a march’ - Carin T. Ford, *Duke Ellington: “I Live with Music”* (New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc, 2007), 28.


\(^{1077}\) Ibid., 86-87.
Mary Lou’s Mass is a particular case in point; this record combined the rich and vibrant traditions of jazz with the unique spiritual dimensions and syncopated elements of the American East Coast sound.\textsuperscript{1078} Clive Barnes of the New York Times referred to the work as ‘strong and joyful music, with a spirit which cuts across all religious boundaries’.\textsuperscript{1079}

While New York can be credited with the birth of the East Coast jazz sound, all-too often as a result of this, the city is considered to be the only significant place along the coast where jazz was fostered. Consequently, this has often resulted in the idea that not only did jazz arise in New York but anything and everything significant that occurred thereafter in the city was principally a by-product of its cultural climate, cultural vanguards, and entertainment hotspots, principally Harlem. This idea has given rise to a disregard for the part that neighbouring cities, such as Boston, played in the evolution of the East Coast sound outright as well as the swift establishment of New York as its jazz hub. All too often there has been a tendency to see every jazz success that transpired in New York during the Jazz Age as one that was entirely conceived, nurtured, and celebrated within the city’s contours, and thus categorise these under the umbrella terminology of ‘New York jazz’.

The problem with this approach is that it is far too narrow and thus overlooks the contributing factors, developmental phases, and conditions that helped to cultivate and advance jazz in the city to a position of steady accomplishment. Essential to New York’s success as the adopted upholder of jazz from 1919 onwards was its cosmopolitan appeal, its vibrant and emergent black community, situated in Harlem, as well as its passion for culture. These factors made the city a magnet for aspirational and proficient jazz musicians, and ultimately the city benefitted from a steady influx of leading players from New Orleans, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Kansas City, and time and again, Boston.\textsuperscript{1080} From these

\textsuperscript{1078} Mary Lou Williams, \textit{Mary Lou’s Mass}. Mary Records - M 102. 1975. Vinyl LP, Album
cities arrived a consistent stream of wonderful talent, including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Bix Beiderbecke, Count Basie, Sidney Bechet, Earl Hines, and Vic Dickenson.¹⁰⁸¹

While these black musicians benefitted from New York's more accepting cultural climate and Harlem's jazz-centric music venues, in turn they brought a collective yet eclectic array of cultural influences, inimitable personal experiences and musical nuances, pooled from birthplaces, upbringings, and touring circuits. These cultures, experiences, and variations in style underpinned many of their compositions and performances with a particular richness. This in the first instance gave New York's jazz a diversity and vanguard foundation that helped to sustain its relevance alongside concert and classical music, while also consistently propelling the music, through stylistic progressions, to new heights. In this sense, New York can be seen as a jazz finishing school, as a place that provided the stages upon which talent developed across America was able to project their artistry. The combined impact of their works amounted to a unique and ultimately potent black voice.

Boston’s relationship with New York is certainly a contentious subject. Today talk of the two cities conjures flashbacks of great match-ups on their respective baseball fields. But long before the days of Ted Williams, Babe Ruth, and Joe DiMaggio, the two cities established a transportation rivalry that lasted almost a century. When New York completed the Erie Canal in 1825, Boston grew so envious that it stopped referring to its rival by name: Massachusetts Governor Levi Lincoln would only call it 'a neighbouring state'. When Boston responded by building the country's first true railroad system in 1897, it was New York's turn to worry about keeping pace with its 'enterprising neighbours'. It would take them seven years to follow suit.

In the realms of culture, the emergence of Harlem as an artistic and cultural centre for blacks, coupled with New York's overall position at the helm of American modernism during 1919 marked the moment when a general shift in cultural power occurred.¹⁰⁸² This shift can be

loosely defined as the moment when New York’s racial and cultural diversity displaced the Anglo-American, Victorian gentility of Boston-led New England, and arguably the starting point when jazz began its steady ascension to the position of America’s classical music.\textsuperscript{1083} By 1920, New York had married the literature and refined culture of educated middle-class blacks with the purported ‘ill-educated multitudes’ and New Negro factions amongst its ranks.\textsuperscript{1084} In this respect, New York became ethnically and culturally mixed in such a fashion that Anglo-Americans, blacks, immigrants, and U.S minorities were engaged in unprecedented interaction, to the point where, as Ann Douglas notes, ‘conservative race ideologies of the day’ saw such a development as heralding ‘the imminent era of miscegenation’,\textsuperscript{1085} but also the emergence of a prominent and significant black voice.

Essential to this voice, as previously noted, was the multifarious and eclectic layers of New York’s culture and creativity, which in the main consisted of homegrown talent and musical proficiencies sourced from beyond its contours. In terms of the latter, alongside cities such as Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Kansas City, Boston can be considered an important contributor to the growth and overall success of New York jazz, from the 1910s onwards. This contribution, in one respect, consisted of a long list of musicians, both black and white, who swapped Boston for the ‘Big Apple’.\textsuperscript{1086} Of the many, players such as pianist, Frank Signorelli; guitarist and saxophonist, Robert ‘Bobby’ Johnson; pianist and band leader, Joseph A. ‘Joe’; drummer, Kaiser Marshall, and of course more well known transferences, including drummer, Tom Whaley, and saxophonists, Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges.\textsuperscript{1087}

\textsuperscript{1083} Nicholas M. Evans, \textit{Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s} (New York: Routledge, 2015), 108.
\textsuperscript{1085} Ann Douglas in Nicholas M. Evans, \textit{Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s} (New York: Routledge, 2015), 108.
\textsuperscript{1086} Of particular note, Dixon grew up in New Jersey and plied his trade in jazz clubs in Boston before going on to perform consistently with Sam Wooding, and Ralph ‘Shrimp’ Jones, at the Nest Club in New York City during 1922.\textsuperscript{1088} Among the musicians Dixon played with while under Wooding and Henderson were Kaiser Marshall, Louis Armstrong, Ralph Escudero, Coleman Hawkins, Don Redman, and Elmer Chambers. He also played in small ensembles accompanying great singers such as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Trixie Smith, and Alberta Hunter in the 1920s - Craig Martin Gibbs, \textit{Black Recording Artists, 1877-1926: An Annotated Discography} (North Carolina: Mcfarland,2012), 237.
One of the first Bostonian jazz players to make a significant impact in New York was Anglo-American, Fillippo ‘Phil Napoleon’ Napoli. Born in 1901, Napoli was performing by the age of five and by sixteen had recorded as a cornet soloist. In the second half of the 1910s, he left Boston and found Brooklyn jazz so inspirational that he formed the Original Memphis Five with the aforementioned pianist, Frank Signorelli. One of the earliest Dixieland bands in the country, the Original Memphis Five made a number of important recordings over a ten-year period, beginning in 1921. During 1923, they recorded with Memphis-born African-American female vocalist, Alberta Hunter. This was the first time in recording history that a black singer had fronted an all-white group on record.

While the Boston to New York talent drain consistently strengthened the cultural position of the latter, it severely inhibited the cultural spectrum of black Boston and in turn the presence of a native and nuanced black voice, projected via a portal of early jazz expression. In this respect the local Boston voice became fragmented as it was transferred and, arguably, buried in amongst the melee of the national black voice, and in particular that of New York (and specifically, Harlem’s New Negro movement). In the context of jazz history, therefore, Boston can be regarded more as a place for jazz outsourcing than scene making. In this sense, the city served as a training ground for its native and resident players as well as a much-used thoroughfare for aspiring national musicians seeking to hone and refine their craft before transferring it to the stages of leading jazz venues, such as those in New York.

In addition to Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, Boston was home to many figures, both black and white, who operated in the capacities of on-the-job instructors for a generation of local musicians. One such example was Tasker Crosson’s band, a New England touring group that honed its skills on the college circuit and the dance halls in Roxbury and the South End. While Crosson is principally known for his work with The Ten Statesmen (or twelve, or

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1089 Ibid.
fourteen, depending on the job) during the 1930s, his entire career stretches from 1920 to 1950, however, and his influence was certainly felt during the Jazz Age. Boston pianist and arranger Charlie Cox said in a mid 1980’s interview, Crosson’s band was often referred to as a schoolin’ band – a place where youngsters might go to learn how to read and transpose before advancing to better bands.\footnote{1092 “The list of musicians who passed through Crosson’s band is impressive, starting with Sabby Lewis and three of his longtime associates, drummer Joe Booker, saxophonist Ricky Pratt, and trumpeter and arranger Gene Caines. Pianist Ernie Trotman replaced Lewis, and stayed for three years. Guitarists Irving Ashby and Tom Brown, drummer Bobby Donaldson, and trumpeters Jabbo Jenkins and Andy Kelton were Statesmen. And among the musicians who played their very first gigs with Crosson were bassist Lloyd Trotman, drummer Alan Dawson, and trumpeter Lennie Johnson”. - Richard Vacca, ‘July 9, 1904: Tasker Crosson’s Academy of Music’. On Troy Street. Published: July 10, 2013. Available: http://troystreet.com/tspots/2013/07/10/july-9-1904-tasker-crossons-academy-of-music. Accessed: July 1, 2015.}

In the early days of jazz, long before the music was codified and taught in academia, the magical mysteries of the music were - as the old timers would say – ‘learned on the bandstand’. Mentoring was the key. While playing with the jazz stars of the day was virtually unheard of - unless of course, you were fortunate enough to find them at an after-hours jam session – role models were found in many bars in many cities all across America. The opportunity to perform in any capacity, but especially to a receptive audience, gave many aspirational jazz players, including those in Boston, the opportunity to air their appropriated takes on the popular styles and sounds they had heard on the radio.

Through such channels, Boston consistently produced excellent musicians. In addition to notables such as Charlie Dixon, Kaiser Marshall, Phil Napoleon, and Tom Whaley, saxophonists, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, Charlie Holmes, Howard ‘Swan’ Johnson, and Nuncio ‘Toots’ Mondello make up the bulk of a best of Boston list for the period in question. However, while these individuals matured in Boston’s playgrounds, school bands, and local venues, they all left the city during the Jazz Age and prospered elsewhere, often continuing the steady flow that Charles Wright ‘Charlie’ Johnson had initiated years earlier.

Similarly, Perley Breed, born in Danvers, Massachusetts, sometime in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, was both a band leader and a contributor to the nurturing of Boston musicians. Several players, including clarinetist, Brad Gowans, and song-writing pianists, Sid
Reinherz and Curley Mahr, refined their abilities in bands led by Breed, before establishing themselves on the New York circuit. Of note here, in 1924, Reinherz released *Mah Jong / The Boston Trot*, a 10 inch, 78 rpm shellac release, recorded in New York and released on the Gennett Label, which had previously recorded Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Beiderbecke, and King Oliver’s band, which was equipped with a young Louis Armstrong. In the late 1920s, accompanied by several Bostonians – the Starita Brothers, the Cape Ann Trumpeter, Sylvester Ahola; and saxophonist Johnny Heifer – Perley Breed toured New York, Paris, and London.

There were of course musicians who chose to stay. While the city’s saxophonists tended to forge careers outside of Boston, several of the city’s pianists hung around and made decent careers for themselves as support musicians: there was an abundance of decent pianists spread across America and thus demand for these was considerably reduced. Amongst those that stayed were Highland Diggs, Preston ‘Sandy’ Sandiford, and Mabel Robinson. There were also musicians who left, made a name for themselves elsewhere and then returned to Boston. In addition, Wendell Philips Culley, a trumpeter, stayed in Boston until 1931, when he followed so many before him to New York. He found early work playing with Horace Henderson and Cab Calloway, before taking up employment with Noble Sissle.

The siphoning off of Boston talent to New York might in one sense be viewed as the main factor as to why the city has not received the kind of attention one might expect of a place that produced black jazz greats such as Whaley, Carney, and Hodges.\(^\text{1093}\) This is also, perhaps, simply a by-product of the transient nature of jazz itself.\(^\text{1094}\) For often, little consideration is given to the process (i.e. the background and the roots) that conjured the most celebrated and effective jazz voices of the period. Rather, there is a propensity to place most emphasis on where success occurs not necessarily how success comes to fruition. Thus, Whaley, Hodges, and Carney are often seen as New York based as opposed to Boston-born and Boston trained.


The impact of this is ultimately the paradoxical silencing of Boston’s jazz voices by proxy. In this respect, the failure to acknowledge the developmental processes that gave rise to the unique sounds and styles propagated by players such as the aforementioned equated to a refusal to acknowledge the Boston influence and as a by-product, the Boston voice. This notion is further supported by the rise of Duke Ellington as case-in-point. Ellington, who is without question a jazz icon synonymous with New York, can be viewed as an apt prism through which to view the lack of recognition attributed to the role Boston and Greater Boston played in nurturing the jazz idiom and its unique voice during the 1920s. Rarely acknowledged but significant, in the years before Ellington established himself in New York, Boston and its neighbouring towns served as a training ground upon which he cultivated the unique sound that became his trademark.
Chapter 6: Duke’ Ellington and the Boston connection: establishing a new voice

1. Duke Ellington: 1899 – 1923, a short history

Edward Kennedy Ellington was born on April 29, 1899 in Washington, D.C., to James Edward and Daisy Ellington. His upbringing, principally in Washington D.C., can be categorised as cultured, religious, and aspirationally middle-class. His father, a Methodist, made blueprints for the U.S. Navy and served as a White House butler, notably during the Warren G. Harding GOP Administration.1095 His mother, a Baptist, hailed from a respected Washington family: her paternal grandfather was a white senator from Virginia, and her father was a police officer.1096 As parents, James and Daisy set a dignified tone for the family to follow, living and raising their children (Ruth Ellington was born in August of 1916) by the ideal of Victorian gentility.1097 The Ellingtons believed that they were a part of the black upper-crust; however, the standards to which they lived were more reflective of a desire to assert dignity and project pride than they were a true reflection of the family's actual economic and social position; their grandson, Mercer Ellington, described them as ‘menials’.1098

The pride that James and Daisy clung to nonetheless communicated itself in the traditions of art and music, and as Mercer notes they consistently stressed to Edward James the necessity to 'do something different—something that identifies you as an individual'.1099 It is not surprising, then, that as parents the Ellingtons purposefully fostered the idea that their son was special into his consciousness when he was young. Given the fact that he grew up as a protected, well-loved child in an orderly household where decorous behaviour was the norm, Edward James naturally developed a certain etiquette that often set him aside. Regardless of how unrealistic, the belief in his own high-estate during his early years contributed to his

1098 Mercer Ellington in Harvey G. Cohen, Duke Ellington’s America (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010),14.
1099 Harvey G. Cohen, Duke Ellington’s America (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010),14.
confidence, grace, good manners, regal air and sartorial splendour in later life. At the age of fourteen, these characteristics, already at that time in development, earned him the now widely known sobriquet ‘Duke’, given to him by his equally brazen and self-confident high school friend, Edgar McEntree.1100

With his newly acquired title, during the summer of 1914, Duke Ellington began working in Washington’s Poodle Dog Cafe after school as a soda fountain ‘jerk’.1101 It was here that his forays into musical composition began; inspired by the music he heard in Washington’s clubs and performance halls, including that of James P. Johnson, and as a loose homage to his position at the cafe, he penned his first song, aptly titled, ‘Soda Fountain Rag’, which showcased excellent stride piano skills.1102 After moving on from the Poodle Dog Cafe, Ellington dropped out of school to pursue music, playing in jazz bands by night and supplementing his income painting signs during the day, including those for his own musical engagements.1103 In addition, he served as a U.S. Navy and State Department messenger during World War I; and after the war, influenced by the style of earlier jazz artist Doc Perry, he formed his first band, ‘Duke's Serenaders’.1104 Notably, on July 2 of 1918, he married his high school sweetheart, Edna Thompson, and nine months later, their only child, Mercer Kennedy Ellington, was born.1105

For much of the next four years Ellington became integrated, as a pianist and a leader of pickup bands (collectives that played at various dances and social functions), into Washington’s socially- and culturally-thriving Negro community.1106 During this time, the city

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1101 Henry Moscow, The Street Book: An Encyclopedia of Manhattan’s Street Names and Their Origins (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 45. *Note: ‘A soda jerk (or soda jerker) is a person — typically a youth — who operates the soda fountain in a drugstore, often for the purpose of preparing and serving flavoured soda water or an ice cream soda.’
1104 Leslie Alexander, Encyclopedia of African American History (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 190.
was a prosperous outlet for many black performers on the Chitlin’ Circuit, a network of black-owned and black-managed venues where black acts were well received.\textsuperscript{1107} However, as the Harlem Renaissance moved into full swing, the appeal of New York, and especially the opportunity to play with clarinettist, Wilbur Sweatman’s vaudeville act at the city’s Lafayette Theatre, compelled Duke to swap the capital for New York.\textsuperscript{1108} While the move proved somewhat problematic to begin with—gigs were scarce—ultimately New York and its vibrant cultural climate would prove vital in the development and career of Duke Ellington.

However, insofar as his relocation to New York in 1923 is often noted as the significant moment in his early career development, for much of the decade thereafter Boston was also an integral and largely unsung factor in the evolution of Duke from an aspirational pianist to a performer of a high grade, profitable form of black entertainment. In this respect, Duke's eventual box-office appeal, which was in principle, underpinned by a moving, spirited, and sophisticated approach to composition, was without question, fashioned and refined during the years 1923 to 1927 and in part in many of the clubs, theatres, and ballrooms of Boston, Massachusetts and the states of New England. Beginning under the initial stewardship of Charlie Shribman, Ellington over time forged a connection with the city of Boston that gave rise to numerous accomplishments, honours, and, of course, provided him with arguably two of the finest sidemen—Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney—in the entire history of jazz.

2. Duke Ellington in Transit

Much of Duke Ellington’s musical career was spent in transit, travelling across America with his orchestra from one concert hall to the next; as Robert Bingham notes, he led a frenetic life without roots in any town.\textsuperscript{1109} As he took his music from state to state - Washington to Louisiana to New York and on to New England – living out of a suitcase became a standard of life, and so too did composing aboard trains, planes, and automobiles. Ellington’s career as such has been defined by the connections and strong bonds he forged with an array of particularly places. These connections, to a certain extent, have been reinforced in the materiality of bronze, steel, and brick. In his home city of Washington DC, a 20-foot tall, 10,000lb statue of him stands on the aptly named Ellington plaza that fronts the restored Howard Theatre.\textsuperscript{1110} Similarly, in New York, there is Duke Ellington Circle, a traffic circle located at the Northeast corner of Central Park at the foot of Fifth Avenue and of 110th Street, Manhattan.\textsuperscript{1111} While Ellington has been dead for almost forty years, these memorial markers remain as fixed points of his legacy as a symbol of black advancement, stabilising the physical and the cognitive landscape in the process.

However, while these markers contribute to the broader construct of an essential America, their motionless forms are incongruous with the transitional nature, both artistically and geographically of Ellington’s music. In jazz, he composed and championed an art form that, by definition, existed and continues to exist in a continuous state of flux. From ragtime to Bebop to free jazz and beyond, essential to the music and its many precursors is the notion of change. Ellington, in compositional and legacy form from the 1920s to the midpoint of the 1970s defined many of the elements, or at the least assisted in establishing them, which set new precedents for the music. Significantly, in the context of the Jazz Age itself, he developed and where necessary appropriated elements such as harmonic motifs, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, punctuated riffs, runs, breaks, and distortions. More importantly, he also spoke for a national black community, which was at the time itself in a state of political, social, and cultural transition.

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In this respect, Ellington did not openly advocate black equality in a defined manner of overt racial protest like so many of his contemporaries. Rather, his devotion to his race and his purpose to document its accomplishments and character infused large portions of his work. Insofar as Ellington’s success is often measured in terms of economic value and critical acclaim, debatably his finest achievement was his unwavering ability to incorporate the history, spirit, and problems of being black in America into his work without it devolving into polemic. As Ellington alluded to in the 1920s, being viewed as a ‘black entertainer’ during the Jazz Age often meant that one’s work was easier to dismiss. Ellington found, especially in the early years of his career, that lexicological critics and wide-ranging commentators would repeatedly hone in on his use and refashioning of jazz standards such as improvisation, contemporary dance rhythms, and blues tonalities as evidence of non-seriousness. He noted:

I guess serious is a confusing word...We take our American music seriously. If serious means European music, I'm not interested in that. Some people mix up the words serious and classical. They're a lot different. Classical music is supposed to be 200 years old. There is no such thing as modern classical music. There is great, serious music. That is all.

Ellington counteracted the kinds of flippancy levelled at his elemental frameworks by establishing himself, from the mid-twenties onwards, as a great artist as opposed to just a black artist. Impressively, he achieved this feat while staying true to both his musical vision and ideals. As Gary Giddins notes, like Mozart, Ellington ‘wrote music specifically designed for dance and concert and, again like Mozart, fudged the distinction between the two by the originality and consistency of his vision. It was this commitment to excellence and originality that has helped to propel jazz to the status of America’s ‘classical music’ in the contemporary era. An era in which the ‘guardians of jazz’ have become just as determined to protect the music from foreign influences as the high-art culturists of Boston – the Brahmins

- were to defend the sanctity of concert and classical (serious) music around the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{1117}

The city of Boston does not possess any tangible markers or physical homages to Ellington, and there is little of value textually to indicate the role the city played in the evolution of his musical voice. This is despite tours spanning New England from 1923 to 1927, and the fact that from 1926 onwards, Ellington’s band comprised at least one musician from Boston. During the second half of the twenties, Harry Carney (from 1926) and Johnny Hodges (from 1928) were both ever-presents. While in the 1950s, Paul Gonsalves’ arrival provided Ellington with his strongest tenor (saxophone) soloist of the post-Ben Webster decades.\textsuperscript{1118} Loyal until the last, all three died as fully fledged members of the Ellington Orchestra.\textsuperscript{1119} As a legacy, especially in the case of Carney and Hodges, these musicians created a completely original sound language, which they spoke right at the heart of Duke Ellington’s music for years.\textsuperscript{1120}

Much of the heady praise Ellington received from audiences, critics, and academics in Boston occurred during the Hodges and Carney era, beginning circa 1926. His association with the city, however, was underway in 1924. At this time, touring was the enemy of any road band. Often jazz collectives would be forced to cover inordinate distances up to 300 miles by bus from one night to the next. The more compact geography of New England’s coastline and the array of musical venues dotted along it, heading towards and eventually into Boston, made the route particularly appealing to aspiring players.\textsuperscript{1121} This was exploited by local impresario,

\textsuperscript{1117} Mark Rennella, \textit{The Boston Cosmopolitans: International Travel and American Arts and Letters} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 60.
\textsuperscript{1118} Paul Gonsalves had served a four year term as Count Basie’s main tenor man and one year with Dizzie Gillespie before he teamed up with Ellington. By 1950, he was a seasoned professional and an accomplished sideman. David Bardbury, \textit{Duke Ellington} (London: Haus Publishing, 2005), 82.
\textsuperscript{1119} Gonsalves passed on May 15, 1974. Somewhat fittingly, nine days after, on the day of Gonsalves’ funeral, Duke Ellington, weeks after his seventy-fifth birthday, lost his battle with cancer. And Inside five months, Carney was gone, too. Scott Yanow, \textit{Jazz: A Regional Exploration} (New York: Greenwood Publishing, 2005), 56.
\textsuperscript{1120} Matt Lavelle, \textit{New York City Subway Drama, And Beyond} (New York: iUniverse, 20011). 139.
Charlie Shribman, who ‘controlled almost all of the ballrooms in New England’, as well as handling many bookings in the city from the early twenties onwards.\textsuperscript{1122}

Among the many great American jazz players to master New York via Boston, abetted by Shribman, were: Glen Miller, Artie Shaw, Claude Thornhill, Sidney Bechet, Max Kaminsky, Bix Beiderbecke, Jean Godlkette, and of course, Duke Ellington.\textsuperscript{1123} From 1924 to 1927, Ellington carried out long summer residencies along the New England coast and around Boston that gave his band its first exposure outside of New York.\textsuperscript{1124} His commitment to this circuit also resulted in their first out-of-town reviews, one of which credited Ellington with ‘setting New England dance crazy’.\textsuperscript{1125} These tours proved successful, partly due to Charlie Shribman, who admired the talent of Ellington’s band and thus promoted them vigorously. Undoubtedly, Shribman was a kingmaker in the band business, owning ballrooms, financing bands and using radio and publicity as well as anyone in the business.\textsuperscript{1126} Musicians follow the work, and Schribman had the work. His circuit made the dance-crazy northeast the big band capital of the country in the 1920s and 1930s. As Ellington noted:

There wouldn’t be a band if it wasn’t for Charlie Shribman. He kept the whole racket going and a lot of guys would be starving if he hadn’t helped them.\textsuperscript{1127}

Back in the mid-1920s, when Ellington was just beginning to gain a foothold in the New York nightclub world, he would spend the summer months playing a circuit of theatres, dance halls, and pavilions throughout Greater Boston. According to Mark Tucker’s \textit{Early Ellington}, his itinerary for 1926 included 24 appearances in the area between July 12 and August 13, during which time, Harry Carney joined the band.\textsuperscript{1128} The following summer, he

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\item \textsuperscript{1122} George Wein, Nate Chinen, Myself Among Others: A Life in Music (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2009), 52.
\item \textsuperscript{1124} A. H. Lawrence, \textit{Duke Ellington and his World} (New York: Routledge, 2004),31.
\item \textsuperscript{1125} Edward Kennedy Ellington, \textit{Music is my Mistress} (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 44.
\item \textsuperscript{1126} Randall Sandke, \textit{Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz} (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 192.
\item \textsuperscript{1128} John Arthur Garraty, Mark Christopher Carnes, American Council of Learned Societies, \textit{American national biography, Volume 4} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 420.
\end{itemize}
played 33 engagements around the Hub, all booked by Shribman, including nine performances at the Charlestown Ballroom in Salem Willows, the town’s summer recreation area located at the end of Salem Neck, a point of land that juts into the harbour, with Beverly to the north and Marblehead to the south.

It is unclear how Ellington and his band, then titled the Washingtonians, first came to the attention of Shribman, who principally operated out of Salem but ran a chain of ballrooms across New England. Booking records indicate that the band initially appeared on a Shribman bill on Easter Monday of 1924 at a dance in Salem for the Massachusetts Young Men’s Christian Temperance Society. If indeed it was the first Ellington show under Shribman, it can be considered important because it marked a significant shift in the career trajectory of Ellington. What is more interesting, however, is that this show marks a moment during the Jazz Age when the supposed devil’s music and the notion of temperance and associated purity were brought together in one arena in an official and, what appears to be, an accepted capacity.

While Salem, much like Boston, had an aura of ‘quiet and proper’ and was thus similarly not the kind of place that would openly take to the fast-paced and often outlandish nature of jazz music, especially performed by a group of musicians from New York, Ellington and company were a success there. This may have derived from the fact that the racial makeup in Salem was quite different to nearby Boston: there were no black residents and thus perhaps no great sense of hostility towards the race, brought about by labour struggles, cultural differences, and so on. In reality, Salem was a world away from the complex social dynamics of Boston. It was untouched by the furore of the Red Scare, had little to no concept of cultural elitism, and was largely unaffected by social prejudices ubiquitous in Boston, which had been further exacerbated by prohibition and the presence of the Watch and Ward Society.

1129 Klaus Stratemann, Duke Ellington, Day by Day and Film by Film (Copenhagen: Jazz Media, 1992), 51.
In fact, the lack of blacks in the area probably made Ellington something of an oddity,\textsuperscript{1133} which supports the claim, made by Mark Tucker, that the band was largely accepted. Residing at the New Brunswick Hotel, when not in transition, the musicians enjoyed the ‘fresh salt air, boat rides on the harbour, delicious fish dinners, and good natured fun’.\textsuperscript{1134} Ellington even became friendly with a police lieutenant, who later became Salem’s mayor.\textsuperscript{1135} At a time when Ellington and company, as Mark Tucker notes, were in danger of ‘drifting around New York from one short engagement to the next’,\textsuperscript{1136} Boston provided them with a structured touring circuit and the support, principally the financial backing of Charlie Shribman to operate on a consistent basis.\textsuperscript{1137} In his autobiography, \textit{Music Is My Mistress}, Ellington recalled Shribman as a man who ‘nursed’ bands, ‘would send for them and keep them working...Yet (he) never owned a piece of any band or anybody remarking,

...I cannot imagine what would have happened to the big bands if it had not been for Charlie Shribman.\textsuperscript{1138}

It was Shribman’s support and the Greater Boston touring circuit which led to the earliest notable Ellington releases. In November 1924, he made his publishing and recording debut with ‘Choo Choo (I Got to Hurry Home)’ - trains had been a common theme in songs since the 1840s - released on the Blu-Disc label.\textsuperscript{1139} This composition was, in the simplest terms, a concept piece on which Charlie Irvis’s trombone revs up the engines and Otto Hardwick lets his frenetic alto saxophone create a jaunty, almost nervous quality that conjures images of rail travel.\textsuperscript{1140} A year later, Ellington contributed two more songs - 'Love Is a Wish for You' and 'Skeeedely-Um-Bum' - to Chocolate Kiddies, an all-black revue that introduced European audiences to black American styles and performers.\textsuperscript{1141}


\textsuperscript{1136} Mark Tucker, \textit{Ellington: The Early Years} (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1995), 192.

\textsuperscript{1137} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{1139} Duke Ellington, Bob Schafer, Dave Ringle, 'Choo Choo (I Got To Hurry Home)'. Conductor: Rosario Bourbon. Victor 19516. 10” Shellac. 1924.


On the back of these releases, circa June 16 to 26, Ellington and his band pitted their skills at Nuttings-on-the-Charles in Waltham, Massachusetts in a ‘battle-of-the-bands’. On this occasion, rather than playing alongside Mal Hallett, they faced-off against him. On this occasion, Mal’s band boasted an array of excellent side players, including none other than Boston-based saxophone legend, Nuncio ‘Toots’ Mondello. By this time, Mal and company had built a sound that was underpinned by big, fat arrangements of dance music. On this sound, he had developed a reputation as a musician who consistently blew New York bands right out over the Charles River. This, of course, forced the Ellington orchestra to raise their game and work towards a more polished and consistently brilliant synthesis.

The willingness of Shribman to invest in and promote the Ellington repertoire led to several opportunities to perform alongside leading Bostonian jazz players such as Mal Hallett and resident acts such as Speed Young, Frank Ward’s Boston Orchestra, and the Crescent Gardens Orchestra. Starting in June 1927, the band embarked on a 27-date tour of New England that saw them appear at venues across the region, including two shows in Boston. While Ellington’s appeal was growing across New England during this time, the general appeal of jazz in Boston can be seen to have limited the opportunities there. In a symbolic sense, the success he achieved in Greater Boston towns, such as Cambridge, and further afield in Waltham and Salem, supports the notion of a music, quite literally, developing on the fringes (or rather the margins).

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1142 There is some confusion as to on what date this show occurred. This is significant because it marks the first time that Caney appeared with Ellington as an official member of the Orchestra. Sources such as Troy Street suggest it happened on June 20, 1927. Carney himself alleges June 16. However, the schedules for the period have the date as June 26.
3. Duke Ellington and Voice: Boston talking, from the margins

Duke Ellington was, arguably, America’s greatest jazz composer. His music, in originality and scope, has no equal in jazz.\textsuperscript{1149} While in a broader respect few artists of any genre have produced a catalogue of work as extensive and consistently brilliant, his music during the Jazz Age was, among many things, evolutionary. While in elemental form it often adhered to many of the agreed-upon jazz standards, in ambition, especially by 1929, it was by far the most exigent form of the music in America, serving as the foundations for decades of musical and personal development. One need only reflect on Ellington’s catalogue to recognise that the man set precedents and broke new ground and then, seemingly for the sake of it, appropriated and at times completely reworked many of his own jazz standards and thereafter performed these new takes with such regularity that they too became standards.

Thus, it seems appropriate that of all the work that exists in the pantheon of American jazz history, Duke Ellington is far-and-away the most written about artist. Much of the work documents a career of remarkable creative and popular staying power; a career richly integrated with American history during the transformative years of the twentieth century. Duke Ellington was, among many things, a composer, an arranger, a pianist, a bandleader, an entertainer, and an entrepreneur. But he was also an important figure for black advancement and a significant mouthpiece for blacks across America. Emerging in the late 1910s, during a period of harsh Jim Crow vilification on the streets and in the media, Ellington’s musical prowess steadily carried him to a position of high-regard in American cultural circles, where he established himself as a respected, often by whites just as much as blacks, major artistic figure.\textsuperscript{1150}

In the context of the Jazz Age itself, Ellington has been described as a developing ‘cultural hero’; a figure who, while setting the groundwork for the skilful manipulation of the pragmatic realities he faced during the era, simultaneously mediated public tensions that

\textsuperscript{1150} Harvey G. Cohen, \textit{Duke Ellington’s America} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.
existed between, amongst many things, ‘popular and serious American art, intellectual and popular culture, creativity and conformity, democracy and communism’ and of course, blacks and whites.\textsuperscript{1151} But insofar as Ellington the individual served as a totem for changes taking place at the time in larger society, his music was not composed in the solitude of his own inspiration. Rather, he incorporated the skill-sets of a diverse and at times unparalleled collection of musicians, who took on the role of a developing orchestra. As its focal point (i.e., its composer and conductor), Ellington viewed the orchestra as one large instrument stretched to the utmost lengths of its capabilities.\textsuperscript{1152}

Ellington repeatedly called on the creative and often original nuances of his backing band to embellish his furtive musical politicisations and reactions to white dominance. As Nathaniel Mackey asserts, the improvisatory privileging of the verb in black work (such as Ellington’s) connects with the more general linguistic situation ‘among a people whose ability to act is curtailed by racist constraints’.\textsuperscript{1153} In this sense, black artists could resist erasure, creative containment, and commodification by changing the ‘noun to the verb’.\textsuperscript{1154} Here Mackey makes reference to the work of Amiri Baraka, who focused on white appropriations of black music, principally the development of big-band jazz in the twenties and thirties.\textsuperscript{1155} This focus pitted the original compositional styling of Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, and Jimmie Lunceford against the commoditised imitations of white musicians such as Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, and Benny Goodman.\textsuperscript{1156}

In an effort to counteract ongoing efforts of whites to take and thereafter trade on the ideas and expressions of blacks, Ellington’s work from 1927 onwards can be seen to have been channelled through a consistent portal of variance, inventiveness, and alternatives to musical

\textsuperscript{1151} Harvey G. Cohen, \textit{Duke Ellington’s America} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.
\textsuperscript{1154} ‘The privileging of the verb, the movement from noun to verb, linguistically accentuates action among a people whose ability to act is curtailed by racist constraints.’ Robert G. O’Meally, \textit{The Jazz Cadence of American Culture} (New York: Columbia University, 1998), 515.
\textsuperscript{1156} Ajay Heble, Rebecca Caines, \textit{The Improvisation Studies Reader: Spontaneous Acts} (New York: Routledge, 2014), 244.
norms in an effort to resist notions of othering found in black culture.¹¹⁵⁷ In this sense, Ellington can be considered ‘the truest and most complete innovator’ of the era; for he so thoroughly remade the fundamentals of jazz to the point that they took on new life.¹¹⁵⁸ By persistently moving the boundaries of creativity for his work, Ellington repeatedly set new precedents for black American music. When those precedents became subject to white mimicry and thus standardisation, he started all over again and redefined the paradigms by utilising the voices of his orchestra.

Through these voices, Ellington vicariously was able to orate the value and power of black creativity and resourcefulness. With work, such as the Mooche¹¹⁵⁹ and Black & Tan Fantasy¹¹⁶⁰ he ensured that the philosophy of black music was viewed as a credible art form of cultural intent – one that emerged out of the sociological disposition of blacks in America. For all the innate qualities of a jazz instrument, Ellington knew better than most that once any instrument had been mastered it was the inimitable personality of sound predicated by the individual musician that gave it character and brought it to life. As such, when one breaks down the component parts of Ellington’s orchestra, individual distinction is unmistakably apparent: band members felt that they were given an opportunity to express their own talents, and in turn elements of their musical voices, while playing and colouring Ellington’s unique music.¹¹⁶¹

Among the many great musicians – including Cootie Williams, Bubber Miley, Joe Nanton, and Arthur Whetsol - to have played in the many evocations of the Ellington Orchestra during the Jazz Age, Bostonian, Harry Carney and from neighbouring Cambridge, Johnny Hodges were unmistakeably essential players.¹¹⁶² Along with Duke’s piano and Bubber

Miley's plunger-muted brass, the ‘flowing, sensuous alto-saxophone of Hodges, and the full-blooded baritone saxophone of Carney proved quintessential elements of the Ellington sound that had at their core a sense of heritage. As young, aspirational blacks in Boston, Carney and Hodges grew up in the shadows of important black Bostonians before them, including abolitionists, academics, and members of their respective communities who had contributed to campaigns of resistance.

This heritage instilled in both a sense of identity, which was in time developed, with the help of the great Sidney Bechet into a portmanteau of musical qualities that Ellington equated to a unique and effective form of cultural language. Ellington once remarked that Hodges’ effortless style was one of a kind. In an interview with jazz historian, Sydney Dance, he remarked, Johnny Hodges ‘says what he wants to say on the horn and that is it.’ He says it in 'his' language, which is specific, and you could say that this is pure artistry. John Edward Hasse stated, 'Hodges ranks as one of the very best alto saxophonists in jazz, and as one of the most unmistakable and gorgeous 'voices' of the 20th century.'

Similarly, Carney’s baritone solo work had the capacity to conjure emotional connections, and often was utilised as a vehicle for the projection of despair. As Kent Smith notes, Carney 'had such a rich tone that he could play notes in the range of a tenor, and Duke would give him some of the high parts. If another baritone saxophonist tried it, it wouldn't sound right because he wasn't Harry Carney'. His abilities were seamlessly married with the sensuality of Johnny Hodges and the sweet melody of Otto Hardwick, which in turn

1165 For example, it was in Boston that Crispus Attucks died for American Independence.
1168 Ibid.
complemented a trumpet section that boasted the snarling plunger mute of Bubber Miley and the poignant lyricism of Arthur Whetsol. As a ten-piece, the power of Ellington’s Orchestra was unprecedented, and rightly, it received consistent audience and media praise, including the title of ‘the royal family of big bands’.\(^{1170}\)

The power of this orchestra, the influence of its voice, and the nuanced contributions of Carney and Hodges to these characteristics can best be understood through the shift in Ellington’s work that occurred circa 1927 to 1929. This shift, which can loosely be defined as a move into the experimental and at times the vanguard, coincided with the period when his growing regard in New York and along the East Coast was simultaneously abetted by the emergence of Network Radio broadcasting and the arrival of Ellington as a national figure. Of particular note here are four compositional recordings: \textit{The Mooche},\(^{1171}\) \textit{Creole Love Call},\(^{1172}\) \textit{Yellow Dog Blues}\(^{1173}\) and \textit{Tishomingo Blues}.\(^{1174}\) These recordings show a defined vision on the part of Ellington but also the ways in which he began to utilise the unique and elementally varied skillset of the musicians he had assembled to furtively speak his language of protest and resistance.

\textbf{3.1 Creole Love Call (Instrumental) to Yellow Dog Blues}

First aired in 1927 and recorded several times thereafter, notably also in 1928 (copyrighted at this time, too) alongside \textit{The Mooche}, \textit{Creole Love Call} marks an interesting time in Ellington’s career. In one respect, the song has been cited as a focal point in what is often referred to as his zenith period. However, the song also carries a minor stigma. Its main melody, which was presented to Ellington in 1927 as an original piece by his then saxophonist, Rudy Jackson, was duly adopted by the band. However, it came to bear that the melody also


\footnote{1171} Duke Ellington And His Orchestra – \textit{The Mooche / Sweet Chariot}. 78 RPM. Odeon-Swing-Music-Series – A 2408. 1927. Shellac, 10”.

\footnote{1172} Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, \textit{Creole Love Call / Black and Tan Fantasia}. Victor 21137: US. 10” Shellac.


\footnote{1174} Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, \textit{Creole Love Call / Black and Tan Fantasia}. Victor 21137: US. 10” Shellac.
appeared in the Joe ‘King’ Oliver composition *Camp Meeting Blues*, which Oliver recorded with his Creole Jazz Band in 1923. Oliver attempted to sue for payment of royalties but the lawsuit collapsed due to problems with Oliver's original paperwork. More significant here, though, is that Ellington fired Jackson over the incident, and replaced him with the ebullient clarinettist, Barney Bigard. Bigard stayed for fifteen years and it was his pirouetting against sonorous brass that provided Ellington with many climaxes to his compositions during those years.\textsuperscript{1175}

Much like *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*\textsuperscript{1176} and *The Mooche*, *Creole Love Call* can be considered a musical exploration that went 'far beyond the expectations of popular taste or a more discerning hot jazz connoisseurship'.\textsuperscript{1177} Helen Oakley remarked in a 1936 *Down Beat* article, addressing readers in defence of Ellington and with reference to this particular piece:

> A lot of Duke's material goes over our heads because we are not used to having to listen that carefully. When you say that they don't swing, remember that they don't play the tempos or style you are accustomed to. Try paying attention once, and remember that more styles than one can be good.\textsuperscript{1178}

While the aforementioned compositions were nevertheless musically unique from everything else at the time, as a collection they shared certain similarities, notably the employment of a recapitulation to conclude; i.e., ending the songs quietly, carried by Bigard, with a short reprise of the main theme (most bands of the period ended each number with full ensemble (sometimes collectively improvised). But for their elemental and structural complexities, these songs all share a melancholic simplicity, underpinned by blues chords.\textsuperscript{1179}

Moreover, on *Creole Love Call* and many of his so-called jungle era compositions, Ellington, in what may be likened to a theatrical play in compositional form, deployed his soloists, including Carney and Hodges, much like characters in a play, with their comings and


\textsuperscript{1176} Duke Ellington And His Washingtonians, *East St. Louis Toodle-O / Hop Head*. Columbia 953-D US. 10" Shellac. 1927.


\textsuperscript{1178} Ibid.

goings planned and orchestrated. While the focus of Creole Love Call revolves around the 'tigerish snarling' of Miley's trumpet, the song's mood also calls on the sensual interchanges between the reed section as a rebuttal to Miley's trumpet. In this respect, the saxophones of Hardwick, Carney - and on post-1928 recordings, Hodges - can be heard employing the quintessential black jazz feature of call and response. While arguably here, Carney and later Hodges are somewhat overshadowed by Miley what is apparent on early recording of this composition is a sense that Carney and where applicable, Hodges were beginning to integrate into the band and more importantly they were starting to develop their unique tones and staccato – notes that are abruptly disconnected - styles further.1180

3.2. Yellow Dog Blues/Tishomingo Blues

A June 25, 1928 recording session, again for Brunswick, delivered a reworking of W. C. Handy's Yellow Dog Blues. While obviously not an original Ellington composition, his arrangement of the piece shows the same level of mastery that he applied to his own scores. At times, on Yellow Dog Blues included, Ellington comes close to creating something almost entirely new when appropriating. Also notable on this recording were the abilities of Carney and Hodges to meet his lofty expectations, while simultaneously enriching the sound palette. Here one can hear a general progression from Creole Love Call that highlights the way that Ellington was beginning actively to score for the band as a whole, as opposed to dictating parts to individual members or doctoring up stock arrangements. Naturally, this gave rise to a more interconnected work underpinned by a tighter chemistry.

In his efforts to achieve this, Ellington was abetted by the arrival of Johnny Hodges, whose soprano saxophone married wonderfully with the growling of Miley and, on this occasion, Nanton. As he had done on Creole Love Call, Ellington opened Yellow Dog Blues with a high reed trio that pitted Hodges' soprano saxophone against the clarinet of Bigard and Carney. Drawing on Latin rhythm to underpin Nanton's playing, of particular note here is

the way that Hodges contributed a frothy solo, that in echoing the playing style of his mentor Sidney Bechet was every bit a homage to his fantastic tutelage and thus a nod to his roots in Boston. The capabilities of Hodges and Carney were so appreciated by Ellington that from 1928 onwards as Loren Schoenberg asserts, he used the term ‘Boston’ for solos, which is how he notated them on his scores.1181

During this recording session, Ellington also put down a reworking of Spencer Williams’ Tishomingo Blues. Again, showcasing the unison attack of Carney, Bigard, and a supremely confident Johnny Hodges, who provided the reed section with a dominant voice and a luxurious alto texture, displayed the timbre and rhythmic control of a master. From the moment Ellington’s reworked eight-bar introduction mixed descending chromatic chords and sustained whole notes with Hodges’ pungent fills, a new leader was emerging. That introduction, which also featured the brilliance of Carney, established the unusually rich, somewhat dark, and at times melancholic flavour of saxophone writing that became customary Ellington during the first half of the 1930s.

Of particular note here above all else, however, is the maturity and accomplishment of Hodges. Considering he was still one month shy of his twentieth birthday it is surprising to hear that there was something of a distinct wisdom in his playing that carried the same sense of pride and injustice that was empowering Ellington. As he sparred with Bigard in the songs opening, and later, after the first chorus, as he responded to one of Miley’s solos with a stunning outburst of alto power, he was in those moments establishing himself as a significant black voice of the era. Soon thereafter, both Hodges and Carney would team up with Ellington to write Cotton Club Stomp, further indicating that the two had become not just prominent but overtly vocal in their musical expressions.

3.3. The Mooche

_The Mooche_\(^{1182}\) first recorded in 1927 (copyrighted in 1929), built on the sombre and at times weeping mood of _East St Louis Toodle-oo_, and marked the moment in Ellington’s career when the quest to make ‘sweet music’ gave way to a new musical language, described as ‘jungle music’.\(^{1183}\) While principally powered by the growling, sinewy muted horn of James ‘Bubber’ Miley, this sound was quintessentially moody and poignant in style and somewhat indicative of a real blues feeling. Elementally, it pooled the audacious use of multiple themes, key changes, and richly coloured textural effects and harmonies to conjure the shadowy, the wry, the salacious, and more importantly, the personal. In its daring freshness, it offered a counter to the gracefulness of Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra, which often fell back on a process of transforming American popular music into a brightly contemporaneous model.

On _The Mooche_, Ellington tapped into something deeper and altogether more ominous. In order to achieve this, he called on the shades and tones of members of his orchestra, including Carney and Hodges, who were still somewhat in the infancy of their tenure. On the October 17, 1928 Warner-Brunswick Ltd recording,\(^{1184}\) Carney (clarinet, alto, and baritone sax), and Johnny Hodges (clarinet, soprano, and alto sax) assisted the focal points of Ellington’s and Miley’s playing in bringing to the attention of white New York the exotic, dangerous, and totally unfamiliar landscapes of a black world far off in a different continent. For _The Mooche_, with its eerily wailing clarinets, snarling brass, and primitive sounding temple blocks, transported its audiences, often exclusively white, into the heart of an imaginary Africa, one that when performed live with improvisational free-reign acted as a cultural conduit.


This conduit often incorporated spontaneous sounds, delivered by anyone in the orchestra willing to step up, that often expressed the tortures, shrieks, and agonies of being black in America. In this respect, *The Mooche* served a particularly important purpose. During a time when white America was, in part, systematically trying to dehumanise blacks in lynch law segregation, *The Mooche*, with its jungle themes, marks a deliberate attempt on the part of Ellington to project the musical traditions and the cultural heritage of black Africa that had so inspired him. As Florence Zusner in the *New York Evening Graphic* noted, Ellington was ‘taking the Negro from Egypt, going with him to savage Africa, and from there to the sorrow and slavery of Dixie, and finally ‘home to Harlem’.

This journey was the foundation for future forays into conceptual compositions, such as 1940’s masterpiece, *Koko*, in which jungle conventions, powered by the saxophones of Carney, Hodges, and by then also Otto Hardwick, depict the dancing of African slaves in New Orleans’s Place Congo.

While the roles of Carney and Hodges during this recording were somewhat low-key when compared to what followed in the years thereafter – the two would lead ‘hundreds’ of compositions, including *Prelude to a Kiss* and *In a Mellotone* - it is evident here that the strength of Ellington’s orchestra was clearly wealthier for their presence. Behind the interchanging and musical sparring of Miley and Duke up front lay the developing distinction of a unique reed section. In jazz, most reed sections are voiced with alto on top and baritone on the bottom, but notably at this time, and on many occasions in the future, Carney’s baritone sax voice reigned prominent. Naturally, this equated to a warmer, at times darker, and altogether denser soundscape, which over time became the signature of Ellington’s compositional and performing style.

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1187 The inspiration for KoKo appears to the stem from the 1902 arrival in New Orleans of voodoo practitioner, Dr Koko. Dr. Koko claimed to come from the Congo, and boasted that he had discovered the seal of Solomon - the signet ring attributed to King Solomon in medieval Jewish tradition - on the shores of Syria. Joseph E. Holloway, *Africanisms in American Culture* (Indiana University Press, 2005), 139.
Duke Ellington remarked at the height of his popularity that ‘jazz is like the automobile and airplane. It is modern and it is American’.\textsuperscript{1189} He also stated around the same time that ‘all music critics think jazz musicians are trying to get into the symphonic field’, but argued that ninety percent, himself included, were not interested in symphony techniques at all. However, by the time Duke Ellington received the Esquire gold medal award from Arthur Fielder of the Boston Pops in 1947, he had all but elevated black jazz to the plateau of high art in America. No longer was jazz simply a music in the margins - a sound emanating from bordellos and gambling dens – it was now billed at Symphony Hall and appreciated by vast white audiences and black alike.

In much the same way that Bartok and Stravinsky had created an urbane harmonic style out of pre-tonal rural melodic material, Ellington had taken rag and jazz and transported it through a portal of Miley, Nanton, Carney, Hodges et al into something distinct and uniquely black. Stravinsky’s \textit{Pribaoutki} and Bartok’s \textit{Improvisations on Peasant Songs} translated the non-classical aspects of peasant music into ‘jarring dissonances’ made up of bitonality, tone clusters, and major and minor thirds. In contrast, Ellington represented the black urban experience and the associated struggle with unique textures, timbres, tonalities and structures that were sophisticated in design and execution and in turn vanguardian, which equated to a music that was above all else ‘modern’.

With works, such as \textit{Creole Love Call}, \textit{Yellow Dog Blues}, and \textit{The Mooche}, Ellington conjured a style of music making that drew on African heritage and forcefully melded it with the contemporary world of cosmopolitan America. In this respect, jazz stands similarly alongside European classical music, for in both forms the modern often appeared as an atavism to the primitive. \textit{The Mooche}, for example, was both simultaneously modern and yet primitive ‘jungle music’. For insofar as the European Modernists sought to bypass bourgeois values and restrictions, Ellington, aided by Carney and Hodges, subverted the racial prejudice

of his era. Through his efforts to remain modern and unique, Ellington transformed the jazz idiom into a means of communication that, through its mystery, majesty, and accomplishment, compelled whites to listen to him and his orchestra on their own terms.

Undoubtedly, Boston was pivotal to this process and to a certain extent, if not in a coherent manner, has since attempted to lay claim to him in a number of ways. In a more general respect, Boston was one of only three cities in which Ellington performed (at Symphony Hall) *Black, Brown, and Beige*, his sweeping tonal history of black America in 1943. While in 1947, he received the Esquire gold medal award, from Arthur Fielder (the Boston Pops) as the nation's top popular music composer and arranger. In 1962, Ellington, alongside Fielder, performed a medley of his most famous compositions to an audience of 18,000 at Tanglewood. And during the first half of the 1970s, he presented his *Sacred Concerts* (liturgical works) at area churches, including the Emmanuel Church, part of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.

![Figure 6.2: The Duke at Tanglewood with the Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops.](image)

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Furthermore, in 1966 he received the Paul Revere Plaque, a municipal honour, from the city, and in the same year was given the keys to neighbouring Worcester, on their aptly titled ‘Duke Ellington Day’. Add to this, honorary Doctor of Music degrees from Berkeley (where the study of his work has been part of the curriculum for over fifty years), Assumption College, and Brown University. Duke on occasion reciprocated the affection felt for him in the city by penning homages and ditties to the city itself and some of its players. For example, ‘B Sharp Boston’, often cited as an ode to Sabby Lewis, was recorded by Duke Ellington in New York on December 22, 1949. Sadly, the song settled into obscurity. It was not released in the U.S. in Ellington’s lifetime but its writing and recording marks a notable connection.

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1198 Klaus Stratemann, *Duke Ellington, Day by Day and Film by Film* (New York: JazzMedia, 1992), 250.
1201 Ibid.
Conclusion

Boston is and has been for much of its existence a city of distinction. Small in size but ultimately great in influence, it boasts a short but proud history. From iconic figures such as founding father, Samuel Adams to revolutionary links including the Freedom Trail and Bunker Hill, Boston’s post-European history of settlement, economic development, and tradition has instilled a sense of identity into the city that infuses not only its core inhabitants but also those in outlying communities such as Medford, North Andover, and even Marlborough. Through a process of drawing the past, allegorically and metaphorically, off its landscapes of memory, and through the absorption of official written narratives and even in certain instances myth-telling, Boston’s collective recall has been shaped in such a manner as to cultivate individual belief in its merits and to preserve the legacies of its institutions.

For a city that places great value on the magnitude of its past, however, representations of its twentieth-century black history serve as a paradox. For beyond the legacies of Crispus Attucks, Harriett Tubman, and Phillis Wheatley et al, Boston’s black history, notably history that relates to its South End communities and associated individuals are lacking sufficient recognition. In this respect, black Boston lacks both the textual and temporal reference points that allow for collective memorialisation. An obvious downside to this is that limited recognition has impacted on the production of post-abolition black heritage. The production of such heritage, often cultivated through the purposeful recording of the past, is essential in the continued shaping and sustaining of shared identities.

Important to the character of black Boston during the early twentieth century, as this thesis has shown, was the emergence of jazz music. In its formative capacity, jazz served as an essential repository for the curation of many long-preserved black cultural forms: sorrow and slave songs, gospel music, call-and-response chants, sub-Saharan African rhythms and more. Over the course of four centuries, beginning with the arrival of the first slaves to America (principally to the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies), these forms were preserved, refocused, and at times fused with adopted white cultural forms, for example the Charleston...
rhythm, and then passed on to future generations. At the time of its emergence, jazz served as the pinnacle of this process. It was a music that not only imitated, critiqued, and stereotyped the harsh realities of black life but also showcased the enormous value and richness of black culture, if at first not to whites, especially to emerging black generations.

Every city that played a part in this process did so in its own unique way. For example, in Boston, in addition to the more generalised issues of being black in America, notably racial discrimination, residential segregation, labour conflict, and poverty, black jazz musicians also had to overcome limited infrastructure, governmental (state level and national) narrow-mindedness, tenuous links to the Red Scare, and longstanding racial, cultural, and class inferiority defined, in large measure, by the city’s Brahmin classes. Insofar as jazz music in many cities nationally, especially New York, was propagated as a fresh concept and the most potent mechanism for the projection of the black voice, the reaction of the cultural, social, and at times political hierarchies in Boston was often consistent with their general reactions to all black cultural forms of expression and voice experienced in the past: they rejected it outright as low-class and lacking in morality and merit.

The best means of understanding this rejection is perhaps through a comparison with the manner in which jazz was received across the Charles River in neighbouring Cambridge and in nearby places such as Salem, Massachusetts. These places were largely untouched by the furore of inner-city, puritan-style social policing, racial prejudice, and Brahmin cultural influence. Furthermore, these places were not ingrained with the principled standards of high culture sensibility. As such, these places, and many more like them in close proximity, can be viewed as the tangible margins beyond the demarcation line of elitist Boston where black musicians, from the city and those who travelled in, could somewhat freely cultivate their take on jazz music.

In short, while Boston, circa 1919 - 1929 lacked the requisite network of record labels, recording studios, booking agents, and viable music venues required to cultivate jazz on a

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widespread scale, it did, however, assist many jazz musicians, both homegrown and visiting. Such assistance was principally down to the support and fostering of bandleaders, booking agents, promoters, and general champions of the music in the city. In this respect, one can point to both blacks and whites who supported some jazz players in their opposition to the racial and cultural status quo. These individuals, including Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks and Charlie Schribman, created the conditions that not only allowed blacks to pass the baton of cultural heritage as they had done so many times before but also on this occasion to be heard, via jazz music, on their own terms.

Arguably, the apex of this process was reached in 1927 when Duke Ellington, and his associates from Boston and nearby Cambridge, Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges, achieved national prominence via New York. Not only did this success mark the moment when jazz began its ascent toward the plateau of America’s leading musical form, but it also ushered the music into mainstream focus in Boston. All of a sudden, not only was there a challenge in the city to the dominance of white musical forms (concert and classical music) and white musicians (including Paul Whiteman, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Jerome Kern), but there was also a challenge to the clearly defined cultural hierarchy of distinction that had been set in motion by seventeenth-century Puritanism and maintained thereafter by Brahmin elitism.

The extent of this ‘revolution’ is evident in 1929, when journalistic, scholarly, and cultural debates about jazz’s merits, which had previously focused on the baseness of its origins in Boston – the 'savage crash and bang' of African jungle music - began to give way to a sense of pride and recognition in its cultural value. While the negativity attributed to black jazz in the press had resulted in a poor understanding of the whole jazz environment and its musical sense for much of the Jazz Age itself, a contrary shift, spearheaded by the reportage of leading American tabloids – The New York Times and mirrored by the Boston Globe –

focused on the merits of the music. This newfound affection for and approach to jazz on the East Coast ushered into focus a national media swing. As Luther Williams notes:

In April 1929 the death knell was sounded not for jazz but for the controversy surrounding it in an article in the *Times* recounting the European travels of Sandhor Harmati, director of the Omaha Symphony. He said that jazz was the only American music known by the European generation of that day. It appeared that jazz had arrived to stay.1204

This can be considered a monumental moment for black America, and with it, black Boston. For the change in attitude towards jazz ultimately marked a paradigm shift, culturally, whereby not only had the music displaced European concert strains as the leading form globally, but it had also become a respected device that allowed some blacks a voice of their own. While black Boston would not fully reap the benefits of this shift, ironically, until the Jazz Age and with it the glamour, splendour, and lavishness of the era, had ended, it had, however, in its own way, set in motion the wheels of change. Thus, while the tales of Harry ‘Bish’ Hicks, the emergence of Local 535, the murder of James Reece Europe, and the residencies of Duke Ellington mark an interesting chapter in the early years of jazz history, they also reveal a telling period in black Boston’s history that deserves closer and more developed scrutiny and analysis.

For as Gabrielle Brammer asserts, in early evocations of jazz, the improvised lines, and the harmonic complexities of its solos gave rise to a new melodic and rhythmic language. That language ultimately served, over time, to elevate jazz to the position of America’s classical music, and Duke Ellington, arguably its most esteemed patron, to the status of national icon. More importantly, however, is that in the midst of the many elements – swing, rhythm, syncopation and so on, of Ellington’s early compositional pieces was, without doubt, the most potent aspect of jazz expression (i.e., freedom), the solo – or as he referred to it, ‘Boston’.

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